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IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: A CASE STUDY OF DISTRICT FAISALABAD

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ABSTRACT

Domestic Violence has been the most heinous crime to the well being of the society. In the past, domestic abuse was considered as a private matter and no intervention was thus made by the society. However, sociologists later realized that it is an offence that acts to the detriment of the society as a whole. The state of affairs in Pakistan is not hunky dory in this regard. Pakistan has been ranking in lower quarters among the comity of nations in the indices of human and social capital since decades. The short term effects of domestic abuse include psychological trauma, short-term health effects, lack of immunity, gastrointestinal disorders, fatigue, low energy, chronic pain, loss of appetite and eating disorders among others. The long term effects of domestic abuse, reduced self-esteem, poor work performance, adverse implications upon child growth, psychological aberrations in the victims and child upbringing, lack of confidence in the children. The domestic abuse is an anathema to well being of a modern and moderate society and warrant concerted efforts to curb and eliminate the occurrence of such incidents.

INTRODUCTION:

Domestic Violence against women has been the most soaring issue of the contemporary world in general and Pakistan in particular. In the past, the victims were unable to muster courage enough to communicate the same and the perpetrators used to act freely and with no compunction. Domestic

violence is a multi-pronged problem and has far-reaching implications on the social, economic and religious foundations of the society. With the increasing awareness among the masses, the prevention followed by increased resilience has been improved but at snail's pace as is evident by the increasing prevalence of domestic violence across the country despite the fact only a fractions of such incidents are reported. The results justifies the lowest ranking of Pakistan in Human Development Indicators. Pakistan's Gender Inequality Index ranks 121 out of 155 countries.¹ The Women Peace and Security Index 2019/20 indicates that Pakistan ranks 164th and the index is 0.460, which measures the rank and well being of women worldwide². The domestic violence has been rendered an 'offence' in the criminal justice system of Pakistan. The prevention and elimination of such heinous offence has been a component of fundamental human rights that has been embraced and graced by each individual of the country. However, the increasing incidence of such violence indicates some structural and functional flaws inherent in the orthodox society of Pakistan. The purpose of this study is to analyze the same and conduct an impact assessment of the same on the society. Women have been continuously victimized physically and emotionally and cultural norms act as a bar in communicating the same and ameliorating the sorry state of affairs. Domestic violence has multi order effects that adversely effects the generations of the victims and social indicators of the society get aggravated in the long run.

Problem Statement:

Domestic violence is the most prevalent offence against humanity in twenty first century. It severely impacts women across the life span and later permeate to infringe the foundations of a healthy and prosperous society. It has far reaching adverse consequences for the social, economic and cultural well being of the society as a whole.

Research Methodology:

The qualitative approach has been used in this study. Qualitative data is based on interpreting stories of abuse, post-abuse trauma and subsequent after effects on the emotional well being of the victims and their children. The trends of domestic violence was analyzed practically and logically. The more focus is laid on the impact of domestic violence on individual and society as a whole. The shared belief is realized by interviews, group discussions and perusal of the literature. The tool of data collection is close ended questionnaire. The data was reconciled by including three or more agencies in the data collection. The socially constructed beliefs are presumed as the justification of domestic violence i.e. women being inferior are amenable to subjugation and submission. The attempt has been made to present the unreported instance of domestic abuse.

The major limitation in this study is the fact that domestic sensitive is very sensitive and somewhat private issue and people refrain from disclosing it in the first instance or disclosing it with lessened gravity than actual. The coordination of health workers and union council secretaries was

Instrumental in this regard. Nevertheless, this study has made serious attempt to comprehend the research question holistically.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Domestic Violence is defined as “Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive and assaultive behaviors that include physical, sexual, verbal, and psychological attacks and economic coercion that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partner”.³ It is not only limited to physical violence but encompasses sexual, verbal, psychological and emotional violence. Before 1970s, domestic violence was considered as a private matter and the victims had few recourses to rescue themselves.⁴ However, with technological revolution and other associated factors, such acts started being reported and triggered serious debates on such offences among the social scientists. It was first surmised that violence is more prevalent in poor and rural households. However, later studies and survey revealed that violence in one form or other is prevalent in all social classes. Similarly, the most common justification of such a violence was unemployment of the women which restricted their economic freedom. It was later found that women from all levels of education and social status are victims of the domestic abuse. A UNDP report revealed that violence not only affects victims but their families, businesses and country as a whole.⁵ The report states that “In addition to the impact on women’s health, education and participation in public life, the economic costs include health care and legal services; lost productivity and potential salaries; and the costs of prosecuting perpetrators.”⁶

