



## Extant Literature Review on Understanding of Domestic Violence against Women in Rural Sindh, Pakistan

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**Abstract:** *This paper presents detailed critiques of existing literature and debate on crucial issues of domestic violence against women in Rural Sindh, Pakistan. Primarily, definitions, causes, consequences, and prevention of domestic violence, as well as sociological and feminist theoretical framework perspectives, are discussed profoundly. Discussions and analyses of past materials, meanings, nature, and scope of studies on domestic violence worldwide and in Sindh, Pakistan, backgrounds are discussed. Patriarchy, masculinity, and their relation to domestic violence are briefly elaborated. The international perspective on domestic violence, ideology and concept of patriarchy, men and masculinity connecting to the situations of marriage, gender relations, roles, legal and religious perspective in Pakistan about domestic violence in Sindh, and previously reported incidence is also reviewed. Likewise, relevant literature and its review on the topic of past studies, connecting with the present study, have also been established with relevant theories, which have overlapping effects on domestic violence. Literature review sections of papers define that there is not any single theory or reason; rather, there are multiple socio-economic, psychological, and feminist viewpoints which allow perpetrators to commit domestic violence against women in rural Sindh, Pakistan.*

**Key Words:** Domestic Violence, Patriarchy, Masculinity, Review, Sindh, Pakistan

### Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to review and analyze the literature related to domestic violence against women in Sindh, Pakistan. Although there is a high percentage of prevalence of domestic violence in rural areas of Sindh, there is less data and literature review found on it. Therefore, literature reviews from different sources have been discussed and analyzed in this regard. The purpose of a review of literature is to give easy and ready access to references to the readers' topics, with high-quality articles, material, and theories in one report. Because literature is the most powerful tool and source for disseminating knowledge and raising awareness among researchers, this is all about researchers understanding critical analyses of literature to make new social policy documents, laws or constitutions of country and reforms in existing social, cultural laws, norms and religion-based narratives about domestic violence taking place in the particular society. So, to understand how domestic violence is harmful, from a socio-psychological, physical, and economic point of view, that costs severely on the individual, community, societies, and countries as well. To lessen this burden from society, generally and specifically for women, this needs thoughtfulness to create a livable and peaceful society for both genders.

### Literature Review on Violence Against Women

United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women 1993. In Article 1, the Declaration states that:

“For the purposes of this Declaration, the term "violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering

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to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”.

In Article 2 of the Declaration, it is stated that Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not limited to, the following:

“Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation.”

World Health Organization (2016:13) defines “violence against wives” as “any behaviour perpetrated by the husbands against the wives that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to wives”.

According to the World Bank (2011), about 63.0% of the Pakistani population lives in rural areas of Pakistan. Zakar et al. (2015) state in their study entitled "Domestic Violence Against Rural Women in Pakistan: An Issue of Health and Human Rights" that historically, in rural areas, patriarchal norms and tendencies of hegemonic masculinity are stronger than in urban centres. Normally, in rural cultures, rural women are the custodians of family honour and are treated as subordinate to men (Critelli, 2010). Besides, men consider that women are supposed to be obedient to their men (Zakar et al., 2012). In rural areas, there is societal acceptance of domestic violence against women, which appears to be comparatively higher, mostly in cases of a 'woman's disobedience', 'suspected adultery', or 'showing disrespect' to her in-laws (Bogal et al., 1990). Women living in rural areas are at increased risk of domestic violence than their urban counterparts (Koenig et al., 2003; Krishnan et al., 2001). Chandio (2008) stated that from January 2005 to April 2008, 775 cases of domestic violence and harassment have been reported in the Sindh province. Breaking it down into districts, it was found that Karachi, the largest city of Sindh, recorded the second highest number of domestic violence cases, at 141. This can be compared with the district of Dadu, which has a 20 times lesser population than Karachi but which has the highest number of domestic violence cases reported, at 146. The Aurat Foundation shared the data under its "policy and data monitoring project" that "women face violence in every third household of Pakistan in the lower, middle and upper-class families, but it goes unreported at all levels and in poor households' domestic violence is not generally considered as a form of violence".

