

## VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN

### (A CASE STUDY OF NAIABAADICHAAKRA, RAWALPINDI)

SYEDA SANA MUNIRKAZMI<sup>1</sup> & ANWAAR MOHYUDDIN<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan

#### ABSTRACT

This research paper investigates the causes, sources, types, and the natives' perspective of violence against men. The research was conducted in Nai Abaadi Chaakra, Saddar, Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Qualitative anthropological research techniques were used to collect empirical data. Social setup, culture, religion, geographical conditions, economic setup, moral standards and literacy are the major determinants of gender discrimination in any society. In order to investigate the causes of violence against men, all these plausible factors are studied in this research study with the help of individual and collective analysis. As a result, the causes of violence and discrimination against men by the hands of women are identified and analyzed. The research has important practical implications for people, organizations, policy makers, and government. Educating masses and providing adequate resources and support to the victims is necessary to reduce the instances of the violence against men. It also presents important research implications suggesting longitudinal and comparative studies in this research area in the future.

**KEY WORDS:** Violence against Men, Sexual Abuse, Psychological Violence, Emotional Violence

#### INTRODUCTION

Everything in the world is maintained by a balancing factor known as nature. Nature provides different qualities and potentials along with their appearance to every object. Every balancing factor is adding to the support the object gives to its counterpart. Man and woman are also made as each other's supportive counterparts who ensure the nature's balance and maintain a supportive system of the society. Many a times this balance is disturbed when one partner violates the rights of the other leading to gender discrimination. The discrimination takes its roots from the very fact that man and woman have differences in physical and emotional strengths. Men, being the physically stronger being have been subjugating women for long through means of violence and discrimination. However, this presents only one side of the picture. A deeper observation depicts that the balance of the nature is sometimes disturbed by women as well, when they subject men to violence and discrimination of many sorts. Statistics reveal that men are victim of violence in 63% of the aggressive domestic situations, while women are victimized in 39% of such instances (Fiebert, 1997).

Violence against men is a phenomenon which has prevailed in our society for long, but has never gotten into limelight. This is due to the fact that many critics claim that violence shown by women is usually caused in retaliation or self-defense, therefore we only need to tackle the issue of violence against women (Kurz, 1993; Pleck et al, 1980). Our social, cultural, and emotional barriers blind us to see men of our society being victimized at the hands of women. Violence is the most important element generated as a result of gender discrimination. Although difficult to believe, women are found to be potentially more capable of violence and discrimination than men. In our society, men face various kinds of violence by the hands of women ranging from physical abuse, to psychological, sexual, and emotional torture. Women,

despite being the weaker gender, have the reigning power within the four walls of the house which gives them an edge over men with regards to decision making about household affairs. Consequently, she always pushes her man forward to implement the decisions made by her and face the consequences as well. This ultimate household authority in the hands of women, in many instances, leads to the exploitation of power which is shown by discrimination against men.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative anthropological research techniques which include socio-economic survey, participant observation, key informant interviews, case studies and in-depth interviews were used to collect empirical data. A collection of sampling methods is used at different stages of the research to ensure the objectivity. Simple stratified sampling is used to classify the population according to age, gender, and occupation. Random sampling is used for surveying different population segments. Lastly, snowball sampling is used to gather information in a quick, efficient, and fruitful manner. Through this sampling technique 10 different cases were found and thoroughly investigated and researched upon to gain insight into the research aims and objectives. Moreover, the case based research helped in probing into the respondents emotions and expressions, which is rather difficult in a questionnaire based survey.

## **RESEARCH SITE**

Chaakra is a village near Saddar, Rawalpindi, Pakistan with its geographical coordinates as 33° 35' 15" North, 72° 58' 39" East. It is 10 kilometers to the south of Mall Road, Rawalpindi. Islamabad is located in the north of Chakrah, in the east there is a land of Sehyaam, Sheikhpur is in the west and Jalaldeen is in the south. This research was conducted in 'NaiAabadi Chakra, extension of the village located at the distance of 1.5 kilometer in the north. Its total area is 89kanals, out of which 21kanals comes under graveyard, 14kanals is used by brick makers, 30kanals is the residential area and the remaining area comes under markets, schools and Mosques. There are 175 houses in NaiAabadi Chakra, out of which 91 are paka houses (cemented). The native language is Punjabi. Some settlers from different regions of Pakistan speak their languages also.

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Violence and domestic abuse have been part of the societies of the world since the foundation of so-called civil society (Fee, Brown, and Lazarus, 2002). Empirical evidences depict women as equally and sometimes even more violent than their male counterparts. However, the abusive pattern of females has only recently emerged from its cloak of secrecy (Babcock and Siard, 2003). Although many believe that women become violent only for self-defense or retaliation, researches have revealed that majority of the women do not cite self-defense as the incentive for violent behavior against their male counterparts. Rather, anger, jealousy, efforts to gain dominance and control in the relationship, and confusion are some of the important causes of violent behavior by women.