According to the World Health Organization’s research (WHO, 2013) “35% of women worldwide have experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime”.⁷

Since 1970s, the lawmakers have been more apprised and sensitive about domestic abuse of women. Society has developed a narrative aimed to alleviate the severity of domestic abuse and consequently, domestic abuse has been rendered as social and public health issue. Domestic abuse has been reflected in, criminal justice system of nation states. The legal system has since been more responsive for prevention of domestic abuse and enforcement of protective measures.⁸ Since 1980s, domestic abuse has been advocated as a public health issue owing to three factors i.e. increased incidence of domestic violence, detrimental effects of such abuse and growing awareness on the impacts thereof.⁹

The researches indicates that the rate of marital violence is highest in societies with relatively higher structural inequality in economic, educational, political and legal institutions. It renders patriarchy as the significant reason of violence.¹⁰ Thus, Domestic violence is a pattern of patriarchal hegemony¹¹. The cultural explanations also reveals the same.¹² The incidence of domestic violence in Pakistan is no exception in this regard. There is a stark dichotomy in the approach towards such violence in the sense that the perpetrators of such offences considers it as an anathema for the society as a whole¹³. Another study revealed that victims are mostly the women who have been assuming

traditional gender roles since long in the society and are incapacitated both socially and economically in extricating themselves from the abusive relationships¹⁴. The domestic violence is prevalent in both rich and poor households. However, low income is a rather greater risk factor for partner violence. Similarly, unemployment of the male counterpart is also a risk factor for domestic violence. In most of the cases, continuation and cessation of violence is also highly correlated with low income and high income respectively¹⁵. It has been a significant risk factor vis a vis domestic violence as it leads to unilateral power and decision making by the male spouses which in turn leads to poor problem-solving and communication skills and hence dependent wives are more likely to experience marital violence.¹⁶

Conversely, the rate of intimate partner violence is higher in urban areas as a contrast possibly due to correlation of urban life and poverty¹⁷. This is in contradiction to the argument of awareness which is relatively higher in urban areas. In addition, non-availability and non-accessibility of prevention and intervention services also lengthen the torment span of victims and victims continue to languish in an abusive relationships¹⁸. On the other hand, in orthodox societies, women are least satisfied from such services and harnessing such services is largely considered as socially inappropriate and hence such services mostly went unused for most part of the time¹⁹.

Sociological Impact:

Domestic Violence is detrimental to the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims. It has far-reaching implications for the society as a whole. The mother acts as the first institute of children. Owing to domestic abuse, the role of the mother in a society is largely affected and compromised. In addition, the professional skills and performance of working women is adversely affected. It is beyond doubt that a mother is nursery of a healthy society and her role as a child bearer is phenomenal. Studies have found out that disturbed/tormented/victimized mothers do not fulfill their role at the recognized standards of motherhood. The correlation between domestic violence and its impact on society has been increasingly relevant. In the last two decades, several international agencies are assessing professional women's performance through the lens of domestic violence i.e. how far domestic violence adversely impacts the performance of working women at work place. In addition, several studies are analyzing the impacts of domestic violence on larger canvas i.e. society, child growth etc. However, the domestic violence is granted tacit social acceptance due to "historically male dominated social structure and socialization practices teaching men and women different gender-specific roles"²⁰.