Ali et al. (2011), in a study entitled "Intimate Partner Violence in Urban Pakistan: Prevalence, frequency, and risk factors", did a cross-sectional community-based survey using the structured questionnaire that was developed by the World Health Organization for research on violence against women. This study was community-based and was conducted amongst married women who were living in low and middle-income areas of Karachi. The study aimed to "investigate the frequency and prevalence of physical and sexual violence and psychological abuse perpetrated by husbands against their wives, and any associated socio-demographic risk factors". The result of this study shows that out of the 759 women surveyed, 57.6% reported a lifetime experience of physical violence, 54.2% reported severe occurrences of physical violence, and 56.3% reported a past-year experience of physical violence. In the case of sexual violence, the respective figures for lifetime and past-year pervasiveness were recorded as 54.5% and 53.4%. In the case of psychological violence, the figures were 83.6% and 81.8%, respectively. In most cases, violence was experienced as repeated acts, sometimes more than three times in the same year. However, in this study, socio-demographics and women belonging to lower and middle-income groups were investigated regarding the kinds of domestic violence experienced by the women in urban areas of Karachi. Whereas, in this study, the result shows that in urban areas of Karachi Sindh, the low- and middle-income strata of married women face domestic violence by their husbands repeatedly. Moreover, socio-demographic factors such as age and race were also identified as one of the contributing factors to the incidence of domestic violence. However, the women who had the least resources were most affected.

Bhatti et al. (2012) argue that in Pakistan, there are some factors which are associated with domestic violence, such as a dominant social structure, lack of education, false beliefs, imbalanced empowerment issues amongst males and females, lack of support from the government, low-economic status of women, and lack of awareness about women's rights. Aurat Foundation (2013) described that in Pakistan, 7516 different types of violence against women cases were reported, and Sindh had the second highest occurrence of reported violence against women cases. Out of the 7516, the violence against women cases

for Sindh was reported at 1628 (22%). For domestic violence cases, Sindh recorded 230 cases, which is 14% of the overall domestic violence cases in Pakistan. Bhagwandas (2014) states that domestic violence against women is an issue of great concern in Pakistan, particularly in Sindh. It is reported that between July and September 2014, 421 cases of violence against women in general have been reported in Sindh. Many cases in the rural and urban areas still go unreported; thus, the figures for them are not available in any government or non-government sectors, raising the issue of the entire number of reported cases. First information reports (FIRs) by police were lodged for only 66 cases, and the rest of the incidents were not attended to at any level. Out of 534 women who were victims in the reported cases, 59% were married, indicating that they may have been experiencing domestic violence.

Another study conducted by Abdullah et al. (2015) entitled "Comparative study of physical violence on women in the rural and urban area of Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK) consists of a household level survey of 600 women, 300 each from rural and urban areas. Married women of age 15–61 years and above were interviewed through a well-structured quantitative questionnaire. The study found that in Muzaffarabad, the patriarchal system is dominant in both rural and urban cultures, which exposes women to gender bias. The education level is an important factor in the pervasiveness of domestic violence. A lower level of education in rural areas results in men justifying committing physical violence against their spouses. The study concluded that higher-educated people were less violent towards their spouses as compared to those having lower educational levels. It should be noted that research on domestic violence in Sindh has mostly been conducted in the urban areas such as in Karachi and very much less so in the rural areas.

