

# Mental and Physical Victimization of Rural Women

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## ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to assess the type and extent of domestic violence against married women in rural areas and to find out the association between the extent of victimization and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. The universe of the present study consisted of two villages of Punjab province of Pakistan. Through a preliminary survey of the two villages a list of married females was prepared. From these lists 55 married females were randomly selected from each of the two villages, constituting a sample of 110 respondents. The interviewing schedule was prepared for collecting the requisite information. The majority of the respondents (about 98%) expressed mental tension due to the behavior of husbands. Almost 56 % also reported to be physically abused. Extent of victimization was negatively associated with the age, education and income of the respondents.

**Key Words:** Women; Violence; Physical violence; Gender-based violence; Victimization.

## INTRODUCTION

Violence within the family has been one of the most hidden crimes because the family is considered a sacred institution. The family matters are considered to be private matters and no body is allowed to interfere in them. It is generally assumed that violence does not or can not exist among family members, because it is believed that family members always help and cooperate with each other, but the facts are that different forms of family violence are the reality of almost every society. The extent of violence against women in the home has been largely hidden and widely defined by communities that fear that an admission of its incidence will be an assault on the integrity of the family. However, existing statistics reflect the pervasiveness, the frequency and the intensity of violence against women in the home in all countries of the world.

In the contemporary society criminal exploitation of women is intense, rampant and global in nature. Around the world at least one woman in every three has been beaten and coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime most often abuser is the member of her own family (Govt. of Pakistan, 1999)

Women in Pakistan live in a world structured around strict religious, family and tribal customs that essentially force them to live in submission and fear. In Pakistan certain formal code, informal traditions and values of society discriminate against women.

Within the broad purview of violence against women, this phenomenon at a domestic level has been found to be quite pervasive and recognized as a major public health concern and violation of human rights. The problem of violence against women has been recently recognized as a crime and major obstacle to equality, development and peace. A woman's right to be free from danger and fear for

her personal safety within the home, is likely to be a toughest battle, women will wage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The term violence against women refers to many types of harmful behavior directed at women. Any act of gender-based violence that results in or likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life. (Anonymous, 1993).

The definition of domestic violence against women under-scores both intentions and behavior of perpetrators with focus on patriarchal hierarchy. Any act involving use of force or coercion with an intent of promoting hierarchical gender relations (Fishbach & Therbert, 1997). Violence against women in the home may be manifested in the form of psychological or mental violence that includes constant verbal abuse, harassment, isolation and deprivation of physical and economic resources. Threatening her with violence or taunting her with threats of divorce, intentions of taking another wife fall within the definition of domestic violence.

The main objectives of the study were to assess the type and extent of domestic violence against married women in rural areas, to find out the association between the extent of victimization and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, and the main hypotheses were: Extent of involvement of the respondents in family decision making is associated with their socio-economic characteristics i.e. age, education, family type and family income.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The universe of the present study consisted of two villages (Chak No. 64/JB & Chak No. 7/JB) randomly selected from Tehsil and District Faisalabad, Pakistan.

Through a preliminary survey of the two villages a list of married females was prepared. From the lists so prepared 55 married females were randomly selected from each of the two villages, constituting a sample of 110 respondents. The interviewing schedule was prepared for collecting the requisite information. The interviewing schedule consisted of two parts. The first part consisted of questions about the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents i.e. age, education, family type, family income etc. of the respondents. The second part dealt with the more sensitive aspects of respondent's marital life i.e. the level of mutual understanding and adjustment with their spouses. In this regard few direct questions were asked to ascertain, as to whether they were mentally and physically abused by their husbands.

The responses of the respondents on questions of "mental victimization" were recorded using following response categories i.e. 'often', 'sometimes' and 'never'.

