

Violence Against Women in Pakistan: A Case Study of Wife Battering in Rural Gujrat, Pakistan

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Abstract: The present study aims at understanding the extent and nature of wife battering in rural Gujrat. Generally patriarchy is more dominant in rural Punjab as compared to urban settings. Due to the influence of patriarchy most of the women are excluded from mainstream decision-making process and are treated as chattel. Among other reasons: low income, low levels of education, husbands' behavior, family tradition to thrash wives and consider them as subordinates, are more glaring. For present study 100 battered wives were sampled from 10 villages of Tehsil Gujrat for elaborate research. The results mentioned below showed a positive relation between: male dominance, intrusions by in-laws and economic conditions of the household; with the severity of wife battering. The analysis showed the intensity of wife battering among rural families. Almost all sampled women were battered by their spouses. As a consequence, all these battered wives look forward to an opportunity, to extricate themselves from their marriage contracts through divorce.

Key words: Domestic violence • Wife battering • Male dominance • Rural Gujrat • Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Recently many social scientists have paid their attention towards the issue of violence against women, not only in the developed but also in the developing world. Feminist movements for the last three centuries have been focusing on the repressive conditions being faced by women across the world but the condition of the women is still far from satisfactory and cries out for amelioration. Recently feminist scholars have concentrated on strategies to safeguard women from domestic violence. Although, technological advancement, globalization, industrialization, internationalization of media and efforts made by international institutions, including international non-governmental organizations have created some space for women to compete on equal footing but the situation is unfortunately still much unsatisfactory for those women who are living in under-developed nations. On the other hand there are few international humanitarian organizations, which are working to eliminate this violence against them. The cumulative and even concerted efforts by struggling parties have been borne little fruit and the situation still remains unpalatable and oppressive. This brutal violence has different forms and multi-lateral dimensions. It varies from society to society in its magnitude and intensity.

Wife battering is one of the major issues and practices in violence against women. According to Heise [1] violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon, transcending cultural, geographic, religious, social and economic boundaries. It has come to be recognized internationally as an important issue and has become the subject of a substantial amount of research in recent decades. The most common type of violence against women is domestic; violence perpetrated by intimate partners or ex-partners.

In the context of Pakistani social setup violence against women has a very abnormal proportion since the societal norms encourage and perpetuate the superiority of men-folk. Among other reasons for the dominance of the men over women, is the joint family system. This stretched family yields excessive influence of the in-laws over the wife husband relations and is a substantial cause of wife degradation, wife humiliation and wife battering. It is usually the mother-in-law who is the major factor in this sanguine drama but she is all the same reinforced feudal make-up of family structure. It is very rare that mother-in-law comes to fend the disputes but most of time she ignites and sparkles vicious conflagration among spouses. Her Pandora-box of complaints against her daughter-in-law is never exhausted [2, 3].

The factors interacting through which females are targeted in rural Punjab have specific formations. The societal norms to a large extent incite the husbands to wife battering. To some extent religion is also misused in perpetuating such acts. The frequency of severe wife battering has resulted into a chain reaction of social malformation. The present research has unfolded disastrous and heinous consequences of wife battering. For instance, the victims have an urge to live in a nuclear family rather than to live in a joint family and face such inexorable violence. In their perception and to some extent true, it minimizes the intrusions of the in-laws thus rending apart the social fabric of society. While on the other hand some of these victims are struggling to opt out of marriage contract but are faced with the dilemma of between the devil and the deep blue sea since the dissolution of such a contract is likely to result into further misfortune and complications and top of all the infliction of social stigma, that is attached to a forsaken divorce [4].

Objectives of the Study

- To determine the demographic profile of the battered women.
- To diagnose the perceptions of battered women regarding socio-cultural privileges exercised by the batterer.
- To explore the prevailing nature and practice of wife battering.
- To analyze the modes and manners and extent of severity in wife battering.
- To unearth the factors responsible for wife battering.
- To unfold and study the consequences of wife battering.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the present study 100 female respondents were selected through purposive and volunteer sampling. Because sampling frame of the battered women was not available. This was a very sensitive issue to investigate. Battered Females were selected after the informed consent. Sample was selected from ten villages on the basis of the characteristics like, married women having age between 15-55; belong to rural area; living in a middle class; and more importantly have actually faced violence. A well-structured questionnaire was administered by the researchers which contained different parts like a) the demographic profile of the respondents; b) modes of wife battering; c) severity of the wife battering; d) perceptions regarding socio-cultural rights of the batterer; e) factors

associated with wife battering; and f) consequences of wife battering. Further, the data was analysed by using SPSS version 16.0. Percentage and proportion test was used to draw the conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No. 1.1 shows that 69% battered women belong to age group of 39-48 years. Only 2% and 3% were from age groups of 18-28 and 48-58 respectively. Remaining 26% were belonging to age group of 29-38. The most prevalent age group for battered women was 39-48 in this study. The findings of the present study are contrary to the finding of the Schuler *et al.* [5]. But at same time it authenticates the findings of Shaikh [2] as there is no such relation between younger age and violence.

