

Causes of Violence Against Women in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa

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Abstract

Violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon as it affects their lives in socio-economic and other spheres of life. This violence is observable on the part of both close and distant people, causing physical, psychological, social and emotional discomforts to them. Sometimes, it cuts across cultural and religious barriers leading to reduce women's access to their due rights.

In general, violence includes rape, gang rape, kidnapping, torture, honour killing, handing over of females to settle down disputes in the form of swara/vanni marriage, no free choice of marriage, dowry death, stove burning, burying alive, public humiliation by stripping the women naked in public, parading through the streets to take revenge from the family, snatching of children, custodial violence, denial of property, sexual harassment, trafficking for forced labour and sex, forced and child marriage, acid throwing, domestic violence, teasing in streets, obscene phone calls and other different kinds of sexual abuse in conflict situation. The present study reveals the existence of psychological worries, socio-economic exploitation and physical torture in the target area.

It is pertinent to mention that women in Pakhtun society are becoming violent in view of changes to their economic, employment, educational, and political status.

Keywords

Violence, Swara/Vanni, Marriage, Dowry Death and Changing Women's Behavior.

Introduction

The United Nations (2001) define violence against women as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

According to Radhika Coomaraswamy (2005) that violence against women pass through their life cycle. Before birth woman suffers from selective sex abortion, at infancy from female infanticide, as young girl from incest and son preference, at puberty from sexual abuse or trafficking, as young woman from rape, harassment and acid attacks, as wife from domestic violence and honour killing and as widow from self-sacrifice and deprivation from property and dignity.

Battering is an unreported crime, being a family violence and hence a private affair between husband and wife.

Tongr (1984) reported four types of women battering.

Physical battering: includes aggressive behavior such as punching, kicking, strangling and burning. Sexual battering: includes forced sexual intercourse with brutality or the threat of violence. Psychological battering: refers to threat to self-esteem of woman. Destruction of property and personal items of the victim. Abuser serves this as a warning to the victim that she may be the next target of violence. Lenore, E Walker (1984) battered women suffer from a state known as “battered women syndrome”.

The Marxist (1970) framework of bourgeois and proletariat also fits well with the subject of “violence in family”. To Marxists, the bourgeois and proletariat situations may be exchangeable with man and woman in the family. Engles (1970) clearly stated that the husband is the bourgeois in the family and the wife the proletariat. Relationship between the husband and wife is both hostile and friendly. Violence is regularly found in the family.

Gelles (1974) research focused on the violence in the family, concentrated on abusive relationships within the family, including violence between brothers and sisters, parental violence towards younger children and teenagers, the physical abuse and neglect of the elderly, courtship violence and violence between husband and wife. Many factors are responsible for violence in the family. Suzanne, K Steinmetz. (1977-78) research theme known as “Family violence perspective” accounted various factors such as employment, poverty, cultural norms which promote violence in the family.

Usha Sharma (2003) many forms of violence are deeply rooted in the patriarchal, feudal, and tribal systems. Walby (1990) defines “patriarchy a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women”. Manish Bahl (2007) also supports this view by saying that patriarchy is associated with subordination and oppression of women. Fazli Hamid (2010) adds his view by saying that drug addiction, impotency (husband-wife), insanity, (husband-wife), premarital and extra marital sexual relations, more children, no children, no son and more daughters, infertility of wife, social differentiation (class/caste) are the major causes of family violence. George Alfaro (1978) held personality trait responsible for violence in the family.

Family violence is deeply associated with social stratification (class system). Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1958) maintain that women belonging to lower class are at high risk of physical violence, which is attributed to “their way of life”. Use of physical violence in the lower class has been attributed to what Lewis calls “the culture of poverty”.

Majority of the researchers have focused on male's aggression in the family. Neil Websdale (1998) has recognized a change in the family violence since long that

women have become more aggressive. R. Gelles (1974) analysis, shows that the focus is now on family violence rather than on male violence, within family the wives commit a significant amount of violence towards husbands.

The Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences survey in 2002 revealed that* over 90% of married women were kicked, slapped, beaten or sexually abused when their husbands were not satisfied by their cooking, cleaning, and failure to bear a child, or had given birth to a daughter instead of a son. Wife battering, child abuse, child neglect, sexual abuse, are the main forms of family violence.

Methodology

This study was carried out in five districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Peshawar, Charsadda, Mardan, Swabi and Nowshera. Primary data was collected from 500 male and female respondents in the sampled areas with equal number through interview schedule whereas secondary data include libraries, survey reports and organizational reports. Data was analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The researcher herself approached the respondents of both gender in the sampled areas. Somewhere prior approval of the respondents was sought.

The study parameters included violence against women in rural and urban areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and reasons of violence such as unawareness of rights, uneducated male members, strict attitude of male members, and financial issues etc.

