



# A Sociological Study on Violence against Women in Pakistan; Challenges and Solutions

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## Abstract

The current study is intended to evaluate the kinds of violence such as domestic violence, sexist violence, male violence, etc. against women and girls, prevalent in Pakistan, and suggest possible sociological solutions. The basic premise of this study maintains that in the era of globalization, the prime vehicle of development is 'human capital', of which women not only constitute a half, but are also the 'means' to bring the other half into existence, and cater to the nurturing and grooming of all. Thus, women hold a pivotal role in human resource development. Even for this strategic position, researches find that women are the marginalized, oppressed and often victimized members of every society across the globe, since time immemorial. The aim of this sociological research is to analyze the underlying factors of violence against women in Pakistan and to understand the local situation in the context of the global discourse on the issue, to briefly analyze the role of media; and to suggest solutions and remedial social measures. This is mainly a Qualitative Research, however, mixed methods have been applied for validating the findings. Data has been collected through interview guides, desk reviews, FGD's (Focus Group Discussion) and open-ended questionnaires. During the course of this study, extensive research has been conducted into the patriarchal mindsets existing in our parts of the world, with special focus on the Pakistani context of violence against women. However, findings of the research suggest that this is a 'global dilemma' and needs to be addressed through global policies. After analyzing the findings, possible sociological interventions and recommendations have been made.

**Keywords:** Role of media; Sexual and gender based violence; Patriarchal mindsets; Media violence; Victimization; Media and social awareness campaigns; Global discourse; Safe social ecosystem

## Introduction

Violence against women (VAW), also termed as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), includes all such acts of violence that are primarily committed against women and girls. Empowerment [1] violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women and one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men. The then Secretary General of UN, Mr. Kofi Annan, acknowledged in a report in 2006 that globally, at least one out of every three women is abused in her lifetime by some abuser who is usually known to her.

Violence against women (VAW) may include violence carried out by individuals as well as communities and states. Forms of VAW include; pre-natal sex selection, female infanticide, psychological and emotional abuse, domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, workplace harassment, economic violence, honor killings, forced marriages, sexual slavery, trafficking and mob-violence.

VAW is as big an issue in Pakistan as it is across the globe. Subsequent governments, media, political parties and NGO's; all are not only becoming vocal for the 'protection of women's rights' and against the ever-so-increasing 'violence against women', but are also relentlessly striving for 'effective legislation', in particular, against domestic violence. This motivational objective is in itself commendable, and positive efforts are needed in this respect.

However, numerous sociological researchers conclude that the strategies adopted by both the governmental authorities and the media (print, electronic and social), are insufficient in this regard.

Whereas on the one hand, they are raising voices against violence on women, and serious concerns are being shown over this issue; but, on the other hand, the local context is not being taken into consideration in the process of policy making. The socio-economic dynamics, religious and cultural identity, as well as social and moral values are being ignored by policy makers, which results in the implementation gap (service, 21st century). Numerous underlying factors that are propagating

violence are also not being accounted for. Non-inclusion of all stakeholders is also a major barrier towards achieving any sustainable solutions.

According to the desk review conducted extensively for this study, focusing on the issue in the specific country context, it was observed that Pakistani society is actively engaged in 'law-making' against violence on women, while ignoring the 'root causes' of VAW. However, the legislators tend to ignore the patriarchal mindsets and the cultural as well as traditional barriers that instigate instances of violence.

The policy adopted in this regard seems as irrational as claiming to be worried about curing a particular disease, but instead of trying to eliminate its root cause(s), spreading the viruses that lead to the spreading of the disease instead. It is therefore, the need of the day, to analyze and adopt the 'correct' social and moral behavior and adopt a code of conduct devised in the light of extensive social research.

## Concept: Violence against Women (VAW)

There are many forms of violence against women prevalent in Pakistani society. Terms such as "domestic violence", "male violence" and "sexist violence" are used to elaborate the concept. The fourth international women's conference held in Beijing in 1995, described violence against women (VAW) as a social subject that consists in "any act of violence based on gender, which may result in physical, emotional, psychological or sexual harm, including threats, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty in private or public life domestic violence is usually used to conceptualize this kind of violence, but their meanings may be different according to the relevant social construct [2].

## Situation Analysis; Forms of Violence against Women in Pakistan

No doubt that violence against women is a bitter reality of every society across the globe! In the Pakistani context as well, this is an issue of grave concern. News of innumerable horrifying instances surface the media time and again. And it is a fact that a major proportion of the instances remains unreported. The most common forms of violence against women in Pakistan include:

- Denial of basic human rights
- Low level of respect in society
- Domestic brawls over petty issues
- Use of abusive language/behavior
- Public humiliation
- Physical beatings
- Acid-throwing
- Burning with kerosene oil
- Marrying without consent
- Child-marriages
- Marrying to older men for the sake of money

- Honor-killings/karokari
- Marriages to the Qur'an
- Deprivation from inheritance
- No right to ownership of money and property
- Forced pregnancy/abortion
- Pre-natal sex selection
- Defamation through media (especially social media)
- Trafficking/pornography/forced prostitution.