Education is very important aspect to discuss here. Present study showed that most of the battered women were illiterate. Table 1.2 shows that 26% respondents were having education below middle. While only 15% were in two other categories (i.e. matric-intermediate and B.A-M.A). In the rural Gujrat, women education is dependent of the major conditions: a) availability of schools; and b) permission or the consent of the parents for the acquisition of education. In most of the cases women's access to the education institution is blocked by societal norms. The parents consider that female access to education means that they will get the opportunity to interact with males and to interact with such males is strictly forbidden for them.

In table 1.3 Occupations of the battered women are presented. The data shows that majority (80%) of the respondents were housewives while 5% were teaching in different schools and remaining were engaged in some paid labor activities. This table has shown that the access of the respondents towards the job opportunities is lower that's why they are facing more lethal violence. One other reason which is a prerequisite for the job opportunities is mentioned above as most of the women were not having good qualification. Table 1.4 showed that 91% battered wives had joint family system at the time of study. Only 9% were living in the nuclear family system. The joint family system is one of the prime characteristic of the rural families in Pakistan. In many aspects of the life it supports the members but in some aspects it is denigratory. Such is the case regarding wife battering, as joint family system is one of the major abettors of this ignoble practice. In-laws are unfortunately collaborators in this assault and most of the time they set a stage for this drama by instigating possessive husbands.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

1.1 Age of the Respondents			1.5 Marriage Experience of the Respondents		
Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
18-28	2	2.0	Very bad	54	54.0
29-38	26	26.0	Bad	40	40.0
39-48	69	69.0	Normal	6	6.0
48-58	3	3.0	Total	100	100.0
Total	100	100.0			
1.2 Education of the Respondents			1.6 Decision Regarding Marriage of the Respondents		
Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	59	59.0	Yourself	3	3.0
Primary-middle	26	26.0	Parents	89	89.0
Matric-intermediate	12	12.0	Others(specify)	8	8.0
B.A-M.A	3	3.0	Total	100	100.0
Total	100	100.0			
1.3 Occupation of the Respondents			1.7 Husband's Education		
Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
House wife	80	80.0	Illiterate	47	47.0
Teaching	5	5.0	Primary-middle	42	42.0
Domestic work	8	8.0	Matric-intermediate	9	9.0
Agriculture	7	7.0	B.A-M.A	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0	Total	100	100.0
1.4 Family Structure of the Respondents					
Categories	Frequency	Percentage			
Joint	91	91.0			
Nuclear	9	9.0			
Total	100	100.0			

Table 2: Modes and Severity of Wife Battering

2.1 Modes of Wife Battering			2.3 Visiting the Doctor after violence		
Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Slapping	32	32.0	Yes	91	91.0
Hair-pulling	5	5.0	No	9	9.0
Come to blows	3	3.0	Total	100	100.0
All of the above	60	60.0			
Total	100	100.0			
2.2 Victims of Severe Injury			2.4 Frequency of Battering in a Month		
Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	92	92.0	1-3	18	18.0
No	8	8.0	4-6	67	67.0
Total	100	100.0	7-9	10	10.0
			10 and above	5	5.0
			Total	100	100.0

Table 3: Perceptions Regarding Socio-cultural Rights of the Batterer

3.1 Perceptions Regarding Family Tradition of Wife Battering			3.2 Motivational Sources of Wife Battering for Husbands		
Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	93	93.0	Religion	68	68.0
No	7	7.0	Culture	21	21.0
Total	100	100.0	Other	1	1.0
			No	10	10.0
			Total	100	100.0

Table 4: Women Involvement in Household Decision Making

		Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Were you consulted in purchasing of domestic goods?	Group 1	Yes	13	.13	.50	.000 ^a
	Group 2	No	87	.87		
	Total		100	1.00		
Were you consulted in agricultural activities?	Group 1	Yes	12	.12	.50	.000 ^a
	Group 2	No	88	.88		
	Total		100	1.00		
Were you consulted in purchasing of large assets?	Group 1	Yes	12	.12	.50	.000 ^a
	Group 2	No	88	.88		
	Total		100	1.00		
Were you consulted in family's social issues?	Group 1	No	91	.91	.50	.000 ^a
	Group 2	Yes	9	.09		
	Total		100	1.00		