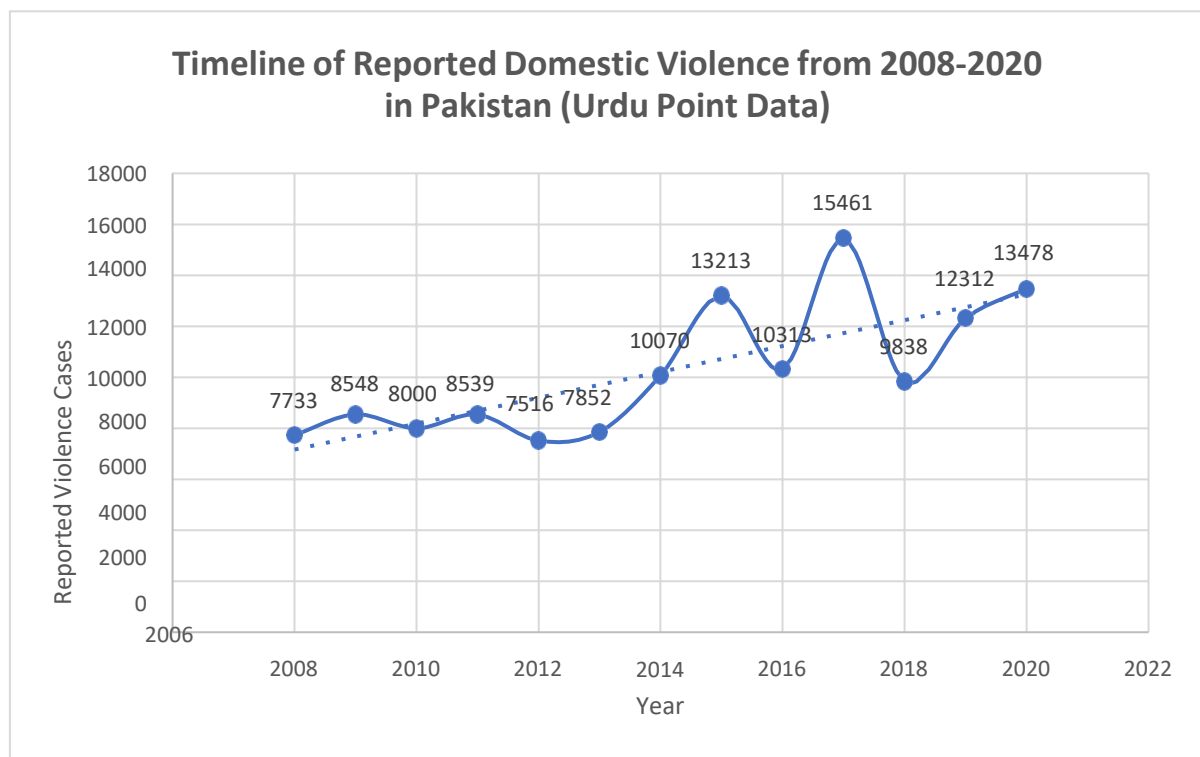
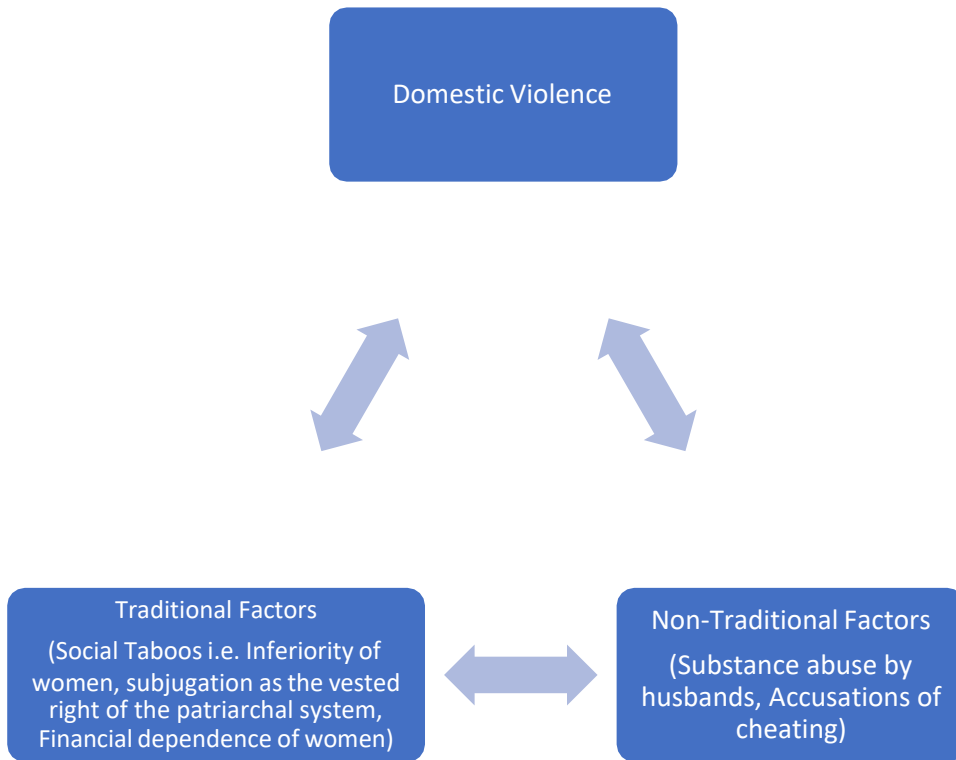
Violence against women has significant consequences in terms of injury,