A long list of injustices carried out against women in Pakistani society can be made indeed. Although sad to admit, yet this remains an often denied, ugly face of the society, and all segments of society need to vocally express genuine concerns and grief over it.

These sorts of violence are all undoubtedly against basic concepts of humanity and social justice, as well as religious teachings of Islam; the dominant religion practiced in Pakistan. There can be no justification for these heinous crimes, whatsoever. Accurate facts and figures are also not available through any reliable sources.

Most of the cases go unreported. If and when such incidents are reported, the blame is put on women, one way or the other, and they become subject to utter humiliation and disrespect. Their own immediate families as well as their community refuse to support them in majority of such cases. Men are seldom given their due share of the blame and are rarely ever brought to justice.

Thus, there seems to be no end to this trend of violence against women, and it continues in a vicious cycle. It must also be noted that each one of the forms of violence against women in Pakistan, is an under-researched area in itself. Extensive subsequent researches need to be conducted into every one of them. However, that is beyond the scope of this current study and must be dealt with through subsequent studies on the subject.

## Statistics Regarding Violence against Women in Pakistan

The limitations of the available statistical data on VAW must be understood and the fact sheet may be analyzed in this context. Most of the cases of VAW remain unreported due to fear of social stigma, illiteracy, conservatism, loopholes in legal mechanisms and shame; thereby making it extremely difficult to calculate such instances. Alarming figures are coming to surface regarding increased trends of violence against women in Pakistan, over the last decade, through media. Socio- factors are also responsible for increase in overall trends of violence in our society. This study emphasizes the need for systematic collection for the availability of authentic data and analysis of acquired data. According to non-governmental sources, the current situation in Pakistan is estimated to be highly politicized and economically devastating [3]. General overview of number of cases of violence against women during specified time-frame, as reported by Human Rights Commission Pakistan is as follows (**Table 1**):

- Sexual violence/rape (2004-2016): 4,734 cases,
- Acid attacks (2007-2016): 1,375 cases,
- Honor Crimes (2004-2016): 15,222 cases,
- Burning of women (2004-2016): 1,535 cases,
- Domestic violence against women (2004-2016): 1,843 cases,
- Female Abduction (2004-2016): 5,508 cases,
- Female Suicide (2004- 2016): 35,935 cases.

**Table 1:** Provincial breakdown of the number of VAW cases in Pakistan in recent years.

Fact Sheet of violence against women in Pakistan 2006-2008						
Area	Domestic violence	Rape	Acid	Suicide	Total	Percentage of total %
Punjab	5,022	4,451	48	24	9,545	73.47
Sindh	1,173	411	3	487	2,074	15.96
NWFP	892,0	194	-	60	1,146	8.82
Baluchistan	135	55	1	-	191	1.47
Islamabad	28	8	-	-	36	0.3
Total	7,250	5,119	52	571	12,992	100
Age	55.8 per	39.40 per	0.4 per	4.4 per	100 per	

The following statistics represent the provincial breakdown of the number of VAW cases in Pakistan in recent years:

### Punjab

The following statistics represent the number of VAW cases in 2015 (**Table 2**):

**Table 2:** Statistics represent the number of VAW cases in 2015.

Rape (2015)	2,720
Honor killings (2015)	173
Acid attacks over a 10 year period	111
Burning cases (2015)	35
Domestic violence	588
Total Cases	3627

### Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK)

The following statistics represent the number of VAW cases in 2015 (**Table 3**):

**Table 3:** Statistics represent the number of VAW cases in 2015 (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).

Rape/gang rape	32
Honor killings	987
VAW in Mardan	35
VAW in Pehawar	104
VAW in Kohat	14
VAW in Mansehra	11
Total	1183

### Sindh

The following statistics represent the number of VAW cases reported within a time period of three years (2014-2016) (**Table 4**):

**Table 4:** Statistics represent the number of VAW cases reported in 2014-2016 (Sindh).

Rape/gang rape	344
Honor killings	860
Acid burning	90
Burning cases	72
Violence against women	535
Domestic violence	481
Total	2382

### Baluchistan

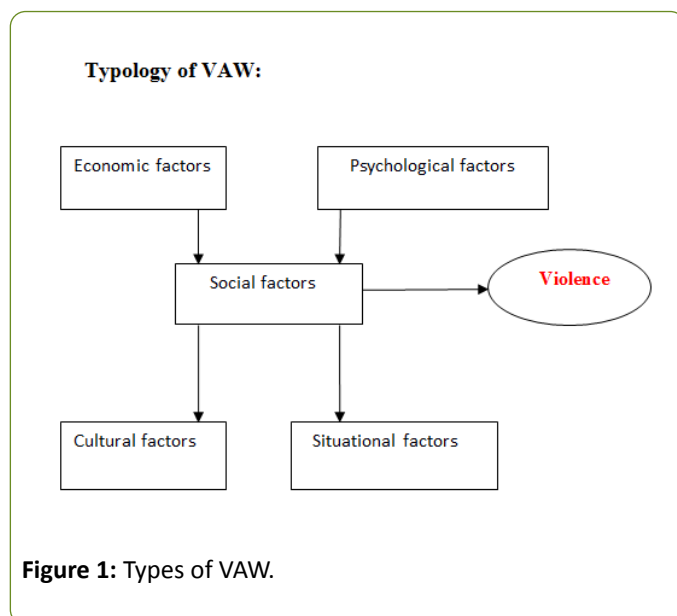
The following statistics represent the number of VAW cases in 2015 (**Table 5**):

