

Gender Studies

Question

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

Answer

Introduction

Gender based violence is the general term used to capture violence that occurs as a result of normative role and expression of society or male dominant personalities. Gender based violence in Pakistan is a multidimensional problem rooted in historical, socio-culture, economic, political and institutional structures. It is not caused by a single factor; rather, it emerges from the intersection

of patriarchy, social norms and economic inequalities. "According to UNFPA (2023),

GBV persists when unequal power relations between men and women become normalized in both public and private spheres."

2. Root causes that led to Gender-Based violence

There are different causes that led to gender-based violence as follows:

(i) Patriarchy and Control over women

Patriarchy is the foundational root cause of gender based violence. It establishes men as a dominant and women as subordinate. "Pierre Bourdieu's theory of Symbolic violence explains how patriarchal norms become internalized making gender inequality appear natural. In Pakistan patriarchal culture regulates women mobility

decision making, and Sexuality, legitimizing practices such as domestic violence, forced marriage and honour crimes.

(ii) Harmful Cultural Practices and Norms

Harmful cultural practices and culturally norms led to the gender based violence in society and country. Deeply embedded tradition normalize violence as a tool of control. "Social learning theory individuals learn how to behave through experience of and exposure to violence. Intergeneration transmission of violence incorporates "Social learning theory" to examine how the relationship between the victim and offender contributes to the cycle of gender based violence"



(iii) Social Acceptance of Violence

Gender based violence often continues because society perceives it as a private family matter. According to the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey, over 34% of women believe husbands are justified in beating their wives under certain circumstances. This illustrates internalized patriarchy and normalized violence.

(iv) Economic Dependence and Structural Inequality

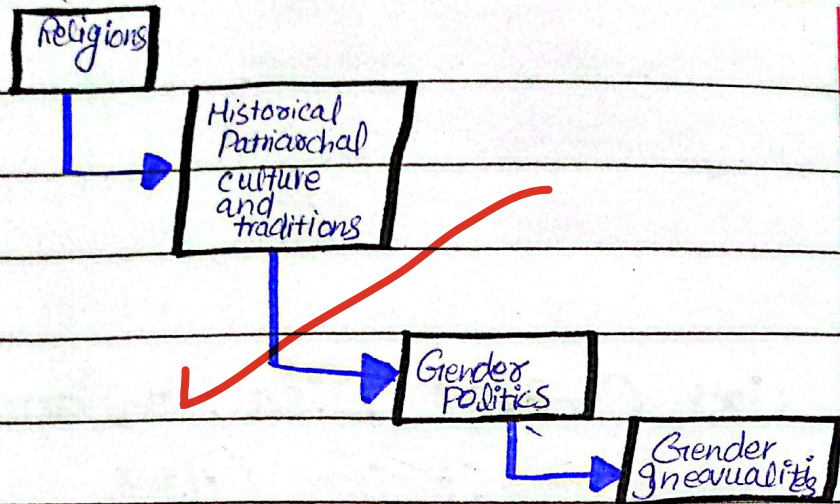
Economic dependence is also the root cause of gender based violence in society. The stereotypes mind-sets of male dominated society seem to women as a subordinated than masculinities. Women's limited access to education, land inheritance, and employment reduce their bargaining power.

(v) Weak Legal Framework and Poor Implementation

Legal framework weaknesses also escalate the violence of gender. The poor implementation of policies on society is the main root cause of gender based violence because if the implementation of policies not accurately than how the prevention of crime and violence possible. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, only a small percentage of GBV cases lead to convictions.

(vi) Religious Misinterpretation

Religion itself does not promote violence, but misinterpretation^{at} by traditional clerics is used to justify control over women. "Misuse of concept such as 'obedience of wife' or 'honour' reinforce patriarchal cultures". Farida Shaheed, Gender, Religion and Quest for Justice.



(vii) Low Education and Lack of Awareness

Education levels strongly influence attitude toward gender based violence.

Pakistan has one of the world's highest gender education gaps contributing to: limited awareness of rights, acceptance of harmful practices, and early marriage.

(viii) Media Stereotypes and Objectification

Media often reinforces gender stereotypes in society. Women are portrayed as submissive, emotional and dependent over

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men. Men are shown as authoritative and controlling. This normalizes violence and reinforces harmful gender roles.

(ix) Conflict, Disasters, and Humanitarian Crises

Conflict, disasters and humanitarian crises also led to the gender based violence. Movements from one place to another place during humanitarian crises caused the escalation in gender based violence. UNFPA(2023) shows that crises disrupt social structures, increase poverty, and reduce access to protection systems.

(x) Digital Violence and cyber Harassment

Growing digital platform have expanded gender based violence into online spaces. Around 40% of Pakistan women experience online

harassment. Besides, cyberbullying leads to blackmail, emotional abuse, and in severe cases, honour violence.

3. How These Factors Intersect and Perpetuate GIBV in Pakistan

There are different factors that lead to ^{ter} increased and perpetuate gender based violence in Pakistan as follows:

(i) Patriarchal and cultural Norms

cultural practices such as honour killings are justified through patriarch beliefs about male dominance and female purity.

There is no doubt patriarchal mindset leads to the perpetuate gender based violence in Pakistan.

(ii) Economic Dependence and Legal Weakness

Economic dependence, when women lack economic autonomy and the justice system is weak, abusers face no

consequences. This creates a cycle of impunity. Economic dependence of male and legal weakness also lead to the gender based continuity in Pakistan.

(iii) Religious Misinterpretation and Social Norms

Misinterpreted religious ideas are used to reinforce culture expectations of obedience and control. Misinterpretation of religious norms enhance the gender inequalities among groups.

(iv) Education Gaps and Media Stereotypes

After religious misinterpretation, education gaps also perpetuate the gender based violence in Pakistan, because uneducated or poorly informed communities rely on media portrayals that reinforce regressive gender roles.

(v) Poverty and Domestic Violence

Financial stress increases household conflict, and women's lack of alternatives keeps them trapped. Due to this, this factor intersect and perpetuate the gender based violence in Pakistan.

(vi) Crises Situations and pre-existing Inequality

Natural disaster exacerbate existing inequalities, leaving women more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

5. Strategies to Eliminate Violence Against Women

Effective strategies to reduce violence against women include strengthening law enforcement, promoting gender sensitive education, empowering women economically, ensuring swift justice, expanding shelters and support services, challenging

patriarchal norms through community awareness, engaging men and boys in prevention to counter harmful stereotypes in Pakistan.

6- Conclusion

The root causes of Gender Based Violence in Pakistan lie in patriarchal social structure, economic dependence, harmful traditions, discriminatory norms and weak governance system. These factors intersect, reinforcing each other and sustaining a cycle of violence across generations. Meaningful reduction in Gender Based Violence requires a multiple sectoral approach, including legal reforms, education, economic empowerment and cultural transformation. "Violence against women is not a private matter; it is a public injustice rooted in inequality" — (UNDEVW).