

UNVEILING THE TRUTH: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - A SILENT TERRORISM IN PAKISTAN

Salman Khan

Department of Political Science, University of Peshawar, 25000, Pakistan.

Corresponding Email: Salmankhanchd583@gmail.com

Abstract: This abstract focusing on the key issue of domestic violence that exists in Pakistan, where it is often hidden and is one way of silent terrorism. The pervasiveness in gender subordination, together with the belief that women are property instead of human with hearts and minds to feel causes generations to perpetuate this problem. This study concerning widespread domestic violence is for women of all social life of every sphere. It is necessary to mobilize support for women everywhere, and also to eradicate public tolerance through education. We need effective steps that will hit at this concealed terrorism. By unveiling the truth about domestic violence, Pakistan could take an important step toward a safer and fairer society for everybody.

Keywords: Domestic Terrorism; Gendered-Based Violence; Patriarchy

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence transcends national, cultural, and social boundaries and is widespread in every country. In addition to physical attacks, it can also take the form of emotional, sexual, or financial abuse. Although domestic violence is a global issue, there are also local nuances to its many aspects. In Pakistan, where it is frequently considered a private matter and hence either disregarded or condemned, this widely prevalent issue is enveloped in mystery due to the customs of society, the country's cultural beliefs, and legal restrictions [1]. Domestic violence is not limited phenomenon. however. It is encountered daily by most people [1].

Domestic abuse or domestic violence is not a rare phenomenon, but it is more prevalent in states like Pakistan. People often encounter these terms in their daily lives. However, what is uncommon is the term "domestic terrorism" and how rarely it is heard. Theorists and scholars have argued that using the term "domestic violence" diminishes the gravity and the sense of terror that the victims endure.

Unravelling the true nature of domestic violence in Pakistan necessitates a thorough exploration of its cultural, legal, and societal aspects. The influence of a patriarchal culture, gender-based social norms, and the implementation of protective laws all contribute to the intricate narrative surrounding this issue in the South Asian nation. Furthermore, this research critically assesses the national initiatives taken to combat domestic violence, examining their effectiveness and limitations. A comprehensive analysis of the existing domestic violence legislation is conducted, scrutinizing its enforcement and shedding light on the challenges faced by victims when seeking justice and protection. Despite underreporting and data gaps, an examination of statistical prevalence provides an empirical understanding of the widespread impact of this problem, affecting not only the victims but also their families and society as a whole [2].

Pakistan continues to perpetuate domestic violence as a societal norm. Deep-rooted concepts like gender subordination and viewing women as male property are ingrained in our culture and passed down through generations. Domestic violence encompasses more than commonly understood, including physical, sexual, emotional, mental, financial, and verbal abuses. Shockingly, every second woman in Pakistan experiences domestic violence, with many cases going unreported. The problem thrives due to an imbalance of power, unjust social tolerance, and widespread ignorance. This issue, once more prevalent in rural areas and among uneducated men, now cuts across all social classes in the country. It has become crucial for women to unite, stand for their rights, and raise their voices against violence and mistreatment. Despite the consensus that domestic violence is a significant problem, there is a lack of government attention and funding, highlighting the historical neglect of this issue [3].

According to the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Abuse, domestic abuse is described as a pattern of coercive behavior employed by one person to control and dominate their intimate partner. This includes physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse, employing tactics like coercion, terrorism, dehumanization, exploitation, and violence to instill fear in the victim [4].

Margi Laird McCue, in her work "Domestic Violence," explicitly defines domestic violence, reaching out to those experiencing severe abuse, such as beatings, domestic violence, battering, partner abuse, wife-beating, marital conflict, women abuse, dysfunctional relationships, and mate-beating [5].

According to statistics from the World Health Organization, one in three women, or 35% of all women worldwide, have experienced intimate partner or non-partner violence. Thus, the ensuing debate will revolve around how domestic violence can be seen as "domestic terrorism" within the context of gender-based violence (GBV), primarily targeting women [6].

