

Q.NO.7 :

To what extent do socio-economic factors - such as unemployment, poverty, and gendered labor roles - shaped the patterns and intensity of GBV in Pakistan today? Explain by highlighting the different forms of Gender-based violence.

I. Introduction

Gender-based violence refers to any harmful act - physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, or economic - that is committed against a person because of their gender and is deeply rooted in unequal power systems in society.

Socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment etc are the major drivers of GBV in Pakistan. Together these factors increases the intensity and frequency of Gender-based violence.

II. How Socio-economic factors shape patterns and intensity of GBV in Pakistan:

A. Poverty

Due to poverty, households face higher level of stress, frustration, and conflicts as they experience chronic economic hardships. These conditions increases domestic abuse and intimate partner violence. Also, poverty limits escape options for survivors because economic dependence constrains their ability to leave abusive relationships or seek legal protection.

Forms of GBV linked to Poverty:

(i) Domestic Abuse and Intimate Partner violence

Poverty or economic stress within low-income families often escalates everyday conflicts into violent acts. Men who are unable to fulfil societal expectations as providers end up exerting power through physical violence against their wives. Women living in poverty also have limited financial autonomy and this factor also reduces their capacity to resist or report abuse. Many domestic violence cases remain unreported in Pakistan.

(ii) Early and Forced Marriages

Economic hardships causes families to hatter marry their daughters early to lessen economic burden. Due to early marriages, girls are unable to get education which further makes them prone to domestic violence

(iii) Economic violence

In poor households, women may be denied access to money, inheritance etc, keeping them dependent on male family members.

B. Unemployment

Unemployment, particularly among men undermines established gender roles. It creates financial stress and frustration. When men cannot secure stable employment, their sense of social status and masculine identity may be threatened. This often leads to increased aggression and exertion of control through violence. Women and children in households with unemployed men are at higher risk of violence in Pakistan. Furthermore, a large number of women in Pakistan are unemployed because of early marriages, cultural norms etc. which increase their dependence on men.

Forms of GBV linked to unemployment:

(i) Domestic Violence

Domestic violence often rises when men spend long hours sitting idle and stressed at home due to unemployment or loss of job. Some men express these emotions through physical, verbal, or emotional abuse, to reassert their authority.

(ii) Psychological Abuse

Unemployed men may become more dominant and controlling. They may monitor their wives, limit their movement, or insult them to feel powerful. Psychological abuse is the invisible form of GBV and very common in Pakistan.

(iii) Backlash against working women

If a woman starts earning and the husband is jobless, he may feel threatened. This sometimes leads to increased domestic violence.

(iv) Public Harrasment

When many men are jobless, idle groups gather in markets, streets etc. This increases harrasment of women in public spaces.

C. Gendered Labor roles (Traditional roles of men and women)

In Pakistan, men are seen as providers or earners and women as caregivers. Rigid gender roles in Pakistan place men in positions of authority and limit women's independence. Women are expected to obey, remain within home, and maintain family honor. These norms justify certain types of violence and discourage reporting.

Forms of GBV linked to Gendered labor roles:

(i) Violence in domestic sphere

Because women are expected to manage the household, failure to meet male expectations (e.g. cooking on time, cleaning etc) can lead to physical or emotional abuse.

(ii) Violence against transgenders

In Pakistan, transgender individuals face highly restricted labor opportunities due to social norms. Society expects them to perform specific gendered economic roles, such as begging, dancing at ceremonies, sex work, often under unsafe conditions. Formal employment is denied and they face violence at their workplaces. They are frequently attacked or harassed in public spaces.

(iii) Sexual violence or exploitation

Women who work outside or perform household work may be sexually harassed or assaulted by men who see economic independence as a challenge to traditional roles.

(iv) Honor-related violence

Deviating from assigned labor roles (refusing household work, earning independently, or working in "male jobs") may trigger honor based threats. Women and girls may be shamed, threatened or even attacked for violating expectations linked to labor and household duties.