**Table 5:** Statistics represent the number of VAW cases in 2015(Baluchistan).

Cases of gang rape , rape, harassment, sodomy, stripping	939
Burning (acid attacks)	143
Domestic violence	279
Total	1361

From the detailed desk review of the available data, it may be observed that the issue of VAW is area-specific and is also affected by demographic indicators.

Findings of the research suggest that the occurrences are higher in 'interior' areas of each province as compared to the rest [4]. Forms of violence are more extreme in rural areas as compared to urban areas. Occurrence of instances of VAW increases as we move downwards on the socio-economic class scale. Gender inequity and societal acceptability of violence against women are identified as major contributing factors of VAW in Pakistan. Media plays an important role in desensitizing the masses as to VAW. It is important to note that the number of occurrences of all forms of VAW have increased significantly in the past decade (**Figure 1**).



## Impact of Media on Violence against Women in Pakistan

Media is being identified as the most powerful tool of mass education and a key 'influencer' of society in today's era of globalization, where technological advancements have immense social impact (wikipedia (the encyclopedia)). The scope of effects media can have on sociological issues encompasses both 'positive' and 'negative' dimensions. Media are amongst the many prime social retailers in societies all over the world. TV, magazines, newspapers, radio, cinema, advertising, the internet, and other so-called "innovative media" or "advanced technologies" subjugate if no longer invade much of our entertainment time, and indeed our working time. Mass media transmit the strategies, values, norms, attitudes, and behaviors that socialize and construct the social reality of those who use them for a large kind of motives.

The extent of the impact of media on Pakistani society may be gauged in the light of following statistics available on the e-

database, Statistica, and also available on many other databases, according to which the number of Tv owners in Pakistan, in the year 2018 was 118 per 1000 persons. Taking into account the family system prevalent in Pakistan, the average number of persons per household is 6 or more. Inferential reasoning implies that almost 70 per cent of the population of Pakistan has direct access to electronic media. Available statistics reveal that the number of mobile users in Pakistan exceeds 144 million, and the total number of internet connections in Pakistan exceeds 2 million. These numbers are enough to validate the claims of powerful impact of media and its pivotal role as an 'agent of social change'. This study is designed as a universalistic sociological comparison of the issue of VAW. The impact of media on VAW may be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct.

During the course of this study, increased trends of 'media violence', or depiction of violence on media was also researched. A content analysis was used to observe portrayal of violent images in media. Excessive violent content was present on all media platforms, including print, electronic and social media. Even video games were found to contain extremely violent contents. Although, individuals and organizations associated with media claim that this explicitly violent content does not have any correlation with increased trends of violence in society, researches tell us otherwise. The association of increased media violence with increased violence in society could have been less relevant in the past, when images projected on media were vague. Today, the portrayal of extremely realistic, high quality resolution images of assault and death, especially on electronic and social media are cause for serious concern. Studies suggest that at least half of the incidents of violence are linked with the desensitizing effects of media violence. This is another under-researched area, especially in Pakistan, and needs to be elaborated through further studies. However, it may be stated that media violence may be the most influential factor in inciting use of deadly force as a way to resolving interpersonal conflicts.

The theory also suggests that social media has great influence on the mindsets of the viewers, and on how they start perceiving the images projected on media as 'reality'.

In the context of Indo-Pak sub-continent, the media portrays female characters in low esteem; assigns casual worthlessness to the rights, lives and identities of women; and domestic violence as well as violence against women is the major themes of almost all popular shows, dramas and films. Pornography is growing, with Pakistan being at the 2nd number in the world where such pornographic websites are accessed.

## Methodological Approach

The methodological approach applied in this study on violence against women (VAW) is based on qualitative research methods. In this sense, the research techniques are thought to capture the subjective experiences of women who have suffered violence and, in particular the effects that violence against women has had on women themselves, their

daily lives, their children and their families. The main objective of this study is to identify the factors of VAW according to the specific country context of Pakistan, analyze the role and effects of media, and suggest possible sustainable solutions for creating a safe social ecosystem.

## Findings of the Quantitative Study of VAW in Pakistan

This was mainly a qualitative study analyzing secondary data, but mixed methods of research were applied. Quantitative study was carried out through closed questionnaire, 2 FGD's (focused group discussions) and KII's (key informant interviews). Subsequent studies conducting more detailed quantitative study into the topic are required for more precise results.