PROBLEM STATEMENT

This topic is highlighting the grave issue of domestic violence plaguing the country. Despite its prevalence and devastating impact on victims, domestic violence remains largely concealed and unrecognized as a form of silent terrorism. This research aims to shed light on this hidden menace, exploring its root causes, manifestations, and the systemic challenges that perpetuate its existence. By understanding domestic violence as a form of terrorism, this study seeks to raise awareness, inspire action, and advocate for comprehensive solutions to protect the rights and dignity of victims, especially women and children, across Pakistani society.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- To investigate the prevalence and extent of domestic violence in Pakistan, particularly focusing on its manifestation as a silent form of terrorism within households.
- To identify the root causes, contributing factors, and cultural influences that perpetuate domestic violence as a prevalent issue in Pakistani society.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the prevalence of domestic violence in Pakistan, and how does it manifest as a silent form of terrorism within households?
2. How cultural, social, and traditional factors are contributing in the perpetuation of domestic violence as a prevalent issue in Pakistani society?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory of structural violence can be applied in this topic. This theory, originally introduced by Johan Galtung, highlights the indirect, systematic forms of violence that are embedded within social structures and institutions. In the context of domestic violence in Pakistan, the theory emphasizes that the issue is not solely a result of individual actions but is deeply rooted in the structural inequalities, cultural norms, and societal hierarchies prevalent in the country. Structural violence helps explain how patriarchal norms, gender roles, and power imbalances perpetuate domestic violence within households, often leading to a cycle of abuse across generations. By analyzing domestic violence through the lens of structural violence, the research paper can uncover the underlying mechanisms and systemic factors that contribute to the silent terrorism of domestic violence in Pakistan. This perspective also underscores the need for comprehensive, multifaceted interventions to address the issue at its root causes and bring about lasting change in the society.

METHODOLOGY

The study uses a qualitative method. Documents from recognized sources like academic journals, government reports, and NGOs have been approached as secondary data. Statistical information on domestic violence rates, legal frameworks, and social programs has been gathered to provide a comprehensive context for the findings of qualitative research. Thematic analysis has been used to discover patterns and themes in the qualitative data, while content analysis has been used for secondary materials. By combining qualitative with secondary data, researcher find this study's findings a clearer picture well form about how intractable these problems are for our society. Such information is also of practical use to policy-makers and courts enacting laws against its perpetrators in society while at the same time seeking support for remedial measures from these very government agents themselves.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to a UN report, domestic violence is "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." Domestic violence doesn't have a single, agreed definition. It may be described as a significant mechanism that forces women into a position of inferiority to males, and it also involves discrimination against women in the areas of education, nutrition, and access to medical services. According to Ohchr [7], it is the cultural manifestation of uneven power relations between men and women. According to Azhar et al. [8], "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, poor development, or deprivation" is another way that the term "power" is used. According to UNICEF, domestic violence is the most prevalent violence against women and a destructive behavior that manifests as physical, psychological, economic, and sexual abuse between intimate partners and other family members [9].

DOMESTIC TERRORISM

Although "terrorism" has no universally agreed-upon definition, experts have attempted to define it via various analyses of historical events and the psychological makeup of the perpetrators. Some components of terrorist definitions have not changed. For instance, it has frequently been suggested that a terrorist act needs to have certain political elements in

order to qualify as such. According to Eraj definition of terrorism in "The Strategy of Terrorism," terrorism is "violence used to create fear; but it is aimed at creating fear so that the fear, in turn, will accomplish whatever it is that the terrorist really desires" [10].

According to Rachel Pain, domestic terrorism and abuse may be compared using Fromkin's concept. "Domestic abuse, like global terrorism, must be seen as a part of a desire to gain particular forms of political control," the author claims. Its impacts strengthen the social and political systems that give rise to it. By considering its two facets—social and political—the argument that Pain has advanced may be understood [11].

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The inequalities in social, political, and economic spheres are intricately connected. An individual's household environment is significantly influenced by their position in society concerning power and authority. Unfortunately, women are often perceived as the weaker group in society, leading to the expectation that they constantly need assistance, usually from men.

The traditional patriarchal system concentrates a considerable amount of power in the hands of men. Women are commonly viewed as the primary caregivers for men, and their honor is seen as belonging not to themselves but rather to the men in their lives. This discourse is then used to justify strict control and subjugation of women. Moreover, in many cases, men are automatically assumed to be the "head of the household," which further reinforces the idea that directing men automatically results in women's compliance [12].