physical complaints and symptoms, and mental illness. Physical violence leads to physical and emotional disorders. Most of the physical violence does not require medical intervention as most of common injuries include scratches, welts and bruises and hence go unreported²¹. Most of the reported injuries are due to substance abuse by the perpetrator(s)²². However, most common after effects of physical violence include generic poor health, lack of immunity, gastrointestinal disorders, fatigue, low energy, chronic pain, loss of appetite, eating disorders, reduced self-esteem and poor work performance. Domestic violence against women also leads to abnormal health behaviors such as alcohol and drug abuse by the victims and in the worst scenario, it may culminate into a number of negative outcomes, including miscarriage, preterm labor, and neonatal death²³. In addition, mental health outcomes such as depression, suicide and suicide attempts, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other forms of anxiety are consistently related with physical violence. Apart from physical violence, emotional violence also leads to compromised psychological well-being. In certain cases, emotional abuse has been more distressing than physical abuse²⁴.

Abuse whether physical, mental or emotional may have lasting impact on the victims even beyond the end of abuse and may be continuously hampering the overall health status of the victim. The first and higher order costs of abuse of any kind against women is also quite significant. The direct costs include medical expenses incurred, reduced performance of the victims thus creating an enormous burden on the health care system of the country²⁵. Children of victims often develop severe behavioral, developmental and academic problems such as violent behaviors at schools, suicidal tendencies, drug addiction, criminal approach and culminating into abusers in later life.²⁶

Results and Discussion:

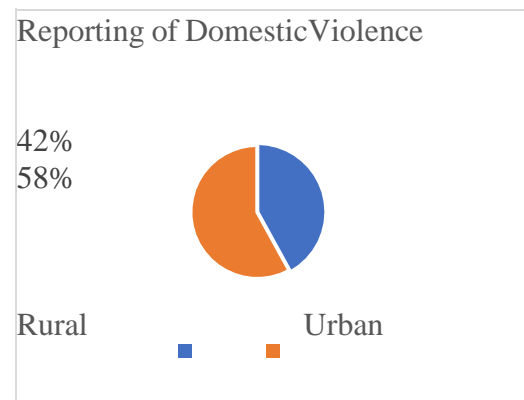
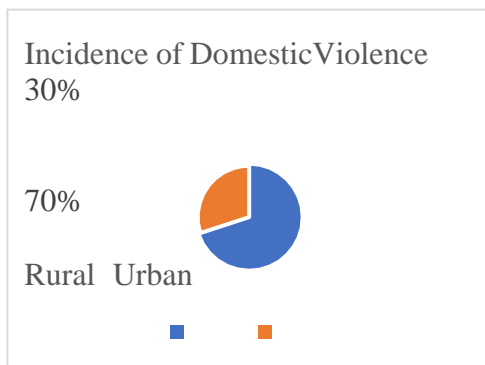
Domestic violence is a complex and multipronged phenomenon. It is caused and reinforced by the both traditional and non-traditional factors. In other words, domestic violence is none less than a catch 22 situation in which the society has been trapped. Since the inception of the 21st century, there has been a plethora of legislations and discussions regarding the prevention/elimination of the domestic abuse. However, the incidents of domestic violence has been increasing monotonically. While it may be the case too that incidents remain unchanged or started decreasing after 2000s and the rate of reporting of such incident might have been increased manifold hence this trend. Nevertheless, whichever the case may be the gloomy picture needs special attention for its redressal.