### Findings of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was sent to gender-inclusive persons from diverse socio-economic backgrounds through social media platforms. 83% of the respondents were females and aged less than 35 years of age. 56% of the respondents belonged to the middle income group. 100% of the respondents acknowledged VAW as a social problem prevalent in Pakistan and also across the globe, and 90% also admitted to have been victims of some sort of violence during their lifetime. 50% respondents claimed that they had suffered violence within their own homes. 100% of the respondents claimed that the perpetrators of violence were known to them and that they were not aware of any laws in Pakistan that could provide protection or justice to them. 50% of the respondents revealed that they had disclosed the incidents of violence to their close family members; however, 65% believed that family members would be unable to help in this regard. 50% of the respondents believed that the main cause of VAW in Pakistan is Patriarchal mindsets resulting in male-dominance. 80% of the respondents considered violence portrayed on media to have a direct correlation with the increase in VAW in society. Cultural and traditional norms were also identified as causes of VAW.

### Findings of FGDs (focused group discussions)

Two FGDs were conducted in the cities of Lahore and Sialkot of Punjab province. Members of the discussion belonged to both genders and were between the age of 25 years and 55 years. All of them recognized VAW as a global social problem, and accepted its prevalence in Pakistan. All expressed concern over the increase of incidences of VAW and the failure for its redressal at all levels. All participants asserted the role and impact of media in the issue of VAW, and its positive and negative effects were analyzed. The main limitations of research in this field were identified as the non-availability of easily accessible social and legal channels of reporting violence, and the reluctance of the victims in reporting any incidents of violence to authorities. Preventive and pro-active

measures were suggested that have been listed in the section of recommendations at the end of this study.

### Findings of KIIs (key informant interviews)

Fifty interviews were conducted from female victims of violence, on the assurance of complete secrecy. The findings revealed that 80% of these victims had been exposed to violence in the vicinity of their own homes, by perpetrators known or related to them, more than once, and the violence was ongoing. They had no knowledge or hope of any justice in this regard and did not know of any person or institution from which they could seek help. The most alarming finding was that more than 80% victims of violence accepted these acts, and 50% believed that they were in some way themselves responsible for the incidents, and also that the male perpetrators of violence were 'good people' in general. 80% of those interviewed believed that media violence to be a major contributing factor of patriarchal mindsets and VAW.

In Pakistan, the effect of violence depicted in media tends to divide people into opposing camps. One group perceives a causal link between portrayals of violence on media with violence in society media influence on VAW in Pakistan (largo). The others group argues that there are multiple causes of violence in society, and there is no direct link between what is portrayed in media with the actions of individuals.

Media is not merely a mirror of society or the violence within it. The portrayal of social phenomena on media, including VAW, is informed by a number of factors, including basic ethics, news conventions, audiences, ratings, political perspectives and, to some extent, proprietorship. Media plays a crucial role not only in reporting events, but in shaping 'what we think' and 'how we think' about those events.

Critics claim that media helps endorse patriarchal mindsets in Pakistan by glorifying unbalanced power relations and abusive relationships, encouraging stalking and emotional manipulation, normalizing a culture of non-consent, and desensitizing the masses towards VAW.

According to a research spanning 100 countries, 46 per cent of news stories in print, radio and television, uphold gender stereotypes. Only 6 per cent highlight gender equality. According to another global study covering 522 news media organizations, males occupy 73 per cent of top media management positions. Whilst women represent half the global population, less than one third of all speaking characters in film are female. Cyber violence has extended VAW to the virtual world, and this is emerging as a significant problem in the online platforms.

According to Dr. Berkowitz, a renowned psychologist, University of Wisconsin, USA, who has written several academic papers and books on the subject of aggression, excessive media coverage surrounding violent incidents is a factor in promoting more of them.

## Role of Social Media in VAW in Pakistan

In recent times, social media is evolving significantly and playing a major role in highlighting and fighting injustices against women in Pakistan (pacific). There are some cases in Pakistan that have been highlighted only with the help of social media and in some cases social media helped attain justice for the victims. These include:

- Zainab murder case
- Suman Ali acid attack case
- Khadija Siddiqui was attacked by her class fellow Shah Hussain, who stabbed her 23 times and injured her younger sister as well
- DungaGali murder case

However, it is also a sad fact that some women in Pakistan have actually been victimized because of the content they uploaded on social media, in the name of 'honor'. Their social media posts have resulted in honor killings by close family members. These include:

- Qandeel Baloch murder case,
- The Kohistan case (horrendous killings of 5 girls and 2 boys due to a video on social media).

## Analysis of Underlying Factors of Violence against Women

Pakistan is a heavily legislated country, by all means, and there are numerous laws devised for human rights violations and criminal offenses, including violence against women [5]. The legislation being carried out to stop violence against women grows out from the commendable sentiment that such horrendous and uncivil behavior is a direct violation of basic human rights and must be curtailed immediately. However, it is pertinent to note that laws alone do not suffice to ensure justice in society. There are many underlying factors responsible for any crime, and these need to be taken into consideration and rectified, if the criminal act is to be stopped completely. In case of violence against women, this phenomena needs to be understood in the light of the socio-economic context of Pakistan. Only then can effective and sustainable measures be adopted for the solution of this problem.

