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Discuss the gap between legal provisions and enforcement in cases of gender-based violence in Pakistan, what are the root causes? How these factors perpetuate violence against women in Pakistan.

### Introduction

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is one of the most common issues of women in Pakistan. Gender-Based violence which women faces at homes, workplace, and public places despite having laws and protection for women. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act (2016) made honour killing punishable, The Workplace Harassment Act 2010, protect women from harassment at workplaces and provincial domestic act exists in Punjab and Sindh. Yet, violence still continues. The reports from 2024 showed, 32,600 women cases of gender-based violence reported, 53,000 rape cases reported and hundred of honour killings. This shows a big gap between law written on paper and their

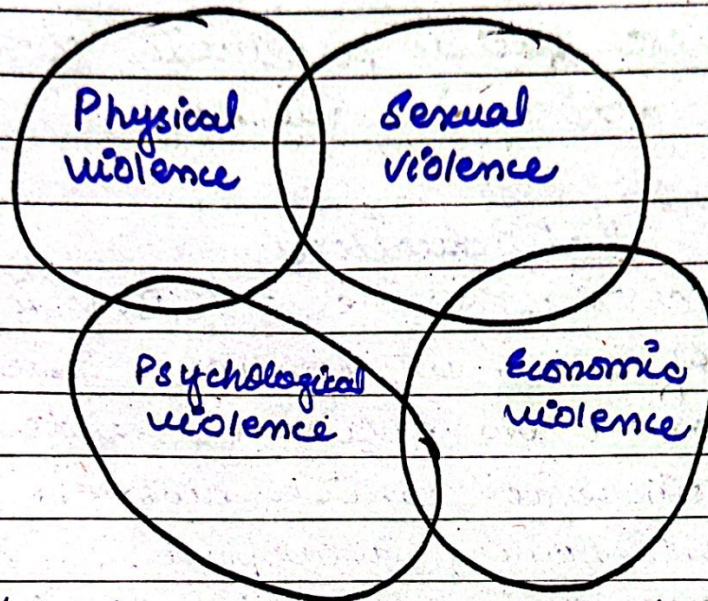


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actual enforcement in society.

## Forms of Gender-Based Violence in Pakistan



Although, there are many forms of gender-based violence, but some of the most common forms are given below:

(1)

### Physical violence

Physical violence may include beating, stabbing, acid throwing, and bride burning. For instance 86 cases of acid attacks were reported in 2018-19.

(2)

### Sexual violence

Sexual violence include marital rape, sexual abuse, Rape and



Harassment: Around 93% women reported who faces workplace harassment despite having law the work place harassment Act 2010.

(3)

### Psychological violence

Many women faces psychological violence in marital relationships such as verbal abuse, threats, humiliation, and confinement inside homes.

(4)

### Economic violence

Economic violence is very common type of violence in Pakistan which includes denial of inheritance rights, low wages and financial dependence.

### Enforcement Gap in Practice

The main problem is not absence of laws, but the <sup>lack of</sup> implementation of laws. Police often refuse to register FIRs of Domestic violence by saying it a "Family issue". The another issue of enforcement gap in

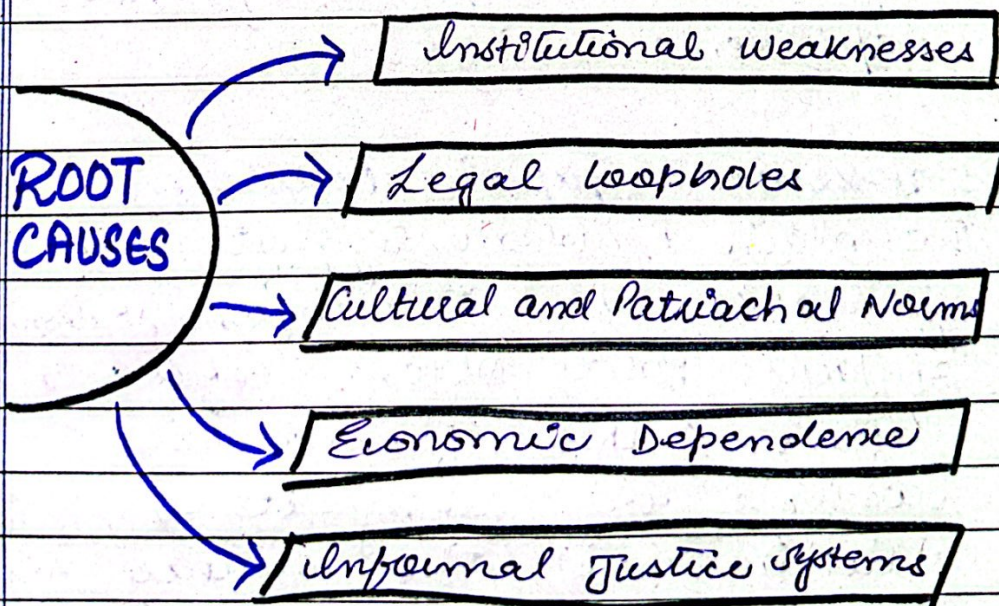


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practice is courts are overburdened which take years to decide, in which the survivors are pressured to withdraw. Similarly, COVID-19 pandemic, reports showed the cases of domestic violence sharply increased, but support services such as helplines and shelter were limited. Alongside Violence Against Women Center (VAWC) in Multan (2017) are not expanded over country, which limit their impact. This weak enforcement make the cycle of violence alive.

### Root Causes of The Gap





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(1)

### Institutional Weaknesses

Police lack training in handling Gender-based violence cases and often show bias. Forensic evidence systems are weak and courts are overburdened causing delays.

(2)

### Legal Loopholes

Laws are not uniform across provinces. In many cases, families forgive the perpetrator, especially in honour killing cases and cases are dropped despite laws.