This deeply ingrained system perpetuates gender inequality and restricts women's autonomy and agency within society. To address these issues, it is essential to challenge and dismantle such harmful gender norms and promote a more egalitarian society where women are recognized as equal individuals with the right to make their own decisions and lead fulfilling lives.

In many cases, abusers attempt to justify their harmful actions towards women by claiming that they are acting "for their own good and protection." When questioned about their abusive behavior by the victims, they use this excuse to rationalize their actions. Tragically, when victims get a chance to share their experiences, they often shoulder the blame themselves and even reinforce the abusers' narrative by expressing thoughts like "we deserved this" or, worse yet, "we shouldn't have done that" [13].

The social structure plays a significant role in shaping the psychology of both victims and perpetrators. Those who engage in abusive behavior often fail to recognize the menacing or terroristic nature of their actions. Conversely, victims find themselves caught in a gaslighting conundrum, where their perception of reality is manipulated and invalidated by the abusers.

This social structure is designed in a way that centralizes authority within a specific group of men in society. Consequently, it compromises women's autonomy at home and perpetuates the oppression faced by marginalized groups, solidifying the foundations of an unequal social system. This cycle reinforces a specific archetype of a downward spiral, where abusive behavior continues to prevail, and victims are trapped in a cycle of self-blame and oppression. It is crucial to break free from this destructive pattern and work towards a society that upholds equality, respect, and the protection of all individuals, regardless of gender or social standing [14].

THE RELATION BETWEEN SOCIALIZATION AND POLITICAL CONTROL

Another essential aspect of political influence that requires further exploration has been presented by Pain. Many individuals hold the belief that instances of domestic abuse should remain within the confines of the "private" sphere and that politics should not interfere. Acts of terrorism perpetrated by individuals within their homes are often seen as family matters.

The wider political implications of interpersonal hostility have yet to be acknowledged by society at large. In "The Terrorism of Terrorism," Tomis Kapitan emphasizes that terrorism serves as a direct tool to bring about changes in the political landscape. Taking into account Kapitan's concept of "alteration of the political climate" and Pain's idea of "political control" thesis, it becomes evident. Families are considered the fundamental building blocks of socialization and hold significant social power. How a person engages in the public sphere, be it socially, politically, or economically, is largely shaped by their interactions with others and the values instilled in them. Unfortunately, instances of abuse and coercion within the household can severely hinder one's ability to participate effectively in society [15].

According to Susan Okin's work, "Justice, Gender, and the Family," there exists a clear link between the roles and positions of women within the family and their influence in wider society. This connection perpetuates discrimination, injustice, and mistreatment of women not only in the workplace but also in social institutions and, most significantly, in political dynamics.

Imagine a scenario where a woman endures ongoing and severe abuse and fear within her own home. She is subjected to sexual, psychological, and physical mistreatment, and also faces intimidation from other residents in the house. Threats constantly overshadow her daily life, putting her in constant danger. Now, let's reflect on the countless women who undergo such harrowing experiences every day, irrespective of their geographical location, social class, race, ethnicity, age, or any other personal characteristics. Can they ever conquer their feelings of not being good enough and their fear of violence? Will they ever find employment opportunities for themselves? Can they even dare to dream of

achieving success, let alone actually attain it? The invisibility of women in politics is further strengthened by this harmful cycle, whether it is intentional or not [16].

The political aim of domestic terrorism is to instill fear in women, leading to a systematic decrease in their representation in the broader political sphere. Additionally, it seeks to establish oppressive power dynamics within households. As a result, the ultimate goal is to subject women to persistent disadvantages. The patriarchal system employs various strategies to ensure that women remain unnoticed and marginalized in all aspects of public life. It can be likened to removing a bird's wings before it realizes its ability to fly, effectively hindering their potential. Domestic violence becomes a private weapon to ensure women continually face political victimization, oppression, segregation, and exclusion [17].

If the aim is to assert dominance through "domestic terrorism," it becomes a means of persecuting and instilling fear in a particular group, maintaining the patriarchal political control. This oppressed minority, confined to their homes, faces significant barriers to establishing a presence beyond those confines. Consequently, terrorism rooted in political motivations perpetuates structural inequality, leading to similar consequences worldwide.

THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF TERRORISM

Domestic violence is only considered terrorism when it serves a political purpose; it doesn't necessarily require political reasons at all times. Despite many of the current situations lacking explicit political intentions, they are still labeled as acts of terrorism due to the severe political consequences they bring upon the victims. A prime example of this is the Christchurch shooting in New Zealand. The perpetrator, a white nationalist with a deep-seated hostility towards Muslims, didn't have any overt political agenda. His act of terrorism wasn't driven by a desire to influence the state's political system [18]

The perpetrator of the Orlando nightclub shooting shared the same description. He was a religious extremist, and his actions were not politically motivated. Despite lacking political motives, the global community, including the Islamic Council of New Zealand, classified the incident as a terrorist act. Such occurrences worldwide clearly demonstrate that terrorism is not solely driven by politics or political objectives; it also involves the political consequences. Committing a terrorist attack is primarily intended to instill fear in people. While political objectives may influence the actions of terrorists, they are not always the primary driving force. The main aim is to create terror among the population [18].

The terrorist attacks have triggered widespread panic, attributed to the sound of gunshots in the mentioned incidents. The victims and the general public continue to be haunted by the events, even though the perpetrator has either been killed or sentenced to life in prison. The ongoing psychological and physical damage hinders those affected from resuming their normal activities [19].

The individuals who have suffered from domestic terrorism have consistently experienced severe trauma, to the extent that it prevents them from engaging in political activities. Consequently, a specific segment of society becomes the target of political victimization as a consequence. Hence, the next instance you come across a victim of domestic terrorism, make an effort to look beyond the surface portrayal or, ideally, discard any preconceived notions that hinder your capacity to think critically [20].

AN INDIVIDUAL'S ACTIONS FOSTER THE INSTITUTION OF TERRORISM

No matter how often it has been emphasized, the truth remains that an individual's intentions are not the main determinant of whether a specific act qualifies as terrorism. The concept of "terrorism as an institution" can persist merely by carrying out the act. Consider one example of this phenomenon. Let's contemplate the possible motivations of a rapist on a personal level. Could it be driven by revenge, a thirst for power, or sexual arousal? The actions of a rapist contribute to the institutionalization of rape, serving its objectives. This institution operates deliberately and with careful planning [17].

To make this institution thrive, it only takes one person to select a woman and subject her to terror, causing immense agony and horror. This serves as a clear warning to other women globally. When someone's actions align with the institution's interests, there's no necessity to consider their personal goals. However, it's important to note that the institution of rape aims to propagate male supremacy and discourage women's independence. The individual's motives may be encompassed within the aforementioned statements. The primary targets are those who have experienced sexual assault because they are well aware of the consequences that can befall anyone who dares to challenge the social order [21].

This is the reason why rape and domestic violence are considered acts of terrorism. These heinous acts not only inflict terror upon their immediate victims but also target women as a whole, aiming to instill fear and subjugation. The intention is to make women feel powerless and resigned to their fate. Furthermore, rape and domestic violence play a significant role in shaping the social and political systems [19]. They often disguise themselves as private matters, dismissing any political involvement, yet their impact extends far beyond personal boundaries and profoundly affects the public sphere [22].

PAKISTAN'S SOCIETY UNDER SCRUTINY

Domestic violence has sadly become commonplace, or more accurately, deeply ingrained in the culture of Pakistan. Women are often treated as mere possessions, a consequence of the prevailing male domination. The patriarchal system

in Pakistan tends to justify or overlook any form of domestic abuse perpetrated against women, and in some cases, it even condones so-called "honor murders" [23].

Domestic abuse against women is frequently considered a private matter in Pakistan, where the relationship between genders is perceived as one of ruler and ruled. This situation is worsened by various socioeconomic and cultural factors, as well as the misinterpretation or distortion of religious beliefs. According to the Human Development Index (HDI), Pakistan is ranked 154 out of 189 nations, and the state's maternal mortality rate typically stands at approximately 140.0%. In Pakistan's patriarchal society, illiteracy remains a significant issue as women's education has historically been considered less important than that of men.