Table 5: Male Dominance as a Factor of Wife Battering

Categories	Frequency	Percent
Yes	94	94.0
No	6	6.0
Total	100	100.0

On the question of marriage experience as shown in table 1.5, 94% wives said that it was unsavory and only 6% reported it as a normal occurrence. Majority of the respondents were facing violence and these acts of violence made them bitter and disorientated. Marriage decisions are very crucial as who decide about match making the marriage of the respondents. In Pakistani society these decisions are taken by parents. In table 1.6 there is same case because 89% battered women's marriage decisions were taken by their parents. Only 3% females were able to marry by their own choice.

It is observed that educated men are less likely to be batterers. So it was asked from the female respondents about their husbands' education. In table 1.7 it can be seen that 47% were illiterate. They had never visited the formal educational institutions. 42% got education but it was below matriculation level. Only 11% women had qualification above matriculation. Different studies have related the lower level of education with the higher possibility of wife battering. Likewise Haj-Yahia [6] asserted that the lower the level of the men's education the greater the tendency to justify wife beating.

To analyze the modes of battering, the victims were inquired that which type as to mode of violence mostly prevailed in their cases. Further, the modes of wife battering were categorized i.e. i) slapping; ii) hair-pulling; and iii) come to blows. Table 2.1 shows that 32% said that it was slapping. 5% had to face hair-pulling while 3% faced any type of blows. 60% said that they had been facing all modes of violence presented in three categories. To get an idea about the severity of battering the respondent were asked if they had ever visited the doctor

after physical assault. Most of the females suffered serious injuries because of this battering and almost all the women were constrained to visit doctors after battering. Table 2.2 shows that majority 92% wives faced severe injuries due to partner violence while table 2.3 shows that 91% wives paid visit to the doctors after being beaten by their husbands. Such severities in the case of Punjab have already been discussed in the report of HRCF [7] in 1998, 282 burn cases of women were reported in only one province of the country. Out of the reported cases, 65% died of their injuries.

Table 2.4 shows that 67% of battered women had to face this horrible situation 4-6 times in a month while 18% wives bear this situation 1-3 times in a month. 15% remaining had to confront this situation more than 7 times in a month. According to a survey conducted on 1000 women in Punjab, 35% of the women admitted in the hospitals of being beaten by their husbands. The survey reported that on an average, at least two women were burned every day in domestic violence incidents and approximately 70 to 90% of women experienced spousal abuse [8].

Most of the battered women thought that it was due to the family tradition and husbands are incited or coaxed by other family members to commit such acts. Table 3.1 shows that 93% battered wives thought that family tradition to beat a wife is the main reason for this assault. Table 3.2 shows that 68% respondents said that this right was given to them by their religion. 21% from their culture and only 1% said other things may be involved. In the case of Pakistan and some other neighboring states religion is misused to perpetuate male dominance over

females. Such an issue has been highlighted by Fortune and Enger [9] they mentioned that yet, religion also can be misused to excuse or condone abusive behavior. In the context of violence against women, religious teachings and communities will play a role; they will never be neutral.

To observe the role of women in household decision making following four questions were asked to the respondents (As mentioned in table no. 4). In response of the first question 87% females responded that they were not consulted in purchasing of domestic goods, p-value (.000*) shows the statistical significance. In subsequent questions same result can be observed and all the tests show that there is clear male dominance in the locale which is one of the main reasons of the wife battering. In our patriarchal society females are not involved in the domestic decision making; which is basically the domain of females, that is why grow powerless.

In Pakistani society females are considered inferior. Societal norms, values and traditions have blocked them for equal participation in all spheres of the life. Male dominance came through the societal practice and it is acceptable for the rural women especially, to be beaten by their husbands. Most of the rural women take it for granted that their husbands have the right to do so for exercising his authority. Male dominance is frequently mentioned as a determinant of the domestic violence [10]. On other hand Almosaed [11] found that most of the respondents were pro to using physical violence against women as necessary. Majority of the male respondents opined that violence was a very effective tool in dealing with female misconduct. Choi and Edleson [12] argued that there is evidence from studies that nearly one-third of male respondents perceive that it is acceptable and normal for a man to beat his wife.