Domestic violence is as a pattern of abusive behaviours by one or both partners in an intimate relationship such as marriage, dating, family, friends or cohabitation (Miller, 2005).

Domestic violence includes hitting, pushing, throwing objects, striking a person with an object, or with a weapon. On the other hand, domestic abuse has a much wider scope and includes all types of 'sexual, emotional, financial, and psychological abuse' through the use of aggression, intimidations, and non-consensual sexual attention as well as humiliation (Findlater and Kelly, 1999).

However, this affects men and women quite differently. Domestic violence against men and women has certain similarities and differences. In most cases, men are more deeply hurt by emotional, rather than physical abuse. In many

cases, humiliating a man emotionally in front of some other man can be much more devastating than physical abuse. Professionals have observed that mental and emotional abuse is an area where women tend to be more brutal than men. Men, on the other hand, tend to get physically abusive.

### **Theories of Domestic Violence:**

Different theories on domestic violence have explained the phenomena in different ways. Feminist theories are focused on female abuse and draw on the accounts of an understanding of how gendered power differentials foster inequality and male entitlement in societies. These theories propose that such violent behavior is observed to achieve and maintain male domination and control. These theories propagate that violence is a socially learned behavior which reinforces itself. In the words of Caesar & Hamberger,

“The cognitive-behavioural model and pro-feminist approaches view violence as socially learned and self-reinforcing behaviour. Violence is seen as functional behaviour and batterers use it to systematically enhance their power in the relationship and control over their female partner. According to this model, a batterer’s use of violence against a woman is a choice. Batterers are motivated to continue their use of violence because it successfully serves their purpose of maintaining power and control.”

(1989)

Some of the socio-cultural theorists see men’s violence as result of structural inequalities in the society. Johnson (1996) sees Patriarchy as a wide spread influence in the formation and maintenance of all our primary institutions in modern society, which covers legal system, health and education on the macro level and the nuclear families on the micro level. Some others argue that violent behavior in males is depicted as a reaction to stress in situations of relative deprivation, unemployment, or changing gender roles.

However, such theories are widely criticized for ignoring individual differences, or why most men are not violent to women or why violence occurs in lesbian relationships. Renzetti explains that:

“Some of the most striking differences between lesbian battered and heterosexual battered have to do with links to the external environment of the relationship. Threats of “outing” women to family members or employers are common forms of psychological abuse and are of course unique to same-gender couples; battered lesbians are evidently less likely to be supported by friends, who often refuse to believe that a lesbian can be an abuser; and social service workers are often unsupportive as well, assuming that only men batter their partners.”

(1992)

Psychological theories are based on development and personality attributes. Proponents of these theories claim that violent behavior exhibited by people to their partners is a result of early abuse trauma, harsh, disrupted parenting, insecure or disorganized attachment styles, personality disorders, depression, low self-esteem, and emotional difficulties. Critics argue that some of these factors emerge as a consequence rather than as a cause of domestic violence, or because men tend to put the blame on other problems to excuse it.

Psychological theories focus on the treatment of abuser as a solution, and suggest individual, or sometimes group therapies. Psychotherapy, anger management, and substance abuse treatment are some of the popular methods of treatment. They are, however, criticized by Hamberger and Hastings (1993) for not taking into account the power and control dimensions of abuse.

The theories stated above are not individually sufficient to explain domestic violence. Practitioners, however, widely use techniques based on feminist and socio-cultural approaches for therapy, although research studies that combine all these paradigms are limited. According to Societal structure theory;

“Domestic violence is caused by an underlying power imbalance that can be understood only by examining society as a whole. The analysis focuses on patriarchy or male domination over women and children through physical, economic, and political control. Domestic violence reflects women’s inequality in the culture and the reinforcement of this reality by various institutions.”

(Canadian Panel on Violence against Women, 1993)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Over the years, researchers have found that the frequency of conjugal violence between husband and wife is almost equal. This tells that not only females, but males have also been victims of IPV, despite the lack of attention that they have had in media and scholarly literature. Research over last 30 years has indicated that within a given year, at least 12% of men are the targets of aggression of one form or the other from their female partners (Strauss et al, 1996). Menard, Anderson, and Godboldt (2008) reported that each year approximately 1.3 per 1000 men are victimized by their female partners, as opposed to 3.8 per 1000 women. Although these statistics are not as high as women, they are not negligible. In the past, domestic violence was considered a personal, rather than a social issue. In western societies, it has gained the status of a serious social issue and a crime (Johnson, 2005). However, in Pakistani society we still lack proper laws and policies to control such instances in case of both men and women.

IPV by women against men not only leads to physical harm, but also mental health problems in men. Some of the most common problems that men face as a consequence of intimate partner violence include depression, stress, psychosomatic symptoms and general psychological distress (Cascardi, Langhinrichsen, & Vivian, 1992).