Results and Discussion

The data, collected from respondents of both gender, is analyzed as per the following details:

Table.I: Violence Against Women at Family Level

Area	<i>f</i>	VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	
		Occurred	Did not Occurred
Rural	125 (50%)	54 (21.6%)	71 (28.4%)
Urban	125 (50%)	57 (22.8%)	68 (27.2%)
Total	250 (100%)	111 (44.4%)	139 (55.6%)

Source: Field Survey

*Media briefing: Violence against women in Pakistan, *Amnesty International's Report*. 17 April 2002.p2.

The data shows that majority of the female respondents i.e 55.6% reported no violence prevailed in their family while 44.4% respondents confirmed violence in their families, in the form of physical abuse (torture), wife beating, slapping, hitting, strangling, defaming young girls, cruelties on married women, harassment and disgracing the modesty of women.

Table II: Types of Violence in Family.

Area	<i>f</i>	TYPES OF VIOLENCE				
		Physical	Mental	Verbal	All These	no violence
Rural	125 (50%)	10 (4.0%)	5 (2.0%)	22 (8.8%)	17 (6.8%)	71 (28.4%)
Urban	125 (50%)	9 (3.6%)	17 (6.8%)	24 (9.6%)	7 (2.8%)	68 (27.2%)
Total	250 (100%)	19 (7.6%)	22 (8.8%)	46 (18.4%)	24 (9.6%)	139 (55.6%)

Source: Field Survey

Table II indicates that 8.8% females reported mental abuse in their families in the form son's preference over daughter, withholding love, sympathy, misunderstanding with wives and children, exclusion of women in decision making process, dowry abuse, refusal to grant women their share in parental property, non-recognition of women as natural guardians of children, children marriages forcing girls to accept arranged marriages, refusal to enter into employment, *peghor* (taunt), *toor* (shame), *tarborwali* (cousin's rivalry). 18.4% respondents asserted that violence prevailed in their families in the form of verbal abuse, emotional and psychological abuse between the family members, particularly husband and wife. These may also include denial of sex and food, access to money, restraints of normal activities and threats, mostly in slums and amongst working class. Reasons for physical and psychological violence against women are not automatically activated but there are internal and external forces. A single factor or a combination of manifold factors may explain the domestic violence or wife abuse for which the term "battering" is also used. Battering refers to physical assault through actions such as hitting, punching, slapping, kicking, pushing, chocking, shaking, hair pulling and arm twisting between a man and woman.

Table III: Reasons of Violence Against Women

Area	<i>f</i>	TYPES OF VIOLENCE						
		Unawareness of Rights	Uneducated Male Members	Violent Attitude of Male	Household ssues	Family Interference	Financial Issues	Not Applicable
Rural	125 (50%)	16 (6.4%)	14 (5.6%)	13 (5.2%)	5 (2.0%)	3 (1.2%)	3 (3.2%)	71 (28.4%)
Urban	125 (50%)	8 (3.2%)	5 (2.0%)	29 (11.6%)	7 (2.8%)	6 (2.4%)	2 (8.0%)	68 (27.2%)
Total	250 (100%)	24 (9.6%)	19 (7.6%)	42 (16.8%)	12 (4.8%)	9 (3.6%)	5 (2.0%)	139 (55.6%)

Source: Field Survey

The data shows that 16.8% female respondent's blamed their husbands for their violent attitude, and hatred against them. Their husbands threatened them of terrible consequences, if they did not act according to their wishes. The wives became fearful and depressed mentally. Another significant factor of domestic violence was "unawareness of women" about their legal rights.

Another major social factor activating violence was illiteracy of husbands.(uneducated males). 7.6% women indicated that lesser education (or illiteracy), a husband has and more likely be itself to approve or support violence. Illiteracy or low level of education does not cause violence but it worsens the frustration. Education on the other hand provides option for resolving family tension. There is a progressive decrease in the percentage of the victims in the educated families.

3.6% women indicated "family interference" as the major factors for violence in their family. Family members such as mother/sister-in law and family friends are supporting the husbands against the victims. The private affair between the husband and wife becomes public affairs. Their interference aggravates the situation as the woman feels more humiliated for letting her down by the husband in the presence of others. The woman develops feelings of powerlessness and helplessness because she does not get any support from anyone, but continue to suffer humiliation in silence. Victims are likely to react sharply even to the mildest form of abuse in the presence of children and in laws (outsiders). In case of children, the victims feel that their authority over children has been eroded (damaged). 2% women asserted that violence is the product of low income, in a situation, where wife is completely dependent on the husband who physically abuses her.

Table IV Violence Against Women Reduced in Families.