Likert type of scaling technique was used through assigning certain score to each of the response (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1986). The scores for each respondent were added. The range of total scores on selected questions was between 5 to 14. The extent of domestic victimization of respondents were categorized in three categories i.e. low (5-7) medium (8-10) and high (11-14).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Socio-economic Characteristics.** In any social setup the socio-economic characteristics of an individual play a vital role in the formation of his attitudes and behavior patterns and his social standing in the social set-up. Therefore it seems imperative to explain socio-economic characteristics of the respondents under study. Some of the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents were as follow.

As for age distribution of the respondents 16.4 % of the respondents were less than 30 years. However, 57.3% and 26.4% were in middle age (30-39 years) and old age category (45 years and above).

Nearly 58% of the respondents and 41% of the husbands were illiterate, only 3.6% of the respondents and 10.0% of husbands were matric and above. Majority of the respondents i.e. 80.9% were living in nuclear family system.

The significant majority i.e. 64.6% of the respondents were housewives and was not involved in any type of economic activity. Only 19.1% domestic laborers and

16.4% were teachers or self-employed. As for their economic status of respondents, 60.9% respondents belonged to lower income group (Rs. 25000 to < 75000 annually), and 24.5 belonged to middle (75000- < 125000) remaining 14.5% belonged to higher income level group (Rs. 125000-176000+ annually), respectively.

**Domestic Violence against Women.** Domestic violence against women is a worldwide problem, which manifests itself differently according to societies and cultures.

Gender based domestic violence against women is mostly perpetrated due to social values that attribute low status to women and devalue their lives and activities. Physical abuse is more common form of violence against women and is rooted in patriarchal social system, psychological and economic dependence on men through out their lives. Wife beating is common but its frequency and intensity vary across different groups and communities. (Hafeez, 1998).

According to World Bank (1997) reports that gender based violence including rape, domestic violence, murder and sexual abuse is profound health problem for women across the globe. Although gender violence is significant cause of female morbidity and mortality, it is almost never seen as public health issue, female focused violence also represent a hidden obstacle to economic and social development, by sapping women's energy undermining their health, gender violence deprives society from women's full participation.

Violence does not occur as an isolated incident in the lives of abused married women. Physical torture as well as mental torture usually occurs on a regular basis causing deep sears on the victims, the victim's family and on society as whole. Women's physical health and mental health is often permanently damaged (Anonymous, 2000).

The confidence to express their desires to their husbands was reported by eighty one % respondents, (i.e. 40% said it was 'often' so, whereas, 41% said 'some times'). Almost 19% reported to be meak and depressed. In other words they could hardly express their any desire to their husbands.

Further, probe in to the feelings of the respondents, as to whether their husbands gave preference to others over them also portrayed depressing picture of wives. About 48 % said sometimes their husbands give preference to others while 22%, said that it was 'often' so (almost always). Only 30% said that it 'never' happened.

**Table I. Percentage Distribution of the Respondents with regard to the Extent of their Mental Victimization**

Type of violence	Extent of victimization			Total
	Often F (%)	Sometime F (%)	Never F (%)	
Respondents Enjoy confidence in expressing their desire to their husbands	44 (40.0)	45 (40.9)	21 (19.1)	110 (100.0)
Husbands give preference to other family member's over them	24 (21.8)	53 (48.2)	33 (30.0)	110 (100.0)
Experience 'mental tension' by the behavior of the husbands	46 (41.8)	64 (58.2)	-	110 (100.0)

**Table II. Extent of Physical Victimization of Respondents by their Husbands and other Family Members**

	Extent of Physical Tension (%)			Total
	Often	Sometime	Never	
By husbands	27 (24.5)	21 (19.1)	62 (56.4)	110 (100)
By other Family members	16 (14.5)	4 (3.7)	90 (81.9)	110 (100)

**Table III. Respondents perception of causes of domestic violence**

Perceived causes	Frequency	Percentage
Poverty	38	34.5
Illiteracy	36	32.7
Dowry	6	5.5
No male issue	30	27.3
Total	110	100.0

