

Q. What are the root causes that led to gender-based violence? How do these factors interest and perpetuate violence against women in Pakistan?

Introduction

Gender-based violence is a deep rooted social system in Pakistan.

The causes that led to violence varies from regions and province. However, factors like patriarchy, gender associated roles, social construction of femininity and masculinity interests and perpetuate violence against women in Pakistan. Holly Jackson, in his work "Violence against Women: An International Perspective" highlights the social construct of violence and how it is not associated to single individual but to a society in whole.

United Nations General Assembly in 1993 defines gender-based violence as, "any act of gender-

based violation which results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual and psychological harassment, or suffering of women, including threat of such act, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether in public or private life."

It is important to notice that gender-based violence is not only related to women but to men or boys as well. It is violence which is caused because of one's gender or expectations associated with that specific gender. Khalid Hosseini in his book, "A Kite Runner" depicted the violence against men specially sexual violence.

Root Causes

The violence is rooted deeply in social structure across Pakistan.

Females mostly become the victim of violence because of multiple reasons like small chores, dowry, inheritance right and education. Here

are few major causes of violence based on gender.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is the major cause of many types of violence in Pakistan like domestic violence, honor killing and child marriage.

It is considered as women are objects and their purpose is to serve males only. **Tehmina Durrani**, in her book, "My Feudal Lords" emphasized this system of patriarchy and feudalism being biggest supporter of patriarchy. She noted that she was merely a possession for her husband. Domestic violence is associated with masculinity in patriarchy.

Nafisa Rizvi in her novel, "A Blue Room", explains that not only males but females also the supporter of patriarchy. Females become victim but elder females of family are in favour of the system. According to the report of Aurat Foundation Pakistan

in 2013, domestic violence reported cases were 400+. However, in 2024, SSDO reported 2200+ cases of domestic violence.

Social acceptance of violence

The violence due to multiple reasons is not considered as a crime.

Sexual harassment is an act related to 'izzat' in Pakistan.

Anand Lievan, in his book "Pakistan a hard country" noted that every cast even lower one have this 'izzat'. The maximum cases of sexual harassment are never

reported. Guernsey in her work,

Sexual harassment: A Question of Power

she explains these concepts of sexual violence. In Pakistan, no concept of marital rape and it is considered as private matter. The society in general accepting violence by hiding it. In 2024, 5538 cases reported.

Wrong Religious Interpretations

Pakistan is a Muslim country, but

the customs are most associated with wrong interpretation of Islam.

Dowry is not allowed in Islam.

Whereas, in Pakistan it is the major reason behind violence against females.

^{Domestic} Ayesha S. Chudhary in her book, Violence against women and

the Islamic perspective, reflects the Islamic teachings regarding domestic

issues. In 2010, 38 women

became victim of stove burning which were actually due to dowry

related issues. Stove burning is a

term used for burning female alive by her husband or in laws. Religious

leaders should give religious declara-

tions (Fatwa) on dowry. Pakistan

government passed an act 'Dowry

and bridal gift (Restriction) Law, 1976'

The issue is still there so need of strict implementation of laws.

Women as commodity

Women is used to solve dispute

across Pakistan and it is normal

custom in various tribes. There are child marriages for dispute settlement. Women sexual harassment in disputes. Honor killing is appreciated and allowed, if women try to take any decision of her choice her family can kill her for their honor. So, women is treated as object, which is responsible for family honor and settlement of disputes. Muktara Mai in 2002 was gang raped in settlement of a dispute. Unfortunately, she has not given justice for tribunal cruel decision. Samya S Zia in her work, Crime or custom?: Violence against women in Pakistan. She exposed that whether it is crime or custom. **Randeel Baloch** (2016), a significant example of honor killing.

Lack of Education

This is also major cause of violence. Females are not provided with

secure and accessible education. They remain unaware of their rights. They throughout the life become victim of violence because they are economically dependant. If they get education and able to find economic security the condition of women in Pakistan must be better. Charlotte Perkins Gilman in her work Women and Economy also shared these ideas of empowerment.

Conclusion

These causes leads to violence of many kinds. Women also become victim of trafficking as Musa Khan explained in his book, ^{essay} 'Trafficking women and prostitution in Pakistan and Afghanistan'. Gender roles, violence passed through generation, masculinity and femininity, women as commodity or object are the violence trigger in society. Due to these causes many females faces violence everyday in Pakistan of physical, sexual, psychological and

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economic kind. In 2010, the reported cases of gender-based-violence were 7571. The number increased in 2023 to 10201 and in 2024 by report of SSPD there were 32651 cases of violence. There is need of strict implementation of law and to make secure Pakistan for females. Islamic being biggest support of women right never allows such violence. Prophet PBUH also advised to take care of woman. These root causes must be ripped off from their bases.