## **Theoretical Framework and Debates on Domestic Violence**

A mixture of theories and approaches have been adapted from feminists' literature on gender and violence perspectives, which have provided the general theoretical framework for this research. The selection of different theoretical approaches employed in this study establishes that no single viewpoint propositions completely offer satisfying answers to the research questions and problems; each of them has its explicit risks and blind spots as well (Kuhlmann & Babitsch, 2002). Based on a survey of the literature, studies on domestic violence began only in the late 1960s and early 1970s using, particularly, a sociological framework. Currently, however, studies and the resulting theory building on the issue can be found more widely. In the 1970s, a few sociologists in the United States of America began exploring the issue of domestic violence. Although intimate partner violence was first broadly recognized as a social problem in the year 1970's, it was treated at first as a private matter inside the family and was not a matter of concern and attention for the wider society (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Gelles, 1983). Since the shift of the problem, this has brought upon the attentions of scholars and public. The studies started to develop from different theoretical perspectives, such as sociological, health and feminist perspectives. Family violence theories developed in the sociological field and expanded to include multiple bio-psycho and social theories (Lawson, 2012). Sociological theories of family violence emphasize on the fact that domestic violence apart from family life issue (for example, family conflict) and moves away from the idea that it is a pathological issue where the perpetrators are seen as having some kind of disease (Gelles & Straus, 1979, p. 549).

## **Sociological Perspectives: Debates over theories of Domestic Violence**

Sociological theories allow one to bring about complexity and study the various social categories that affect the research respondents' perceptions and experiences. Hence, in this section, some sociological theories are discussed briefly to understand domestic violence and the subjective experience of men about domestic violence. These theories and perceptions are seen to be reflective of the interchange of factors influencing men's involvement, understanding, and experiences towards domestic violence at the individual, group, community, and structural levels. The following section defines and describes critical impressions and themes in those theories and viewpoints.

A 'Resource Theory' was proposed by Goode (1971) and Allen and Straus (1979) to understand family violence. Resource theory suggests that decision-making power is a principle of systematizing ideas that value the resources that every person takes into the relationship. Such resources may include property, prestige, money, and contacts, either organizational or material. Resource theory argues that male assault



against an intimate partner because of men's need to achieve power and control in a situation of limited resources. In a situation where basic means (for example, food, money, education opportunities and work) are scarce, in order to obtain priorities to those means or to gain a position of leadership in the family, men may use violence against female family members (Gelles, 2007). Men's need for control over resources may lead to control and domination over women and resultantly lead to domestic violence (cited in Goode, 1971). Men also use violence to control the external resources of women (for example, women's work and education) (Loue, 2001, p. 32). The gendered and unequal distribution of resources and wealth in society also influences the prolonged situation of domestic violence since women who lack access to these resources become highly dependent upon their abusive husbands and are not able to leave abusive relationships (Yount, 2005). Briefly, "this theory suggests that a relationship between power and violence only under certain circumstances can be maintained using resources other than violence. In short, the relationship between power and marital violence is dependent on what resources other than violence are available" (Allen & Straus, 1979, p. 189).

The theory of 'Marital power' was theorized by Cromwell and Olson (1975). In this theory, there is a supposition that power descends in three areas: power bases, power processes and power outcomes. Power bases include the assets and resources that offer the basis for just one partner's domination around another. Power processes include the interactional techniques that an individual uses to get control. Power outcomes include who truly makes the decision. According to this specific theory, individuals' partners who lack power could be more likely being physically punished. In addition, marital power includes men's power and patriarchy, and to certain extent, it may cause to domestic violence, but not in every community or society where there is fully women empowerment in social system of society (Loue, 2001, p. 33).

### Feminist Theories: Patriarchy, Masculinity and Domestic Violence

In this section some feminist theories are discussed briefly to explain how the dominant positions of men in society can be connected to the pervasiveness of domestic violence and to understand domestic violence in depth. These theories and perceptions are seen to be considerate factors which influence men's understanding, and their experiences about domestic violence. Feminist theory on domestic violence is concerned with the issue of power and gender inequality in intimate relationships. Feminists criticize society as allowing men to behave in a dominant and aggressive way towards women. This leads to men's use of aggression in marital relationships to demonstrate their power and dominance and to control women's behaviour that they think deviates from what they want (Pence & Paymar, 1993). Thus, feminist theories in which gender inequality and power are defined as causes and related to domestic violence (Amaral, 2011).

Rashid et al. (2012) argue that domestic violence against women is universal, and it differs only in scope from one society to another as the victim is always female and the male is the perpetrator. This is always perpetrated by any family or group member towards females at home, which is a dangerous place for females. Chaudhuri and Yingling (2014) argued that women's vulnerability towards violence and their limitation in seeking help in domestic violence cases are closely related to patriarchal restrictions. In South Asia, upon marriage, brides are normally required to settle in with the extended families of their husbands, who are usually headed by their new fathers-in-law. In these extended family situations, the brides become subordinate to all men and senior women.

