

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN PAKISTAN

Definition of ‘Domestic Violence’

Domestic violence and emotional abuse are behaviors used by one person in a relationship to control the other. Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior characterized by the intent to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner or other family members. The abuse can be established over time and in most cases, it begins subtly with insults, a shove or by alienating the survivor from family and friends. With time, the abusive behavior can be more frequent and severe. One in every four women and one out of every seven men have experienced severe physical violence from an intimate partner at some point in their lifetimes. Domestic violence can take many forms such as:

- **Physical.** Any use of force that causes pain or injury, such as hitting, kicking or slapping.
- **Sexual.** Abuse can include sexual harassment, sexual assault or manipulating a person into having sex by using guilt or threats
- **Emotional and/or verbal.** Constant criticism, threatening to hurt loved ones or harassment at school or in the workplace
- **Economic.** Controlling a person’s income or financial assistance, misusing one’s credit or making it difficult for a person get or maintain a job
- **Psychological.** Minimizing or blaming a person for the abuse, intimidation and/or threats or destroying property

Domestic violence is characterized by violent actions or threats of violent actions, including behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure or wound a partner.

Domestic violence is the most commonly used term for this kind of violence, but it is also known as intimate partner violence, family violence or battering. These definitions vary between states, countries and organizations, but they are all based in the same premise—the abuse of power and control in familial, co-habiting or intimate relationships.

Domestic violence in Pakistan

Domestic violence is an endemic social problem in Pakistan. An estimated 5000 women are killed per year from domestic violence, with thousands of others maimed or disabled. According to a study carried out in 2009 by Human Rights Watch, it is estimated that between 70 and 90 percent of women in Pakistan have suffered some form of abuse. The majority of victims of violence have no legal recourse. Law enforcement authorities do not view domestic violence as a crime and usually refuse to register any cases brought to them. Given the very few women's shelters in the country, victims have limited ability to escape from violent situations. The following acts are a common phenomenon in our society:

- Acid throwing
- Bride burnings/"stove deaths"
- Dowry death
- Honor killing
- Female genital mutilation
- Female Femicide & infanticide
- Foot binding
- Forced abortion

- Forced marriage
- Forced pregnancy
- Forced prostitution
- Human trafficking
- Murder of pregnant women
- Sati/Burning Alive
- Violence against prostitutes
- Sexual violence
- Sexual assault
- Campus sexual assault
- Rape/Gang Rape
- Sexual Slavery

Factors responsible for Domestic Violence in Pakistan

Various factors are associated with domestic violence in Pakistan. Poverty, illiteracy and social and economic taboos are considered the main reasons for domestic violence in the country. A lack of awareness about women's rights and a lack of support from the government are the other two reasons. Another factor given for the rise in domestic violence has been due to increased urbanization. As people move from villages and increasingly live apart from an extended family, assaults are less likely to be prevented by the intervention of family members, who in past times often intervened in domestic conflicts. Yet another reason given for abuses is patriarchalism in Pakistani society, which marginalizes women's role. In some traditional societies, a man is considered to have the right to physically beat his spouse. In 1998 of 1974 reported murders the majority of victims were killed by either family members or In-laws. A survey carried out by the Thomson Reuters Foundation ranked Pakistan as the third most dangerous country in the world for women, after Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo; it is followed by India and Somalia. More than a thousand victims of honour crimes were recorded last year.

The annual report by the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) recorded gang rapes, kidnapping, acid attacks, amputations, burnings and said almost 800 women killed themselves or attempted suicide. The report warned that despite a series of landmarks in 2015, which saw the first Pakistani female firefighter and rickshaw driver start work, exploitation and abuse remains rife with little judicial recourse. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan report said prosecution rates for domestic violence and sexual offences were low, with women frequently too afraid to report the crimes or being intimidated into withdrawing complaints. It recorded more than 900 rapes and sexual assaults in 2015, 279 instances of domestic violence, 143 of burning, 833 kidnappings and 777 suicides and attempted suicides. The HRCP reported 987 honour crimes in 2015, with 1,096 female victims and 88 male victims, including an unknown number of children.

Legislative Measures for curbing the Domestic Violence

In 1976 the Pakistani government passed legislation on dowry and bridal gifts in an attempt to eliminate the custom but, because of cultural and societal norms combined with government ineffectiveness, such killings over inadequate dowries continue. In 1999 the Senate of

Pakistan rejected a resolution which would have condemned the practice of murdering women for the sake of family honour. The following year, on 21 April 2000, the national government leader Pervez Musharraf declared that honour killings were "vigorously condemned" by the government and would be treated as murder. The Ministry of Women Development set up ten crisis centres to help the victims of domestic violence and raise the awareness level of the people on this issue. In 2011 the Senate passed the *Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Bill* to repress acid attacks in the country; the senate also passed the prevention of anti-women practices bill.