## Extrinsic and Intrinsic Sociological Factors of Violence against Women in Pakistan

'Patriarchal Mindsets' are dominant in Pakistani society, which portray women as 'lesser beings', not looked upon as 'equal human beings', and thereby maltreated [6].

- Ever-increasing poverty and inflation have been identified as main catalysts of violence.

- An oblivious factor that usually stimulates domestic violence is the enormous amounts of unjustifiable financial and mental pressures instigated upon men at the hands of their womenfolk.
- Increased drug abuse is also a major factor of violence against women.
- Family pressures and quarrels also provoke men towards violence, especially where joint family systems are prevalent.
- Portrayal of violence on media is another contributing factor of VAW.

It is also important to note that in many cases, women are the actual culprits behind the acts of violence carried out by men, as they provoke and instigate violence on other women and are often accomplices in the crimes. Another aspect that also requires serious consideration is that, if an end to social chaos and disharmony could be brought about by mere legislation, then, in the liberal democracies of Europe and America; where literacy rates as well as per-capita incomes are high and rule of law is also prevalent in the society to a significant extent; violence against women should have been eliminated completely, or at least been reduced to a negligible level!

What, may we ask, is the actual situation prevalent over there, in this regard???

For the sake of achieving a harmonious family life, the protection of women's rights is as important as relieving men of mental agonies, and so 'balanced measures' must be adopted in this regard; and, after that, it may be continuously evaluated as to how far the designed solutions are practically applicable in society. There is an impending need to meticulously calculate whether domestic violence can indeed be eliminated as a result of the existing methodology and marital and family lives made blissful through mere legislation; or in trying to solve one problem, new and more complex ones would be created [7]. For the sake of sustainable social policies in this regard, media and social awareness campaigns must be built, along with narratives that redefine the status of women in a respectable manner. Patriarchal mindsets need to be addressed as well.

## Creating a 'safe social ecosystem': proposed theory of reverse social engineering

This study recognizes the fact that 'social engineering' and 'reverse social engineering' hold negative connotations in the context of IT and information security; and refer to psychological manipulation of people for extracting confidential information [8]. However, it is being proposed that in the context of 'sociology', this term may be coined in a positive connotation for the sake of attaining sustainable solutions to the issue of violence against women. Reverse engineering of society in the context of Sociology is built on the premise that 'violence against women' is a social evil, that has gained momentum over the passage of time due to its acceptance as a social norm and also because it has not been curtailed through effective legislation. Therefore, in order to

eliminate this practice from society, the norms, values and customs of society will have to be 're-structured' or 're-engineered'. Reverse social engineering means the systematic breakdown and analysis of all factors; causal, extrinsic and intrinsic, that result in violence against women, and shifting or 'engineering' them in a positive direction so as to end or curtail violence against women. It may be noted that the following theory of reverse social engineering has been suggested in the form of a schematic diagram and is in its introductory phases. There are no claims regarding the effectiveness of the theory at this stage, and it may be challenged, amended, modified or refuted altogether, after detailed research. This theory will be further elaborated in subsequent researches.

A proposed framework for elimination of Violence against Women in Pakistan through Reverse Social Engineering: 'Creating a safe social ecosystem'

- End to all forms of Violence Against Women.
- Women and girls are safe to pursue their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- Gender Equity.
- Safe Social Environments for Women and Girls.
- Social Sustainability.
- Social change related to gender power relations.
- Shift in control over resources for balance, equity and gender parity.
- Usage of mass media for sensitizing on VAW.
- Changes in social norms.
- Men and women do not engage in violent behavior or practices against women and girls.
- VAW is actively and effectively negatively sanctioned at all levels.
- Governmental Mechanism for Protection of Females.
- Helplines.
- Counseling.

Media campaigns Safe access to Support Services (economic, medical, legal, shelter, psychological) to victims of VAW Quick access to justice at all levels including within customary and religious laws

## Risk Factors for VAW

During the course of this study, it was observed that factors associated with violence against women have correlation with specific social conditions existing at individual, family, community and societal levels, also known as risk factors. In this case, 'risk factors' refer to those factors whose presence may increase the probability of occurrence of acts of violence against women. These risk factors are associate either with the perpetrators of violence or with the victims, or with both [9].

Risk factors for VAW include the following:

- Low levels of education
- Perpetrators who have been victims of child abuse
- Exposure to family violence

- Multiple relationships
- Gender-based discrimination rooted in traditions and culture
- Past history of violence
- Male dominance and control
- Weak legal sanctions and implementation system.