**Table IV. Association between the age of the respondents and their extent of victimization**

Extent of victimization	Age of the respondents (in years) (%)				Total (%)
	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+	
Low (5-6)	0.0	21.2	30.3	48.5	100.0
Medium (8-10)	6.5	15.2	32.6	45.7	100.0
High (11-14)	10	14	4	3	31
Total	13	28	29	40	110
	11.8	25.5	26.4	36.4	100.0

$\chi^2 = 34.3$  Significant D.F. = 6 P<0/05

Response pattern to another question i.e. whether the respondents experienced ‘Mental Tension’ due to the behavior of their husbands, 40% said ‘often’ and 58% said

‘sometimes’. None reported that she was free from any mental tension

Table II indicates that 56.4 % of the respondents were not physically abused by their husbands. However, little less than one-fourth i.e. 24.5% (often) and 19.1% (sometime) respondents reported to be physically tortured by their husband at home.

About 14% and 4% reported to be physically abused by their family members. However, 82% had no such problem.

Table III indicates that 34.5% of the respondents said that the main reason of marital conflict and domestic violence was ‘poverty’. Similarly 32.7% of the respondents reported that the main reason of domestic violence was ‘illiteracy’ of husbands. They believed that menfolk had little respect for women. However, 22.3% said that major reason of violence against them was for not having ‘any male issue’. Only 5.5% said that the ‘dowry’ was the cause of their being victimized.

**Testing of Hypothesis.** The above data show that among younger age and middle age categories i.e. 20-29 years and 30-39 years, the Extent of victimization of the respondents was very high i.e. 76.9% and 50.0%, respectively. As the age increases the Extent of violence decreases. The calculated value of statistical test of chi-square at 0.05 level was significant, thus the hypothesis i.e. association between extent of victimization of the respondents and their age is up held.

**Sub-hypothesis 2. Extent of Victimization of the respondents is negatively associated with their educational level.** The above data in Table VI show that as the educational level of the respondents increased the extent

**Table V. Association between the educational level of the respondents and their extent of victimization**

Extent of victimization	Educational level of the respondents (in years)			Total
	Illiterate	Primary-Middle	Matric and above	
Low (5-6)	10	15	8	33
Medium (8-10)	34	9	3	46
High (11-14)	20	8	3	31
Total	64	32	14	110
	58.2%	29.1%	12.7%	100.0%

$\chi^2 = 25.55$  Significant D.F. = 4 P<0/05

**Table VI. Association between family income of the respondents and their extent of victimization**

Extent of victimization	Annual Family Income of the respondents (Rs.)			Total
	25000- <75000	75000 < 125000	125000-175000+	
Low (5-6)	12	2	19	33
Medium (8-10)	35	6	5	46
High (11-14)	20	8	3	31
Total	67	16	27	110
	100%	100%	100%	100.0

$\chi^2 = 31.58$  Significant D.F. = 4 P<0.05

of victimization decreased. The hypothesis i.e. association between extent of victimization of the respondents and their educational level was accepted.

**Sub-hypothesis 3. Extent of Victimization of the respondents is negatively associated with their family income.** Majority of the respondents of low income category (Rs. 25000-75000) fell in medium and high extent of violence i.e. 52.2% and 29.9%, respectively. Only 17.9% low violence. On the contrary, in the higher income group majority i.e. 70.4% reported low extent of violence, while 11% expressed high extent of violence. Hence, the association between extent of victimization and level of income was negatively related.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Violence does not occur as an isolated incident in the lives of abused married women. Physical torture as well as mental torture usually occurring on a regular basis causing deep sears on the victims, the victim's family and on society as whole. Women's physical health and mental health is often permanently damaged. Domestic violence is an economic, educational, legal and development and above all, a human right issue; the term "domestic" includes violence by an intimate partner and by other family members.

It is suggested that government should take proper

measures through utilizing print media as well as electronic media for the eradication of miscommunication against women at all levels. The State and NGO's should undertake a national campaign to raise awareness among women about their rights. All necessary steps should be taken to improve women's social and economic status. All legislation, which discriminates against women, should be repealed.

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(Received 14 July 2006; Accepted 20 September 2006)