Researchers have also indicated that although the violence against women has gone down over the years, violence against men has remained quite steady. Crime surveys, however, fail to report actual magnitude of IPV as men are reluctant to label the physical violence from their female partner as “crime” as they may be viewed as emasculating (Steinmetz, 1977).

At the same time, when it comes to conceptualizing marital violence, women are less likely to report their use of IPV, than men. Rates of sexual and psychological abuse by women towards men are harder to obtain due to the fact that no systematic efforts have been made to obtain them despite the fact that both are used by women quite often. Studies have also indicated that as much as 90% of men are target of psychological assault including being threatened, called names, or being insulted and sworn at, in their relationship.(Steinmetz, 1977).

Viano (1996) noted that men find it much harder to get out of the trauma of violence because of the disbelief and the stereotyped reaction from their friends and families. Another reason why men hesitate to report IPV is the unfair treatment by judicial system towards men because of their gender (Cook, 2002). At the same time, some experts claim that the burden of proof for victimization of men in case of IPV is high for men because it falls out of our common understanding of gender roles.

Studies have indicated that women usually victimize their partners as retaliation to ongoing abuse inflicted on them by their partners and use violence to try to stop or escape it. Gelles puts women motivation against men succinctly in the following words:

“People hit and abuse family members because they can. And in today s society, as reflected in TV, movies, and feminist doctrine, women are openly given permission to hit men. For example, a woman slapping a man in the face is rarely, if ever, viewed as domestic violence.” (2001:133)

Some other reasons that motivated women to hit men include threats to their children or loved ones, retaliations and punishment for some past behavior, anger, fury, attention seeking behavior, or stress and frustration (Archer, 2000). However, women use violence against men to gain short term benefits, as opposed to men who use it to establish authority over a longer period. It has also been found out that women’s violence rarely succeed in changing men’s behavior.

Sexual aggression is any forms of behavior directed towards the goal of making another person engage in sexual contact against the target person’s will. It involves verbal coercion, exploiting a person’s incapacitated state, and threatening or using physical force. Krahe, Waizenhofer, and Moller (2003) found out that every 1 in 10 women use aggressive strategies to intimidate the male counterpart sexually, and try to obtain sexual contact against his will on at least one occasion.

Studies indicate that violent behavior exhibited by women towards men is influenced by both, long term influences like childhood sexual abuse, and more immediate aspects of sexual interaction, such as perceived peer pressure, number of sexual partners etc. (Corry, 1997).

This study depicted that the male counterpart of a family suffers from various problems simultaneously. Men are victims of mental stresses caused by various factors ranging from economical to social depending upon their individual conditions. However, the root cause of this stress is always the female counterpart. Women generally use their words as a weapon against men by tormenting them in rude or emotional way. The torment does not end here but many a times takes the more aggressive form of physical abuse.

The study also revealed that females tend to influence men by creating stressful environment within their houses which generates depression and anxiety amongst men and they give in to the wills of their female counterparts. Men are the chief income earner of the families and spend most of their time struggling and striving to make both ends meet. These stresses lessen their absorption capacities of household politics and unstable environment created by females. This is one of the main reasons that they give up on arguing with their females. Women, in such situations, exploit men financially, as well as emotionally and physically abuse them for fulfilling their needs. Moreover, women often use manipulative tactics when it comes to emotions. They abstain from showing emotional support, an element which is at the heart of any relationship, to their male counterparts leaving them emotionally frustrated. In many women dominated households, exchange of indecent and rude words as well as swearing was also found to be a part of routine.

Physical violence, which is rare yet existent amongst many households, was also found during the study. Women often assault their male counterparts using sexual harassment and physical beatings. Men, who are suffering from any of these social ills, were hesitant to share their experiences for the sake of saving their face and dignity. Most of them suffer in silence due to the shame of being victimized by the women of their own household. This silence gives roots to many physical and psychological ills like depression, anxiety, and other stress related illnesses.

## ANALYSIS

Based on the in depth investigation of the topic, some important conclusions can be drawn.

- The issue of violence against men is fairly common, not only in our society but also in the modern western societies. But the issue is always undermined and ignored because of the lack of support. Men, due to their

proclaimed status of being tough and insensitive by nature, do not share such experiences with anyone due to the fear of being further abused or ridiculed (Barber, 2008). Hence they bear this violence in silence and go through a series of physical and psychological trauma which make their lives miserable.

