

Q8: Define gender based violence. Explain various forms of violence against women in Pakistan and devise some practical strategies which can be helpful in the eradication of gender based violence from our society.  
(CSS: 2013)

### 1) Introduction:

"It seems to me that violence against women has been tolerated for so long that the world has become numb to it"

(Zainab Salbi)

Sadly, as far as one can see in history, gender based violence (gbv) has always remained an endemic in the world. As of definition, it is a kind of violence that is inflicted on someone for belonging to a particular gender. However, in reality, gender based violence (GBV), the term, is used for the violence against women, for they are the major recipient of gender-based violence. Unfortunately, as of other developing nation, Pakistani women are also subjected to various forms violence only because they belong to a certain category of sex.

## 2) Defining Gender Based violence.

This term refers to harmful act directed towards an individual based on their gender. The European Institute for Gender Equality defines gender based violence as "a form of violence directed against a person because of their gender."

According to UNHCR, sexual or gender based violence is different from those of other kinds of violence as it merely pinpoints a specific gender. Moreover, although both genders might face violence or subjugation just because they belong to a certain gender, this term is mostly used to reflect the violence against women.

Consequently, the term, according to United Nations Population Fund (UNPF), should be used in the context of women only as they are considered to be a weaker gender.

## 3) Gender based violence in Pakistan and its forms.

Unfortunately, despite all the attempts made by the world, gender based violence has not yet been completely eradicating. Although developed nations are performing well on the indicators

of gender equality, the developing world continues to struggle against the menace that is gender based violence. Similarly, Pakistan has also failed to eradicate gender based violence. The GBU exists in various forms in Pakistan: Physical, ~~with~~ sexual; social and economic violence. According to a report published by 'Reuters Foundation' in 2021, Pakistan is the 6th most dangerous country for women. Similarly, the report infer that the country stands at 5th for gender-based violence.

### 1) Physical Violence:

#### i) Women in Pakistan experience physical abuse.

It is a sad reality that the women in Pakistan are subjected to physical violence. They face physical torment that leaves scars on body as well as their souls. According to the data provided by the 'National Commission for Human Rights', in Feb 2023, Over 40% of women in Pakistan have experienced physical violence at some stage of life. Similarly, the data by the ~~the~~ last Demographic and Health surveys for Pakistan also paints an extremely dismal picture of the gender predicament in the country. It

-the domestic violence is not confined to matrimonial relationships as 39% of women, aged 15-49 years, who had never been married face physical abuse at the hands of ~~an~~ close/family members.

ii) alot of women are subjected to acid attacks:

Unfortunately, Pakistan is among the few countries where the endemic of acid attacks still persist. This method is used to intimidate or hurt women for the purpose of persuasion. For example: In Pakistan, most of the acid attacks are directed towards young girls, for they refuse to get involved in a relationship or get married with the perpetrators. According to 'Acid Survivors Foundation' out of 1186 attacks that took place between 2009 to 2019, 76% were carried out against women and young girls.

iii) They are killed on the pretext of honour:

Sadly, Pakistan is also one of the few countries where women are killed on the pretext

of so-called honour. It is also an impediment of Pakistani culture, which still paints the picture of the life of stone age. Owing to patriarchal stronghold in the country, men are considered to be the sole-authority in society. Resultantly, on the pretext of bringing dishonour to a household, women are extra-judicially murdered. According to 'Human Rights watch', roughly 1100 women are killed in the name of honour in Pakistan. This huge number continues to grow because the legal system provides no less to none protection ~~in~~ to women. Pakistani judiciary has, in the past, acquitted the murderers. For example, the murderer of Qandeel Baloch continues to stay at large because he was ~~being~~ relinquished of all the charges ~~from~~ by honourable judiciary. Scenarios like these highlight the words of 'the exchange theory of gender-based violence'. According to the theory, the benefits, the subjugation of women, out weigh the costs of violence against women. Hence, in the absence of any restraint, men continue to carry out such acts that are detrimental to women.

## b) Sexual violence against women in Pakistan:-

Sexual crimes against women are also

rampant in Pakistan. Sadly, women in Pakistan cannot leave their homes fearlessly. As 'Reuters Foundation' implies that the Pakistan is the 6th most dangerous country for women.

i) women are subjected to rape by strangers as well as by intimate partners:

It is a sad reality that <sup>alot of</sup> women face sexual violence at the hands of their intimate partners, husbands. According to United Nations (UN), out of all the rape ~~cases~~ <sup>crimes</sup> in Pakistan, most of them are perpetrated by their husbands of women. Similarly, due to cultural constraints, most of the women who are subjected to marital rapes remain silent. Hence, the true number of such incidents do not come to the knowledge of general public. Besides facing sexual violence at the hands of their intimate partners, women are also subjected to rapes by strangers. According to the data provided by Punjab Home Department and Ministry of Human Rights, as many as 21,900 rape incidents were reported ~~between~~ in the country between 2017 to 2018 and about 12 women get raped in every 3 days.

ii) they face sexual harassment at the workplaces:

It seems like no place is safe for women in Pakistan. Along with being victims of sexual violence at homes, they are often harassed at their workplaces. They are often asked for sexual favours in return of some economic or material gains, such as increased salary or promotion. As of like a prey, they are hawked at work places. Moreover, they are subjected to coercion if they refuse to volunteer for the sexual favours. According to Ministry of Human Rights, over 2078 cases of workplace harassment came to surface in just 2021 alone. The ministry emphasised that the number manifested only a surface of the ocean as the real number is way over this.