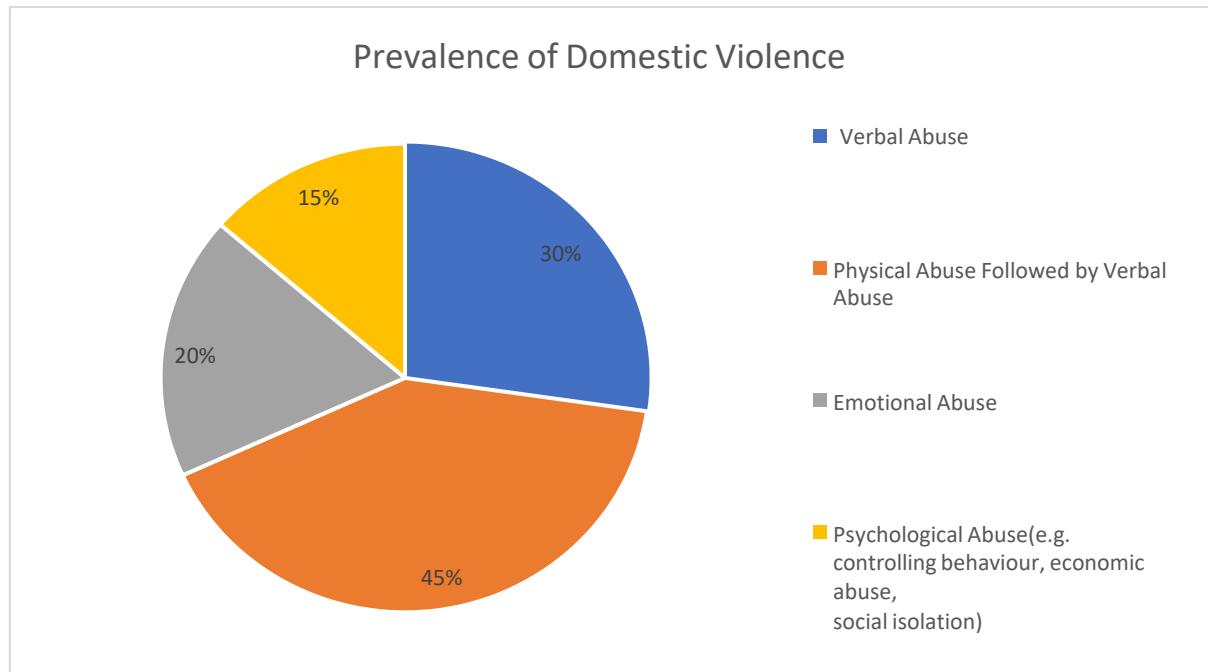
For the purpose of impact assessment of domestic violence against women, district Faisalabad was taken as a case study. First of all, data was collected from the police stations regarding occurrence of such incidents. In addition, the lady doctors in BHUs and RHCs of Tehsil Chak Jhumra were interviewed in

detail regarding the same. The union council secretaries were also interviewed to ascertain how instances of domestic abuse culminated into divorce. In addition, a seasoned gynecologist and a psychiatrist was also interviewed to ascertain the impact of domestic violence against women. Twenty five battered women were interviewed completely on carefully devised, closed-ended, pre-coded questionnaire. The descriptive study was conducted from November 2021 to February 2022 in 5 low to high socioeconomic communities. The participants were identified by Union Council Secretaries and BHU/RHC health workers. The informed consent was taken from the participants. The participants were married women, aged 20-50 years, having at least two to three children, living in the community for more than five years. The interviews were conducted in urdu and regional language of the area. The ethical considerations were duly complied while conducting such interviews. The interviews were scheduled in such a way in which women are comfortable. The observations of this study corroborated with the data on reported domestic violence cases available from UN Women, Aurat Foundation, Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2020 and Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