Domestic violence or any other type of violence is always due to some clashes in the relationship of two or more than two individuals. Family is a basic institution of the society where all the members act as component of the system. And for the smooth environment it is important that every one play his/her role positively. In this study it was asked whether that had they good relation with their in-laws or not. Table 6 (A) shows that 96% victims had bad relations with their in-laws. The result is significant at 0.05 level of significance in binomial test. Wife beating is also considered to be acceptable if the wife is unfaithful to her husband, rude to her in-laws, if the husband suspects his wife of being unfaithful, if she disobeys her husband's orders and if she fails to perform domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning the house, fetching firewood and water and feeding livestock and children [13].

The most important factor in the domestic violence in previous studies is the crucial role of mothers-in-law in Pakistani society. It is considered as extrinsic factor which abets and encourages the husbands to become batterers in their houses. Table 6 (B) shows that 93% victims were indicated that their mothers-in-law were responsible for this violence. The binomial test of proportion shows that there is significant difference between two proportions. It indicates that mother in-law is a factor for this phenomenon. Kadir *et al.* [14] stated that, in the region of Southeast Asia, people usually live in extended families, where mothers-in-law have major influence on family size, family planning and household decision-making. While Fikree and Bhatti [15] assert that 30% of the participants in a study reported presence of in-laws as a common reason of marital conflict leading to verbal and physical abuse of the wife by her husband. On the other hand Ali and Gavino [8] also indicated that various

Table 6: (A) Relations with In-laws

			Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Relation with your in laws	Group 1	Bad/ Not Good		96	.96	.50	.000*
	Group 2	Normal/ Good		4	.04		
	Total			100	1.00		

Table 6: (B) Role of Mother In-laws in Wife Battering

			Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Do you think that your mother in-law has a role in battering by your husband?	Group 1	Yes		93	.93	.50	.000*
	Group 2	No		7	.07		
	Total			100	1.00		

Table 7(A): Economic Condition of Household

		Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Economic Condition	Group 1	Bad/ Not Good	88	.88	.50	.000 ^a
	Group 2	Normal/ Good	12	.12		
	Total		100	1.00		

Table 7(B): Poor Economic Conditions as Factor of Wife Battering

		Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Conflict due to economic condition	Group 1	Yes	65	.65	.50	.004 ^a
	Group 2	No	35	.35		
	Total		100	1.00		

Table 8: Consequences of Wife Battering: Battered Women's Aspirations to get Divorce

Categories	Frequency	Percent
Yes	98	98.0
No	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0

studies, however, have found no evidence which suggest that women who co-reside with their mothers-in-law are more prone to suffer beating from their husbands than are other women.

Economic condition is another inciting factor in this study. Previous studies have shown that it is a major factor for this kind of act because adverse economic condition creates sense of frustration and stress. As a result the male members of the houses who are considered bread earners become angry and violent in their behavior. Table 7 (A) showed that 88% respondents belonged to a household of bad economic condition. Table 7 (B) showed that 65% victim women indicated that their conflict was due to economic condition because they had not enough resources to meet their daily expenditures. So, domestic violence triggers from such petty economic issues. According to Naveed and Persson [16] the factors in the immediate familial context that have been found to have an effect on violence include socio-economic status, family structure, male dominance and domineering and the family support network. Reviewing social science literature from North America, Black *et al.* [17] found that low income was consistently linked to the likelihood that a man will assault an intimate partner physically. Further, Naveed and Persson [16] assert that a consensus is emerging that personal, economic, social and cultural factors combine to cause abuse. Despite this consensus, most studies of domestic violence explore individual-level factors or a few familial factors, whereas community or socio-cultural factors (for example, gender norms and crime levels) remain generally unexplored.

The situation in the case of rural Gujrat is very alarming as 98% battered wives aspire to get divorce

because are they are facing this horrible situation. The perception of divorcing has been fundamentally associated with severity of battering. Although it is thought to be curse for a female to initiate for divorce, in rural Punjab, but in the present case women have no other choice. As a consequence of battering, all the battered women desire to live in nuclear families, instead of joint family system. Usually this joint family system is the bone of between the spouses, devastating marital lives.

CONCLUSION

The situation of the rural women has yet not changed. They are still oppressed as they were in the centuries ago. The societal values, norms and mores have not yet been challenged by these subjugated women. They are still depending on their partners and confiding in the family traditions and cultural norms. These family traditions are fundamentally supporting the oppressive rights of husbands to beat their wives. They are not allowed to take part in family decision-making. The situation of the family in which they are living is worsened by the intrusions made by in-laws and more specifically by mothers-in-law. Almost all battered wives have singled out the role of their mothers-in-laws in this heinous brutality. As a result of this brutality, victims have an urge to live in a nuclear family rather than to live in a joint family and face such inexorable violence.

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