## Social and Health Hazards Associated With VAW

Violence against women may have severely adverse impacts on emotional, psychological, physical, sexual and reproductive health of most victims [10]. The impact of violence may not be limited to the victims, and may even extend to their families and off-springs in most cases. This may be short-term or long-term, or may even last a lifetime in some cases. This 'collateral damage' and its social dimensions are again an under-researched arena, especially in the Pakistani context. It is aspired that the current study may lead to further studies in this area. Serious, emotional, psychological, mental, physical, sexual and reproductive hazards may surface as a result or after-math of violence against women in the victims, their children and families

Such hazards may not be limited to, but have found to include:

- Self-harm or suicide,
- Injuries and disabilities(short-term or permanent),
- Unwanted pregnancies , induced abortions and miscarriages,
- Severe depressions and psychological disorders,
- Behavioral Disorders (especially in children of females who suffer violence).

## Measures for Eliminating Violence against Women

The magnanimous scale of the issue of violence against women in Pakistan and across the globe requires carefully designed primary prevention and response strategies as well as timely interventions.

- Sensitizing the masses on the issue of VAW through media,
- Correction of unbalanced gender-based power structures and patriarchal mindsets,
- Effective Legislation (according to local context of religion and culture),
- Implementation of Legislation,
- Inclusive Public Policies, Continual Impact Assessment and Interventions,
- Counseling Centres/Helplines,
- Media and Social Awareness Campaigns,
- Focus on character-building through education.

In low resource settings, prevention strategies on economic empowerment of females may be designed. Skill-building through vocational training may also be promoted. For all

these possibilities to turn into realities, prevalent patriarchal mindsets need to be rectified and an equitable gender-based power relationships must be rectified. To achieve sustainable social change, it is important to implement legislation. Elimination of violence against women requires a multi-sectoral approach, after detailed research and need-assessment of each sector.

Domestic violence issues are not specifically covered in Pakistan Penal Code, however there are several sections covering issues regarding different forms of violence against women. Laws on sexual violence come under the umbrella of the Hudood Ordinances 1979. In December 2006, the Protection of Women Act was passed. Domestic Violence Bill was passed by the national assembly of Pakistan in August 2009. The Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act was implemented in 2010. Establishment of National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) in 2000 and subsequent provincial commissions are significant attempts made to empower women in Pakistan. The Community Campaign, including Media, to Prevent Violence against Women was launched in Pakistan, in 2006 by the Ministry of Women Development in order to create awareness of women's rights amongst the public. The major objectives of the project, included:

- to highlight women's issues along with possible solutions through the media, including television channels, radio stations, and print media through a well designed media strategy,
- printing and dissemination of brochures/pamphlets/books/banners on violence against women,
- mobilization of positive public opinion on women's issues, specifically focusing on violence against women, with the help of the media,
- involvement of elected women councilors in the campaign,
- Sensitization of police officials through training workshops.

However, gap analyses need to be conducted in all of the above and interventions must be made for their redressal.

## The Global Discourse on Violence against Women

Since the past seven decades the issue of VAW is being highlighted by human rights advocacy groups across the globe [11]. The UN and other international bodies have conducted multiple surveys in different countries on the issue of violence against women. According to the U.S National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, women experience about 4.8 million intimate partner-related physical assaults and rapes every year, and less than 20 percent of battered women seek medical treatment following an injury (2006). According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, which includes crimes that were not reported to the police, 232,960 women in the USA were raped or sexually assaulted in 2006, which is more than 600 women every day.

The global trends of violence against women are clear from reports issued by Intelligence agencies that confess that in USA

every 3rd woman is being physically beaten up by her husband or boyfriend. So much so that even pregnant women are not spared. Every other expecting mother is ruthlessly beaten up, and approximately 1/3rd of the new-born children are delivered with symptoms of having suffered distress. According to reports compiled by reliable sources of FBI and American Institute of Domestic Violence, 30 to 40 Million women in U.S alone suffer abuse at the hands of men. 40% of these women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends. Every 9 seconds a woman gets beaten up, and every 3 seconds a woman gets raped. Every 3rd woman gets sexually harassed at least once in her lifetime. 50% women suffer some form of abuse within their very own homes.

## National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey Fact Sheet

Nearly 1 in 5 women (18.3%) and 1 in 71 men (1.4%) in the United States have been raped at some time in their lives. More than 1 in 3 women (35.6%) and more than 1 in 4 men (28.5%) in the United States have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

Even in 'civilized societies' like Britain, every minute, a woman suffers from all forms of abuse. Nearly 22-35% women brought into emergency rooms of hospitals bear visible signs of abhorring physical brutality, and out of these unfortunate souls, around 2 women lose their lives every week. Studies reveal that even in the case of Sweden, 50% women lodge complaints of violence against their husbands or boyfriend (prevention).

In Japan, 1 out of 20 women face danger by their men.

Even in Russia, violence against women is a norm. All these atrocities are occurring in those countries where laws are strict in this regard and police and law-enforcing agencies arrest people on just a phone call by victimized women, and the accused are either put behind bars or else, they are made to pay heavy penalties.

These facts and figures reveal the intentionally suppressed reality; that violence against women is a global problem; prevalent throughout the world and the situation in the so-called 'modern world' is far worse than in the less-developed regions.