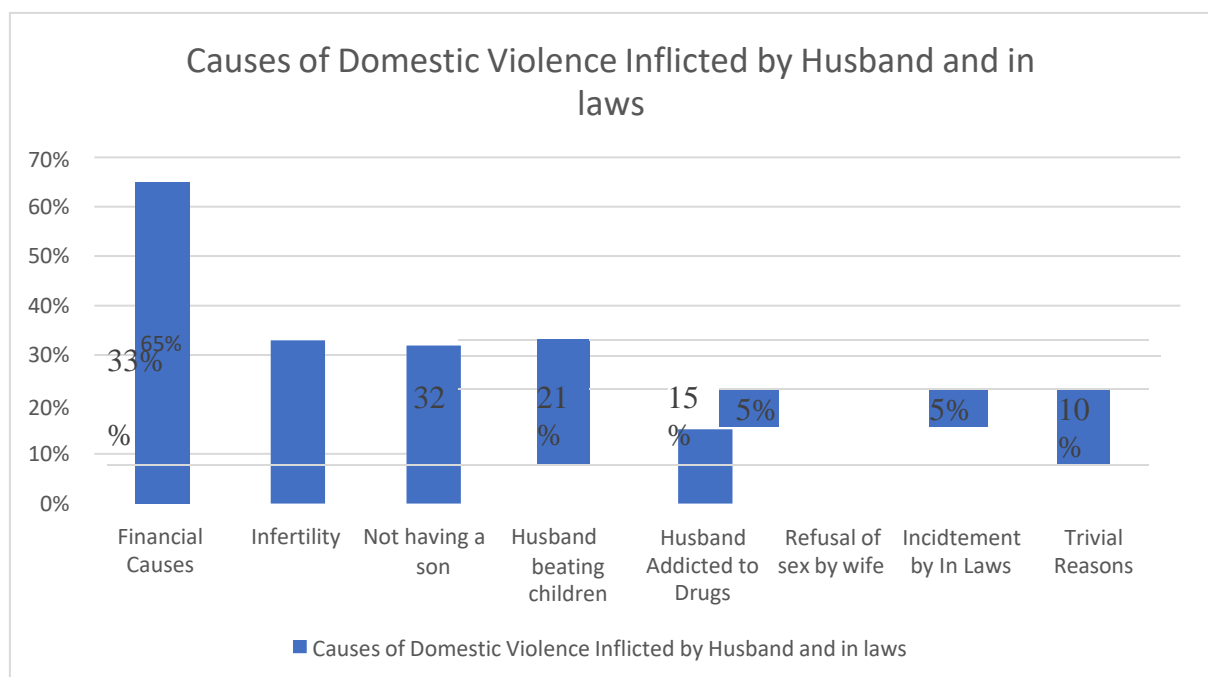
The generic observation revealed the higher rate of incidents of domestic violence in rural areas and higher rate of reporting of such incidents in urban areas. It indicates that reporting of domestic violence is not corroborated with actual prevalence of such instances which refers to the fact that large number of such instances goes unreported.



It is found that there are various forms of domestic abuse suffered by these battered women i.e. verbal abuse, physical abuse followed by verbal abuse, emotional abuse, psychological abuse etc.