Area	<i>f</i>	VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REDUCED IN FAMILIES	
		Violence Reduced	Violence Did Not Reduced
Rural	125 (50%)	110 (44.0%)	15 (6.0%)
Urban	125 (50%)	105 (42.0%)	20 (8.0%)
Total	250 (100%)	215 (86.0%)	35 (14.0%)

Source: Field Survey

Table IV shows that husband is completely economically dependent upon his wife, the husband resorts to violence as the last recourse as he cannot afford to force his wife to leave the house or terminate marriage. 86.0% females reported a decline in the prevalence of domestic violence, due to increase in opportunities for education, employment, enhancement of constitutional and legal status of women, awareness of violence against women, media, and enactments of statutory laws for protection against harassment of women and disintegration of joint families.

Cases of domestic violence are not reported to the police due to the socio-cultural constraints. Domestic violence is treated as private affair. Family problem between husband and wife is rarely considered a crime unless it takes an extreme form of violence. The code of honour of the society also condemns a battered wife, as she has failed to fulfill her conjugal and household responsibilities.

The data shows that the incidents of domestic violence have reduced due to certain factors. 86% respondents reported a decline in the cases of violence, whereas 14% denied. Women experiencing violence also reported higher level of depression, anxiety and somatic disorders. Such women might commit suicide, due to shame.

Table V: Reasons for Reduction of Violence Against Women.

Area	<i>f</i>	Reasons for Reduction of Violence Against Women								
		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	NA
Rural	125 (50%)	46 (18.4%)	11 (4.4%)	31 (12.4%)	8 (3.2%)	7 (2.8%)	2 (0.8%)	2 (0.8%)	3 (1.2%)	15 (6.0%)
Urban	125 (50%)	45 (18.0%)	8 (3.2%)	26 (10.4%)	12 (4.8%)	7 (2.8%)	2 (0.8%)	1 (0.4%)	4 (1.6%)	20 (8.0%)
Total	250 (100%)	91 (36.4%)	19 (7.6%)	57 (22.8%)	20 (8.0%)	14 (5.6%)	4 (1.6%)	3 (1.2%)	7 (2.8%)	35 (14.0%)

Source: Field Survey

- a = due to financial position
 b = due to dowry
 c = due to family support
 d = employment
 e = awareness of people
 f = education of people
 g = knowledge and wisdom of the people
 h = all Reasons
 Na = not applicable

Table V explains various factors which minimize the incidence of violence. Financial condition of the females is highlighted by 36.4% of the respondents, family support by 22.8%, employment of both male and females by 8.0%, dowry by 7.6%.

The study further shows that education is also the best possible means of achieving greater equality in society and raising the status of women. Education system is a power of authority of social privilege as a promoter of knowledge. Education and employment are closely related. Education has created awareness about the equality of men and women. It has made people more conscious about women's rights, their identity and their place in society. Highly educated girls demand for equal rights and therefore expect equal degree of respect from their husbands. 5.6% of the respondents accepted that they have been made aware about their rights by the NGO and media (particularly electronic media). The government's efforts to create awareness were less effective. The work under taken by NGOs and such strategies in collaboration with civil society can go a long way in making women aware of their legal rights.

Conclusion

Violence still persists mostly physical resulting from violent behaviour of husband but however there is a decline in the incidence of violence due to enhancement of educational, employment, and economic power of the females.

Violence against women is a common practice which is always present at different level in the form of physical, mental, and verbal, while some female denied violence in their families due to which they face no mental stress.

Some female reported various reasons due to which violence against women occur as violent behaviour of husband, illiteracy of husband, family member's interference, and financial issues.

Recommendations

- The Federal and Provincial government should increase the violence victim support centres.
- To change the men's negative attitude about women, their contribution to health, education, political, economic, religious and social spheres must be appreciated.
- The practice of women's mock marriage to the Holy Quran should be eliminated from the society.
- To declare acid throwing, a criminal act and propose death penalty for the culprit.
- The number of victims shelter crisis centers should be increased as the present number can not accommodates the large number of violence victims.
- There should be regular programmes on radio and television, regarding women issues and problems.
- The government should introduce literature, concerning civic etiquettes and dignity of women in the schools, especially at secondary level which will create awareness in the new generation.
- Gender sensitization training should be provided to law enforcement agencies and judicial personnel to enable them, to address complaints of all cases including violence in the name of honour.
- Awareness programmes should be conducted for both women and men. It should be done by governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

- There should be religious definitions of the basic rights of women like autonomy and freedom in Pakistan on federal level and the government needs to evaluate all of the basic rights of women.
- To arouse social consciousness by the NGOs and political parties regarding evils of child marriage, forced marriage, dowry and bride price which are responsible for the miseries of women respectively for the whole life. Neither give nor take (dowry) bride price should be the policy.
- To expand the violence victim support service by the state, the provincial government, NGOs, civil society, and women activities should be linked

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