Sultana (2012) defines 'patriarchy' to literally mean "the rule of the father or of the 'patriarch'. Originally, it was used to describe a specific type of 'male-dominated family' – the large household of the patriarch, which included women, junior men, children, slaves, and domestic servants all under the rule of this dominant male". Currently, this is more used generally, "to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways" (Bhasin, 2006, p. 3).

Walby (1989:15) explains that patriarchy has a historical usage, which is to describe "a system of government in which men ruled societies through their positions as the heads of households". Two chief forms of patriarchy are discussed, such as 'public' and 'private patriarchy'. "Private patriarchy", apart from the household, is based on the relative exclusion of women from arenas of social life, with patriarchs appropriating women's service individually and directly in the apparently private services of home. Public



patriarchy does not exclude the women from certain sites rather than subordinate's women in all of them, and in these forms of patriarchy women take part collectively rather than individually" (p.24). Moreover, husbands in marriage and household relations are also associated with the patriarchal production of women's labour. Women are assigned to do household work for the husband and his/her family as well. In return, she is not rewarded or paid for such work production, which is given to her by her husband, and sometimes she is given maintenance. This work is part of marriage relations between husband and wife. The product of the wife's labour power is of herself, her husband, and her children. The husband is able to take all his labour production because he has possession of that labour power, and thus, he can sell it as if it were his own (Walby,1986).

Dobash and Dobash (1979), wrote "stated three basic doctrines about patriarchy and violence against women. Firstly, wife beating is an organized practice of domination by males in marriage, and he wants social control of women. Secondly, wife beating is performed by the males who consider that patriarchy is truly correct and consider it their right to beat the women. Thirdly, the perpetration of violence is necessary to maintain male domination, and it is okay in society. Therefore, the assumed role of chauvinism within the spouse is clear in this regard. The use of physical force and physical assault by men against women in the positions of wives is to not only control and oppresses the women but as a clear manifestation of the "patriarchal domination".

Anderson and Umberson (2001) stated that in the era of 1970, when feminist scholars and activists brought this issue of domestic violence to the public eye, the issue became familiar in the press, academia, and other related bodies to make visible the patriarchy and male domination over women through battering and violence. Historically, misogyny and gender inequality have remained in various fields of life. Thus, the patriarchy, which is developed or promoted, in which they (males) want the subordinate position of women even if they have to use violence in the end. There is a need to modify and contest domestic violence through understanding the gender roles and violence to struggle against the domestic violence which exists today in the name of patriarchy. The Second Wave of Feminism, beginning in the 1960s and in the 1970s, started to argue about gender inequality, misogyny, and its impact on both the public and private lives of women. Wilson (2000) discusses that 'patriarchy' is a fundamental thought of the second-wave feminists, as Walby (1990:20) describes, "a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women".

Schuler et al. (1996) discussed that domestic violence against women is perpetrated at home, and this is one of the elements of a system to subordinate women. Social norms are established in the home that define and explain the women's position and guide their conduct. It is found that the patriarchal system in Bangladesh has made women socially and economically dependent on men. Moreover, in gender roles, women's roles are limited within the household and men has high freedom in this regard to play his role within and outside home. The patriarchal system has isolated women, more traditional, Muslim families are secluded to protect and maintain their honour, and women are confined within homes. In such scenarios, men are the providers and protectors of women, and they control the organizing and relations within and outside the home. Women are economic dependent on men and many women have no independent source of income. Hunnicutt (2009) argues that violence against women is perpetrated to show control, power, and dominance, which are key elements in the notion or idea supported by patriarchy. It always secures the issue of violence against women in social circumstances rather than individual capacity or ascriptions. The patriarchal system consists of webs of power and cultural dynamics that we need to understand violence against women. Connell (2009:76) argued that the idea of men as a dominant "sex class" is pervasive worldwide. Hence, the analysis about the power and patriarchy, the abuse and violence show relevance to the abuse of women at home.