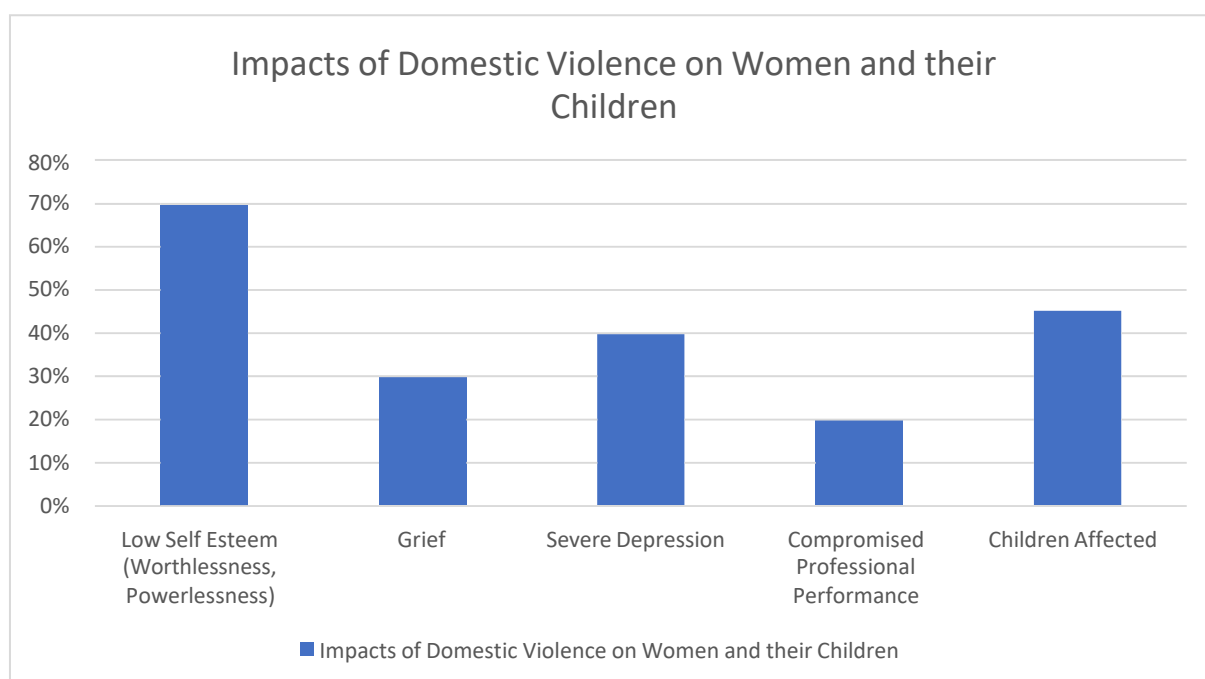


The most recurring cause of domestic violence pertained to financial dependency of the women. Other reasons include infertility, lack of male offspring, drug addiction of male spouses, incitement of in-laws, other trivial reasons etc.



The most common after effects of violent behavior against women include low self-esteem, grief (persistent gloomy mood), feeling of powerlessness, worthlessness, depression etc. These symptoms were acknowledged by the abused women themselves. The abused women were mostly house wives. On the other hand, the working women also admitted that their performance is

compromised due to conflict with and subsequent torture by husband. Almost half of the women complained of severe effects of abuse on the upbringing of their children. Shumaila Syed from Chak Jhumra told that the grades of her children are continuously poor owing to emotional trauma in which children slipped due to continuous domestic abuse by her abuse. Maqsooda Bibi from Jaranwala narrated the event of violence in her own words, “He shouted at me first and unleashed a barrage of kicks and slaps”. Asma Iqbal from Chakera was head shaved by his husband.



CONCLUSION:

The domestic abuse of the women has been a ‘real’ issue and cannot be ignored at all. Women constitutes more than half of the population of the country and such sorry state of affairs will led to phenomenal loss of human capital at the hands of patriarchal practices. The overwhelming negative impacts of domestic violence are excruciating for the society as a whole. In addition to negative impacts on health, it greatly affects the upbringing of the children and later permeates toshatter the very foundations of the society in the longer run. Therefore, the causative factors of thedomestic violence need to be addressed first in order to ameliorate the situation in holistic and comprehensive terms.

Recommendations:

- First of all there is an inevitable need to recognize the domestic violence against women asan important issue.
- Educational and health facilities should be enhanced for the prevention and control ofviolence.
- The domestic violence should be propagated as an offence detrimental to the well-being
- of the society in the first instance and awareness in the society

should be enhanced to the extent that such offence be rendered intolerant.

- The reporting of domestic violence should be encouraged and adequate redressal should be enforced by Law Enforcement Agencies.
- The local bodies should be equipped with tools to refer perpetrators of domestic violence to nearest police stations.
- The criminal justice system should be amended to the extent that domestic violence should be made a cognizable offence.
- The helpline launched by the Ministry of Human affairs should be made effective.
- The HR wing of the organizations should take account of domestic abuse experienced by its female employees.
- The focus of research should be broadened to extrapolate the key measures undertaken to lower the number of violence cases in Pakistan.
- The domestic violence should also be explored from the perspective of men in order to comprehend the sentiments of men that leads to domestic violence.
- The correlation of domestic violence and cost to national economy should be ascertained quantitatively in order to develop a national narrative against domestic abuse.
- The financial independence of the married women should be undertaken as a matter of emergency. In addition to the provision of equitable employment opportunities, underprivileged women should be included in social safety nets i.e. cash grants, encouragement in initiating small and medium enterprises.

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