## The Social Analysis of the Global Context of VAW

(rights)Extensive desk review conducted during the course of this study reveals that within the 'social experiments' of the West, lie the root causes of the problem of VAW. Secularism, Feminism and Capitalism have all played a part in the 'unbalancing of society'. Flawed perception and lack of vision have led to the claims by the West, to have based its civilization on gender equality, economic freedom of women, free-mingling of sexes and legal protection of women. Even so,



the bitter truth has emerged that in the West, the true foundation of society; i.e. the institution of the 'home' has been utterly shattered and the entire family system has collapsed completely. Although, theoretically speaking, legal protection is being provided to women, but in actual practice, following social evils are prevalent, which include:

- Brutal beatings of women at the hands of men,
- Decreased trends of marriage,
- Increased divorce rates,
- Sexual harassment,
- Excessive obscenity,
- Projection of immodesty and immorality,
- Rejection of the institution of marriage and living together in extra-marital relationships,
- Excessive birth-control and abortions,
- Alarming high drug abuse especially amongst youth,
- Degradation of physical strength and health,
- Vast increase in mental and psychological disorders.

All the above have emerged as social dilemmas in the western world that are leading to adverse consequences. According to this study, the basic reason for all this is the imbalance of the mutual relationship between 'man' and 'woman', their societal roles and responsibilities.

The concepts of equity and social justice must be practiced for the sake of 'societal equilibrium' and 'justice for all, and impunity for none' must be made applied as a social norm. To redeem the society on solid grounds, a balanced and just ideology of life and practicable measures for its application are required. Furthermore, all these measures must be strictly implemented and no concession should be allowed to anyone, regardless of creed or gender.

## Status of Women in Islamic Sociology

As the dominant religion practiced in Pakistan is Islam, it is very important to understand the issue of violence against women in the context of Islamic Sociology. Any attempt to understand or resolve the said issue in isolation of the religious context will not lead to sustainable solutions in this regard. Islamic Sociology emphasizes the following concepts as the foundations of society according to Islamic sociology, the personal likes or dislikes and the doing or refraining from an act would be purely according to the standards set by the Creator and the actions (Sunnah) of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) [12]. This is not merely an assertion; rather, it is a guiding principle and a 'cornerstone' of an Islamic society that the ultimate authority would be deposition unto the Quran and Sunnah. This study has analyzed the pre and post Islam Arab society for the sake of understanding the concept of Islamic sociology (shah, 1992). Findings reveal that the social structure of the Arab society was reconstructed on the balanced and just teachings of Islam, and the teachings of Qur'an and Sunnah were enforced in such a way that acting upon them became a symbol of one's beliefs (Imaan), love for the Prophet (PBUH) and the law of the land. Islam lays its foundations on the performing of one's duties out of a sense of responsibility of

being answerable before a supreme authority, which compels people to abide by certain rules and boundaries from within (an inner soul or conscience), instead of merely a fear of the police or legislation. As a result of this, such a society emerged where the institution of the 'home' was founded on love and respect instead of violence and aggression (Iglesias, 1998). Only such a man was considered a good husband who acted in a better manner towards his family, respected their feelings and provided for their needs out of a sense of moral duty. The husband was compelled to perform his duties graciously and the wife felt religiously bound to give her husband even more than his due rights, for the attainment of Heaven. The only tensions, if any at all, were that if any negligence be shown in the performance of duties by either spouse, it could result in severe punishment on the Day of Judgment.

- Sovereignty of God,
- Legal authority of Qur'an and Sunnah,
- Gender Equity,
- Pre-defined Roles and Responsibilities of Men and Women in Society,
- Distribution of Labour,
- Specified Family Structure,
- Social Measures Forbidding Violence Against Women.

The Prophet (PBUH), himself presented the highest example in this regard. He proclaimed that, 'The Best amongst you is the one who is the most gentle towards his family, and I myself am the most gentle in behavior towards my family (phd)'.

If however, any dispute amongst the spouses were to emerge, then a very just and balanced system of family laws provided elaborately, would come into action. In case all measures of reconciliation failed, and both husband and wife remained unwilling to live together, as both feared that the boundaries set by God would be broken and they would not be able to perform their duties assigned to them, thence equal opportunities would be provided for them to separate decently, and the matter would either be settled in a 'just' manner amongst themselves, or through the legal system of the Courts.

In the contemporary Islamic societies, it is pertinent to note that marked deviation from these lines is prevalent and the situation presented today is very much like that of the dark ages known as 'jahiliya'. So, all claims of Islamic Sociology may now be considered 'good theory', but the part regarding 'putting it to practice', is missing almost completely.

## Suggested Remedial Measures

The following remedial measures and suggestions to eliminate violence against women in Pakistan have been suggested in accordance with the local context and may be translated as per required for global application:

- Extensive media and social awareness campaigns may be launched for the rectification of 'patriarchal mindsets' and 'male dominance' in Pakistan.