Measures to prevent and control domestic violence

Public health interventions for domestic violence can be given through three traditionally characterized levels of prevention. Primary prevention in which certain steps are taken to prevent violence before it occurs. This may include awareness programs both for women and other people to prevent domestic violence. Secondary prevention which is focused more on instantaneous response to violence, which also includes care before accessing to hospitals and emergency room care depending on the type of violence. Nurses particularly can play the best role in the initial assessment, and providing psychological support to patients to prevent them from psychiatric disorders such as depression. The third type is Tertiary prevention which is focused on long-term care of the victims, such as rehabilitation and reintegration, and measures to decrease the chances of reoccurrence of any type of further abuse on women. Over all, there are three types of preventive measures related to help victims in their serious situation when they are subjected to domestic violence. Furthermore, interventions should be designed to work with women - who are usually the best judges of their situation - and to respect their decisions.

Recommendations

1. There is a need of recognition at the national level of the issue. Though government of Pakistan has considered this issue but, consistent follow-up is mandatory.
2. There should be enough educational programs in all societies and cultures, both for women and men at the same levels.
3. There should be enough opportunities of employments and participation in political parties along with security and safety for women and the seat allocation for recruitments of both genders should be considered on equality grounds. More funds should be allocated to women's development in the country.
4. Government should make it compulsory to incorporate the programme in all health care facilities of Pakistan for proper screening of all types of domestic violence and abuse. Adequate emergency treatments with rehabilitative measures should be provided. All health professionals should be made aware of domestic violence, its factors, possible treatment and moreover the preventive measures. Along with medical facility, government also can have crisis centers for violated women in the main health care centers like Rural Health Centers (RHC), Basic Health Unites (BHU) and tertiary hospitals throughout the country. Furthermore, specialized health care professionals should be introduced in the crisis centers who could easily handle any case. All of the facilities should be easily accessible to all women in any setting throughout the country.
5. Awareness programmes should be conducted for both women and men. It should be done by using the resources like nurses, doctors and psychologists, working under governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This could easily be done either by direct or indirect teaching. The direct methods would include one to one teaching, counseling, or group based

teaching. Indirect methods would involve the use of media, pamphlets, role plays, drama and talk shows.

6. There should be religious definitions of the basic rights of women like autonomy and freedom in Pakistan on federal levels and the government needs to evaluate all of the basic rights of women. For this a central committee can be made which should include religious leaders, Ulema, and scholars who can consensually define the rights of women in the lights of Islamic teaching and literature. But, for this the other ethnic and minority religious groups should be considered when finalizing any package for basic rights of women. Government should also ensure that every citizen of the country is following the main themes defined by the religious committee.

7. Government should make efforts to ensure that women have enough access to reach any political opportunity and there should be a training programme available for their capacity building on politics.

8. There is also a need of reforms in the police departments and judicial processes which place constraints on women from accessing justice. Women police should be trained to deal with women facing domestic violence so that women could feel safe and protected. Indeed the presence of a nurse or doctor in the police department team would facilitate a pleasant environment for the sufferers. The prosecution rate for violence against women must be increased to create a safer environment.

9. Alcohol production, transport and drinking should be banned as Pakistan is an Islamic country and in Islam alcohol is strictly prohibited. Government can take help from social groups, religious leaders and even they can strengthen their law and order situation to decrease alcohol and other addictive material usage in the country.

10. Exclusive celebrations of marriages were banned in the country some years ago and that worked very effectively through the country. Similarly government can also ban weighty dowry systems in different cultures, and fix certain amount in the lights of Islamic religious teachings which should be followed in any culture and in any region of the country.

11. Government should develop recreational programs like family parks, and other entertaining places where women along with their family can enjoy and relax.

Conclusion

Domestic violence is prevalent in Pakistan at an alarming rate. Women are the sufferers and are subjected to physical, psychological and sexual abuse in their home by partners, in-laws and in some circumstances by their brothers and parents. The factors associated with domestic violence in Pakistan are low-economical status of women, lack of awareness about women rights, lack of education, falsified beliefs, imbalanced empowerment issues between males and females, male dominant social structure and lack of support from the government. Integrated supportive services, legal intervention and redress should be made available in situations of domestic violence. Support and help for women to rebuild and recover their lives after violence, should be a part of the intervention strategy, including counseling, relocation, credit support and employment. In order to prevent women from domestic violence and provide them medical as well as judicial and legal support, new plans and interventional maps should be made in the societies in collaboration with health team members, religious and societal leaders, NGOs, police department and people from other similar groups. This strategy implementation should be enforced.

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