- Another major finding of the research is that men are less likely to report the violent behavior of females. This is in line with the findings of National Study of Domestic Abuse (2008), where men are less likely to report incidents of violence (5 percent) as compared to women (29 percent). One of the major reasons behind this reluctance and hesitation was the perception that their complaint would not be taken seriously. Another major reason was the shame and fear of being ridiculed by peers and friends, or being treated as a weak person and a piece of joke.
- The research also asserted the argument that self- defense and retaliation are not the only causes of female violence against men, but most of the times the violent behavior is driven by other factors like jealousy, anger, the desire to take control over the relationship, and confusion as well.
- The psychological effect of violence on men is much more damaging than it is believed. Since men also face fears of not being believed, ridiculed, or worse being accused of being violent themselves leave them with no other option but to remain silent. This leads to a number of physiological and psychological problems in men which sometimes take the form of chronic illness.
- The prevalence of this issue in society can be symbolized as an iceberg with the tip being the number of cases that are ever brought to light and the major bulk showing the huge number of cases that are never known but cause significant morbidity. This research came up with interesting and novel findings as most of other gender related research work is focused towards health issues, education and literacy issues etc. This research highlighted those aspects of people in my locale that have never been brought to attention before.
- There are many Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations dedicated to protecting the rights of women but rarely any dedicated to providing rights protection to men. One reason is that 80% of the violence conducted against men is non-tangible, hence not exactly visible, such as psychological, economical or emotional violence but this does not mean that it doesn't take place. Moreover, our society lacks institutions and bodies to keep an eye on such incidents, which makes it even harder to detect any instances of violence against men.
- This research was limited to a certain area (Chakra), with its own typical culture and population. Most of the people in this locality were of middle/lower class who are struggling for their bread and butter. Hence they neither have the time, nor the means to convey and discuss the violence committed against them. People are mostly uneducated and unaware of their rights. Therefore, the lack of education is one of the main reasons behind such brutal behavior exhibited by either males or females. Additionally, poor financial conditions also lead to frustration and anxiety amongst male and female counterparts which results in such violent behaviors.
- The research in this area suggested that such cases of domestic violence and intimate partner violence must be present in other parts of the country as well.
- Men need to resolve their legal matters with the legal information and counsel so that they can make informed decisions in a calm and reasoned manner. Men need to make decisions that not only resolve the present problems, but incorporate long range strategies with foresight, to help deal with the future events that always will have to be dealt with even in the best of circumstances. While most attention is given to women who are abused by men, men are often overlooked victims of domestic violence. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief, men account for approximately 15% of the victims of reported intimate partner violence. Men often suffer physical abuse in silence because they are afraid that no one will believe them or take them seriously. In fact,

some men who do try to get help find that they are mocked and ridiculed. No one would even think of telling a battered woman that getting beaten by her husband wasn't a big deal, but people often don't think twice about saying that to a battered man. Many men are too embarrassed to admit that they are being abused.

- Traditional gender roles confuse the matter. A "real man" is expected to be able to "control" his wife. Aside from the embarrassment over admitting abuse, abused men may feel that they are somehow less of a man for "allowing" themselves to be abused. But just like abused women are told when they suffer physical violence, abuse is never the victim's fault; it's no less true just because the victim happens to be male. Another issue that prevents men from reporting abuse is a lack of resources, which may be real or imagined. Many domestic violence services are aimed mostly at helping a female population. While the broader term "domestic violence shelter" is becoming more common, many shelters are still known colloquially as "battered women shelters."
- Legally, many of these community resources are supposed to help male victims as well as female, but there may be resistances for them to do so. Even if these support services do cater men, abused men may feel as though they are not welcome there because of the primarily female population.
- The man of today is not only facing problems on financial and economic fronts, but also psychological problems inflicted up on him by the worsening social conditions. He has become entangled in the web of grave social problems so much that he doesn't even consider the psychological or even physical violence that he is made victim of, at home and outside of it, a 'crime'. There is a number of compelling social needs that he has to fulfill, which make him discount many of the injustices done to him by the society at large. Many of the problems faced by men of our society are due to the extremely poor level of literacy in our rural areas; economic difficulties due to low standard of living; social pressures on them to provide food, cloth, and shelter; and this list goes on.

Despite this wide array of problems faced by Pakistani men, we see them not complaining about various types of violence that they go through because of the stereotypical image of men in our society of being dominant and authoritative. It is considered a major weakness on the part of men if they complain about being victimized, physically or psychologically, at home or outside it. Not only this, but there is also an absolute absence of institutions in our country which could help people in general, and men in particular, who face problems like violence. This worsens the mental and physical health of our men as they don't find any place to look up to for solutions to problems

## CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that men are also victims of violence at different social levels. Most of the time, they are neglected or even accused of being violent, rather than being the subject of violence. This can be attributed to the fact that women in our society have an edge over men as they are mostly viewed as innocent and dignified. But many a times, they exploit this edge to their advantage and commit various horrendous acts of violence against men which are not limited to physical acts alone, but also include sexual, psychological, and emotional abuse. It is therefore suggested that violence should be treated as a gender problem, rather than a female or male problem.

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