

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

Ans: 1 Introduction:

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most pressing challenges confronting societies worldwide, and Pakistan is no exception. It refers to harmful acts directed at individuals based on their gender, disproportionately affecting women. GBV is not an ~~isolated~~ isolated phenomenon but rather the outcome of entrenched patriarchal structures, socio-economic inequalities, and cultural practices that normalize violence. In Pakistan, it manifests in forms such as domestic abuse, honor killings, workplace harassment, acid attacks, and child marriages. To understand its persistence, it is crucial to examine the root causes and how they intersect to perpetuate violence against women.

2. Patriarchal Social Structure:

At the heart of GBV lies patriarchy,

which defines men as dominant and women as subordinate. In Pakistan, patriarchal norms are deeply embedded in family and community life, where men are often seen as custodians of honor and authority. Women's autonomy is restricted, and violence becomes a tool to enforce obedience. Practices such as honor killings, restrictions on women's mobility, and forced marriages are direct outcomes of this patriarchal mindset. This structural imbalance of power legitimizes violence as a means of control, making it difficult for women to resist or escape abusive ~~circumstances~~ situations.

3. Cultural Norms and Misinterpretations of Religion:

Cultural traditions and misinterpretations of religious teachings further reinforce GBV. In many ~~countries~~ communities, violence is normalized as a form of discipline, while silence and stigma discourage victims from reporting abuse. Misuse of religious interpretations often justifies male authority and female subordination, creating an environment where

violence is tolerated. Instead of promoting equality and compassion, these distorted views perpetuate harmful practices such as child marriage and domestic abuse, which are seen as culturally acceptable.

4. Economic Dependence and Poverty:

Economic inequality is another major driver of GIBV. Women in Pakistan often lack access to property rights, inheritance, and independent income, leaving them financially dependent on men. This dependence reduces their bargaining power within households and traps them in abusive relationships. Poverty also increases stress levels, leading to high rates of domestic violence. In rural areas, women's unpaid labor in agriculture and households is undervalued, further reinforcing their vulnerability. Without economic empowerment, women remain unable to challenge or escape cycles of violence.

5. Weak Legal and Institutional Framework:

Although Pakistan has introduced laws such as the Domestic Violence Acts and the Harassment

at Workplace Act, enforcement remains weak. Police reluctance, victim-blaming attitudes, and lengthy judicial processes discourage women from seeking justice. Perpetrators often enjoy impunity due to political or social influence, which emboldens them to continue abusive behavior. The lack of gender-sensitive training among law enforcement agencies further exacerbates the problem, leaving survivors without adequate protection or support.

6. Lack of Education and Awareness:

Low literacy rates among women hinder awareness of their rights and limit their ability to resist violence. Gender stereotypes are reinforced through text-books, media and everyday socialization, which portray women as passive and dependent. Without gender-sensitive curricula and awareness campaigns, discriminatory attitudes remain unchallenged. This lack of education perpetuates cycles of violence, as women are unable to access legal remedies or economic opportunities that could empower them.

7. Intersection of Factors in Pakistan:

These causes do not operate in isolation; they intersect to perpetuate GIBV in Pakistan.

Patriarchy, Poverty, and weak institutions combine to trap women in abusive relationships. Cultural silence and legal gaps normalized violence as "domestic matter", while economic dependence and lack of education prevent women from resisting or escaping abuse.

Together, these factors create a systemic environment where GIBV is sustained across generations, undermining women's rights and national development.

8. Conclusion:

Gender-based violence in Pakistan is the product of structural inequalities, Patriarchal norms, economic dependence, and weak institutions. These factors intersect to perpetuate violence against women, making it a systemic issue rather than isolated incidents. Addressing GIBV requires a multi-dimensional approach: strengthening laws and enforcement, promoting women's economic empowerment, reforming education

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to challenge stereotypes, and raising awareness
to change harmful cultural norms. Only by
dismantling these root causes can Pakistan
move towards a more equitable and just
society where women are free from
violence and discrimination.