As per the HDI, only 27.6% of adult women in Pakistan have received secondary school level education, and the participation of women in the labor force remains at only 21.9%. In terms of the gender parity index, Pakistan ranks 3rd from the bottom out of 153 states. Even the war-torn Arab Republic of Syria fares better in comparison to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan [19].

Another point of contention is the excessive power and interference of the clerical class in public affairs in Pakistan. The derogatory pronouncements of these clerics have propagated the notion of women's inferiority. Some members of this religious elite in Pakistan even view domestic violence as a means to control women, considering it a religious practice. Unfortunately, such toxic ideologies have eroded the social fabric and endangered the lives of women, depriving them of their rights as human beings.

One day, you might come across some conservative clerics who advocate for the religiously mandated practice of hitting or slapping one's wife as a means to exert control over her. On the other hand, another preacher may proudly assert that women's education, especially co-education in Pakistan, poses a threat to Islamic culture, using women as scapegoats for domestic abuse and terrorism. In a similar vein, you may encounter another clergyman defending the immoral act of marrying children. These types of clerics not only promote and justify domestic violence in Pakistan, but they also distort the meaning of "honor (houris)" referenced in Islam, reducing them to mere sexual objects [19].

In Pakistani culture, marital rape is disapproved of. Simply advocating for women's liberation from these outdated traditions may lead to raised eyebrows and accusations of being anti-religious by others. Honor has always been a perplexing aspect of this culture; for women, it has assumed the qualities of Mephistopheles. Speaking out about any issue affecting your life in Pakistan could potentially become a matter of life and death, subjecting you to domestic terrorism in the form of domestic abuse. Women's honor is directly tied to fragile masculinity.

Women's lives are controlled even before their birth through sex-selective abortions. If they manage to be born, the abuse they face during their early months of life raises the mortality rate of female infants. Subsequently, they may encounter a multitude of horrifying experiences, including honor killings, forced conversions, coerced marriages, rapes, sexual harassment, acid attacks, eve-teasing, marital rapes, and cyber blackmail, among others. Even if they manage to somehow survive those critical formative years, these dangers still lurk ahead [17].

CONCLUSION

In the nutshell, when terror incidents like 9/11 occurred, governments worldwide declared a war on terror. They swiftly introduced and enacted new laws in their legislation. However, despite domestic terrorism causing a significantly higher number of victims compared to any single terror incident, international governments have not responded with the same level of urgency to address and combat this societal menace. Every day, in every corner of the world, women endure the constant fear that pervades their lives. They are subjected to various acts of torment, abuse, torture, mutilation, captivity, control, and brutality, which all constitute severe violations of their basic human rights. This is an unfortunate reality regardless of where one may be located. Moreover, the toxic masculinities prevalent in specific regions exert a strong influence on toxic masculinist geopolitics internationally, as highlighted by feminist geographers. The public aspect of an individual's life is profoundly affected by all forms of oppression within the private sphere. This is equally applicable to how these domestic imbalances restrict women's participation in public life on a global level.

It is vital to recognize that without liberating women from the shackles that have hindered their fundamental existence, progress cannot be achieved. While discrimination and domestic violence against women are challenges faced worldwide, they pose particularly complex issues in Pakistan due to various unique circumstances.

WAY FORWARD

- One crucial step forward is to increase awareness about domestic violence in Pakistan. Through public campaigns, educational programs, and media engagement, we can shed light on the severity of this issue and its impact on women's lives.
- Pakistan must enact and enforce robust legislation against domestic violence. By providing legal protection and support to survivors, we can create a safer environment and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.
- Promote women's economic empowerment by providing opportunities for education, skill development, and employment. Financial independence can help women break free from abusive relationships and gain control over their lives.
- Empowering women through education, skills training, and economic opportunities can break the cycle of violence. When women have access to resources and support, they are better equipped to stand up against abuse and create independent lives.

- Establishing dedicated helplines, shelters, and counseling services for victims of domestic violence is crucial. These support systems can offer a lifeline to those in need and guide them towards safety and healing.
- Addressing domestic violence requires involving men and boys in the conversation. Encouraging positive masculinity, respectful relationships, and challenging harmful gender norms can contribute to a culture of non-violence.
- Partnering with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups that work on gender-based violence can amplify efforts and maximize resources towards combating domestic violence.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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