(3)

### Cultural and Patriarchal Norms

Society sees women as honour of family. In some cultures, they practice like *swara*, *vani* and *irqae* (giving girls in marriage as compensation) continue in some rural areas.

(4)

### Economic Dependence

Only 20% of women in Pakistan are in labour force. Many women stays in toxic relationships to avoid fight long legal battles. These are the major reasons that domestic violence cases are not



not reported.

(15)

## Informal Justice Systems

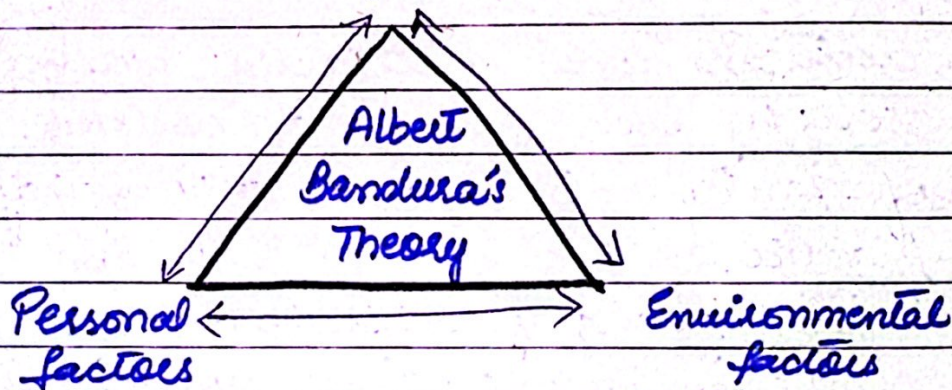
Many rural areas, jirgas and panchayats decide family disputes. They often side illegal practices forced marriages and honour killing, mostly practicing in the tribal areas of Balochistan which they undermining legal orders.

## Theoretical Perspectives

(1)

### Social Learning Theory

Behaviour  
factors



According to Albert Bandura's theory, behaviours are learned. Same as the violence itself is a learned behaviour. Boys who see fathers beating mothers may grow up taking violence as normal. Girls learn to tolerate it as part of life. This explains how domestic violence repeats across generations.



## (2) Resource Theory

Resource Theory was introduced by Blood and Wolfe in (1960) to explain intimate partner violence (IPV), through a related "gendered resource theory" was developed by Atkinson; violence happens when men control resources like power, money and property. They use violence to maintain power in household. In Pakistan, Denying of inheritance rights or jobs make women dependent & easier to control.

## (3)

### Culture Acceptance Theory

"Cultural Acceptance Theory" isn't a single, unified theory but a concept studied within various theoretical frameworks. That studies how individuals and societies accept or reject foreign cultural elements, technologies and practice. Violence continues because societies take it as normal and don't react to it, similarly the harassment cases are increased, because of lack of implementation of laws and strict punishments, long delays



lead to increase in domestic violence and harassment cases in society

## Case studies and Events

(1)

Muktaran Mai (2002)

A survivor of gang rape who struggled for justice due to weak courts and stigma.

(2)

Gandeel Baloch (2016)

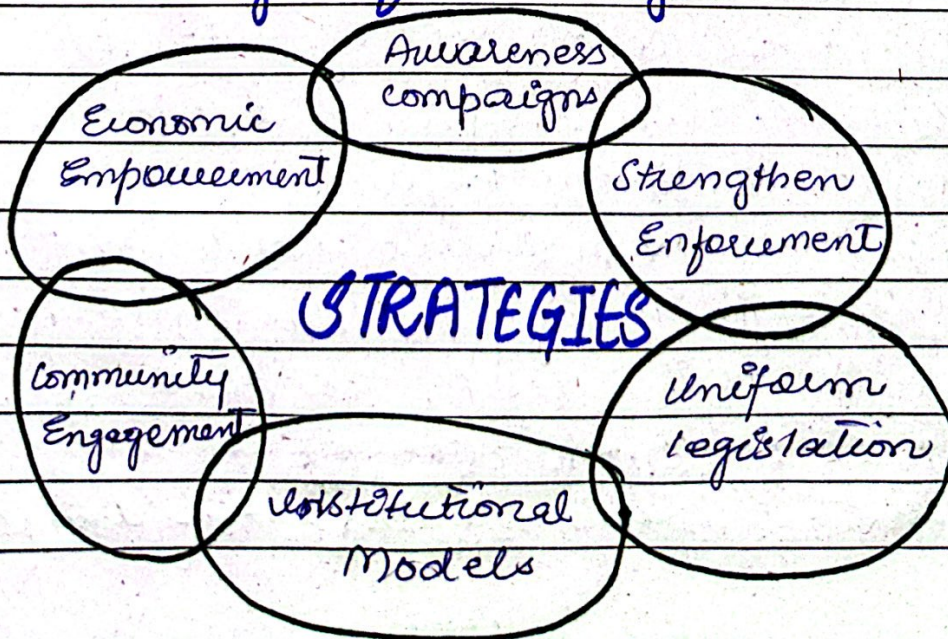
Murder in the name of honour, her case showed that how cultural norms overpower laws.

(3)

Shalmeen Obaid - Chinnay's Documentary: "A Girl in the River" (2015):

Highlighted honour killings and pushed government to toughen the laws.

## Strategies for change





## Conclusion:-

Pakistan has laws against almost every form of violence against women, but weak enforcement makes them ineffective. Patriarchy, economic dependence, and cultural tolerance of violence prevent women from using legal protections. Cases like Mukhtaran Mai and Qandeel Baloch show how social and institutional barriers stand in the way of justice. Ensuring justice for women is not only about rights but also about Pakistan's progress.