- Electronic, print and social media, magazines, social organizations; all should be motivated to play a positive role towards the improvement of society, instead of being accomplices in inciting negative emotions and creating frustration in the society, which ultimately lead to an increase in instances of violence.
- It must be acknowledged that the very first institution of training and learning of an individual is the 'home'. Therefore, the personality of every individual is developed according to the attitudes of the members of the family and their ideology of upbringing. It thus becomes the foremost duty of the family members and the parents, in particular, to pay utmost attention to their homes and make sure that a conducive environment is being provided for optimal physical and moral development, and they should be carefully yet subtly taught how to differentiate between 'right' and 'wrong'. If only the respect of women in their roles of mother, sister, daughter, wife and as a member of society are reinstated, a large number of social evils would be eliminated and violence against women minimized notably.
- Education system should promote balanced and positive mental approaches, and the government as well as academia should take effective measures in this respect. The whole of the existing curricula should be reassessed and new syllabi should be designed in such a way as to promote better social and cultural attitudes and utmost stress should be laid on promoting ethical and moral norms. The teachers should be trained in such a way that they may become exemplary role models.
- Islamic Sociology emphasizes the need to resolve family disputes amicably, within the family, with the help or intervention of the elders. For this purpose, the elders of the family should acknowledge and perform their roles dutifully for the students and should perform the difficult-yet-essential task of "character-building".
- On a community level, a council of elders may be formed, whose foremost priority would be to 'settle disputes' amongst the residents of that community, at a local-bodies govt. level. An elected reconciliatory body could play an effective role in this regard, as it would be better informed of the circumstances of the local people and their issues and disputes may be amicably resolved in out-of-courts settlements before approaching the law-enforcing authorities.
- The most important aspect that needs immediate attention is that "social insensitivity" must be removed. If injustice is inflicted upon anyone, anywhere, societal members must not remain silent observers and bystanders. The members of a family, elders of a household, neighbor's, local residents, influential people, elected representatives, social organizations and political parties----all must lay social, moral and even physical pressure and 'act' to actually stop the wrong-doer and call his attention towards his misconduct and should try their utmost to redeem him. This has worked in the past, so even today, these social pressures may control many social evils to some extent. Even religion does not allow us to tolerate injustices silently. On the contrary, it enjoins upon us to remove these injustices, per force, to whatever extent possible. If, even after all the efforts made in this respect, domestic violence is still not controlled, then the relevant legal authorities and courts may be called upon. More effective and improved legislation may also be done in this respect. Newly introduced legislations regarding domestic violence and harassment at workplaces are good initiatives in this regard, but it remains to be researched whether these acts are producing the desired results or not.
- Justice delayed is justice denied!
- If the shortcomings and unjust practices are not controlled in a society, and no efforts are made for redemption, then it would result in gradual degradation and degeneration of societal norms, and could eventually lead to extreme conditions. Therefore, for the sake of redemption of a society on a large scale, effective legal measures must be created amongst the masses regards these social vices and the public must be motivated to fulfill their responsibilities and be deeply concerned over issues. The government should also realize its duties and act accordingly.
- The truth of the matter is that instead of blindly patronizing and following the west it is high time that we learn a lesson from the horrific situation faced by the west today. Treading upon the same faltering grounds that have led the west towards its current dilemma, will only lead towards similar outcomes.
- Alongside a focus on law-making, stress needs to be laid towards defining the true role of men and women in society.
- In order to control the ever-increasing trends of violence against women and for the sake of strengthening the family institution, it is strongly recommended that the roles of men and women should be chalked out and maintained in a balanced way according to the "natural distribution" assigned by the 'nature'. The women should give top-most priority to their 'home' and the 'character-building' of their off springs. On the one hand, proper legislation must be done, but along with it, on the other hand, immodesty and obscenity must also be discouraged and diminished, instead of being promoted magnanimously.
- Women should not be reduced to being presented or portrayed merely as 'objects of desire', as this will automatically incite and evoke negative desires and make them vulnerable to oppression. No amounts of legislation will prove useful until and unless the sources of frustration are dismantled.

## Conclusion

'Violence' per se, is not just an isolated act, it is a 'mindset', a 'culture'; and it must be dealt with as such. Combating violence against women demands systematic, coordinated and sustained efforts. With the given law situation, there is a dire need to take steps that protect and promote basic human rights and women rights in Pakistan. A strict implementation of International protocols and treaties; along with allocating a substantive amount for helping out the victimized women is

an urgent need. The constitution of Pakistan states that each person has the right to liberty and safety in accordance to law; and taking legal aid is a fundamental right for the protection of life. This clause must be properly implemented in the perspective of women victims of violence. A free legal aid should also be provided at the district level. Women Protection centers should be established and awareness campaigns for the rights of women much be launched. Since domestic violence against women has deep cultural and historical roots, it is asserted that broad scale social overhauling is required and appropriate interventions may be initiated.

This study concludes that the elimination of VAW in Pakistan is possible by adopting the natural, social and moral codes of conduct, provided by the constitutional framework of the country. These will prove to be the basis of respect for women and a strong family institution will emerge as a result, which will put an end to violence against women, or at least restrict it to minimal proportions!

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