Itulua-Abumere (2013:1) defines masculinity as consisting of "those behaviors, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine". Thus, masculinity may exist in two forms: positive attributes, where they have offered some means of identity signification for males and negative ones, where they are not the 'other' (feminine characteristics). The understanding of the perspectives of rural men about masculinity and the discussion about the persistent ideology of patriarchy in rural society, considering Dobash and Dobash (1979) and other similar scholars' discourses on the influences of society's



patriarchal constructs on the pervasiveness of domestic violence. The masculine characteristics and patriarchal mindset of men reflect the societal depiction in detail of how they physically and socially consider and value women.

Ahmad and Baig (2015) argue that Pakistani men define masculine attributes as physical strength, power, aggression bravery, emotional strength, beating, violence, warrior ship, wrestling and fighting but these are not natural, rather, they are constructions by the people, community, and society. Bravery and aggressiveness are the most identifiable masculine characteristics among different cultures in Pakistan. In the case of rural Sindh, Pakistan, masculinity is strongly associated with harsh and violent behaviour. These attributes are in the category of what is called hyper-masculinity which is a psychological term used for the exaggeration of male stereotypical behaviour, like stressing on physical strength, aggression, and sexuality. Seymour (2009) states that the idea of masculinity and gendered power has a very close link with the pervasiveness of violence against women. The hyper-masculine attributes, such as expressed by the men of rural Sindh can be linked to domestic violence because they promote physical and sexual aggression towards people who are seen as less powerful, particularly women. Because of these hypermasculine views of the men of Sindh, there are likely to be pervasive and severe cases of domestic violence that endanger women in rural communities. In Sindh's culture, masculinity denotes 'Maradangi' (Manhood), and rural men take its twofold meanings: "physical and behavioural characteristics", which define a real and masculine man, and second is "sexual characteristics and behaviour of men". In the first instance of the meaning, the concept of maleness, machismo, manliness and masculinity and different perceptions, beliefs, and notions about characteristics and features of a man (biological and non-biological) are deeply described by rural men of Sindh.

Rural men generally give these characteristics to describe a typical man who is brave, strong, wrangler, unemotional, aggressive or someone who is bold enough to pick a fight. Secondly "sexual characteristics of men were sexual potent and having sexual power. Men consider these characteristics very much necessary to adopt such attributes to survive in rural cultures and communities of Sindh (Buriro, 2020).

## Conclusion

In this review paper, detailed reviews, definitions, and meanings of domestic violence discover that in rural areas of Pakistan relating to Sindh, societal acceptance of domestic violence against women is found substantially. The world view about domestic violence in rural culture is different who consider the perpetration of domestic violence as a masculine and routine matter, which appears to be comparatively higher, mostly in cases of a 'woman's disobedience' in terms of cooking, house chores, 'suspected adultery' and 'showing disrespect' to her in-laws. Women living in rural areas are at increased risk of domestic violence than their urban counterparts of Sindh Pakistan. This is because they are comparatively weaker in socio-economic positions, have lower literacy rates, and have lower levels of awareness about their legal and social rights as well. In addition, due to structural weaknesses, rural women lack capacity-building opportunities and proper access to economic resources, and thus, they are generally dependent on men for their survival and livelihood. Women in rural areas of Pakistan are usually physically kept inaccessible and isolated from the rest of society; thus, if they were to become victims of domestic violence, they would lack family, community and societal support and access to legal services and interventions as well. Moreover, patriarchy, masculinity (hyper and toxic masculinity), (hegemonic masculinity) and their relation to domestic violence are found copious.

However, situations of domestic violence in Pakistan, marriage and gender relations, gender roles, legal and religious perspective, in Pakistan Sindh, are the major examples about domestic violence. Besides, the relevant literature on this topic of past studies also indicates that physical and psychological violence and economic abuse are found abundant in rural settings of Sindh, Pakistan. This hinders women's impediment towards progress and success in everyday life and in the development of their individual existence and their positive contribution to social and economic aspects of lifespan from community to country level.

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