### C) Socially constructed forms of gender based violence

Besides physical and sexual violence, women in Pakistan face several other forms of ~~women~~ abuses.

i) They forcefully married off:

On so many instances, one comes

to know that in some corners of the country, women or young girls were married off under coercion after being kidnapped by the perpetrators. This disgusting practise has always been present in Pakistan. However, in recent years, the rate of forced marriages has skyrocketed. According to Aurat Foundation, around 1000 women and young girls from religious minorities are forcefully converted and married off to their kidnappers in Pakistan every year in Pakistan. Similarly, a report published by Human Rights Commission Pakistan (HRCP) says in 2022 says that in every 30 days, 20 women, from Hindu and Christian, are converted under the pretext of forceful conversion marriages. Girls and women from the religion of minority are particularly vulnerable to such disgusting crimes against humanity.

ii) They are married off at an early age.

Owing to cultural practices and religious misinterpretation, a lot of girls are married off at an extremely early age in Pakistan. Child



marriages are an endemic in Pakistan. According to National Commission on the Rights of Children (NCRC), Pak is the 6th highest in the world for the <sup>marriages</sup> ~~number~~ of girls younger than 16 years. Similarly, the commission suggests that the 71 pc of girls in Pakistan do not have any say in the matters regarding their marriage. Despite all the laws, for example, sindh marriage act, the authorities have yet failed to eradicate this menace. One might ask that if such great laws are in place, why is it that the child marriages are still persistent in Pakistan? It is basically because the political leadership and law enforcement agencies lack the political will and authority to respectively to alter ~~with~~ the corrupt practices of the culture.

The iii) They are systematically deprived of education:-

Education, a necessity, is still a luxury for so many women and girls in Pakistan. Due to cultural and religious restrictions, a lot of women are deprived of education in Pakistan. After a certain age, women are forbidden from participating in educational activities. According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2022, dropout ratio <sup>of women</sup> in secondary

or higher secondary is ~~higher than~~ 35% higher than that of men in Pakistan.

iv) They are half-heartedly incorporated in economic sectors.

Women are inefficiently represented in economic sectors. A huge number of women is working in the informal sector of Pakistan.

According to United Nations, of the 5.26 million people working in informal sectors, <sup>in Pakistan</sup> 81 pc are women. This is a really huge number.

Women are mostly employed in informal sectors because they lack necessary knowledge, ~~and~~

education and skills that are prerequisite

for the employment in a formal setup. Resultantly,

they remain under direct subjugation of men,

and for most of their lives, they remain dependent on men.

#### d) Strategies to eliminate gender based violence from Pakistan:

i) Proper laws should be formulated, implemented and updated:-

strict laws should be formulated

against gender based violence. Other than their formulation, they must be implemented in true letter and spirit. Currently, ~~they~~ there are some great laws against violence against women in Pakistan, such as 'Punjab protection of women against violence act 2016'; 'Domestic violence prevention and Protection Act Sindh, 2013; etc. However, their implementation remains stalled. Besides their formulation and implementation, they should be timely amended to meet the needs of changing circumstances.

ii) incentives should be provided to people to avoid ~~the~~ girls' early marriage and school dropouts:

People should be incentivised to educate their daughters and to ~~not~~ prohibit them from marrying girls off at an early age. For example, 'Apni beti Apna Dhan' is programme started by Indian government to wane off the number of child marriages in India. Pakistan should learn from its eastern neighbour and start similar policies to stop menacing practice of child marriage in Pakistan.

iii) Girls should be educated to stop the practice of child marriages and to incorporate them in formal sector:-

According to United Nations (UN), when girl ~~study~~ studies 2 additional years, likelihood of her getting married lowers by 39 pc. Therefore, it is necessary for the Pakistani authorities to provide girls alot more education than they currently receive to put an end to this cultural apartheid. Similarly, if women were to be more educated, chances of their incorporation in formal sector grow manifold. Hence, to provide autonomy in terms of ~~their~~ education and marriage, women should receive education of atleast 16 years.

iv) The perpetrators of gender based violence should be strictly punished:-

To create <sup>make an</sup> deterrence and ~~be~~ example out of the perpetrators, the guilty of committing violence against women should be strictly punished. It is true that the lack of punishment has ~~come~~ emboldened the perpetrators of domestic, sexual and other violence against women.

## e) Conclusion:

Despite ~~the term~~ being used for both the genders, the term gender-based violence is limited to the violence committed against women. Like many developing nations, Pakistan has still a lot to do to eradicate gender-based violence. In Pakistan, women are subjected physical and sexual abuse on regular basis although it has some great laws in place to protect women. Certainly, it is safe to say that ~~that~~ women are extremely unsafe in Pakistan, and the country has become extremely dangerous for women.

"Beating women is not cultural, it is criminal and it needs to be addressed and treated as such"

(Hillary Clinton)