

Violence Against Women – A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Violence against women (VAW) rights which are of course human rights, has been a predominant feature of all known societies, whether they are extinct or existing VAW takes its occurrence in both the simple, i.e., abusive language, to extreme, i.e., beating, wounding, and killing, etc. This paper describes various forms of VAW in district Toba Tek Singh (Punjab–Pakistan) and some immediate and long-term remedial measures for the proper redressal of violence against women.

Key Words: Violence; Discrimination; Divorce; Woman

INTRODUCTION

a) The Beijing Declaration (1995) defines violence against women (VAW) as an obstacle to the achievement of the objective of equality, development and peace. VAW means any act of gender based violence that results in, or is 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.

The joint report of Government of Pakistan (GoP), and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 1977), comments that VAW has been described as the most pervasive violation of human rights. It has become a major area of concern in Pakistan in recent years as more information about its incidence and impact has become available, and particular forms of violence appears to have been on the increase. VAW occurs at all levels of society and has diverse forms, e.g. abusive language, torture, marital rape, custodial violence, honor killings, burning of women, acid throwing, mutilation, incest, gang rape, public stripping of women, trafficking and forced prostitution and sexual harassment in the street and work place, etc.

As a matter of fact, VAW is not a peculiar to Pakistan only. According to the Commission of Inquiry for Women's Report (1997), legislation against domestic violence has been enacted in 44 countries around the world, 17 countries have made marital rape a criminal offense and 27 have passed laws of sexual harassment.

Bunch (1977) has quoted few brain storming facts about the status of the women of the world. These include, i) Roughly 60 million women who should be alive today are missing because of gender discrimination, predominantly in South and West Asia, China and North Africa, ii) In the U.S. where overall violent crimes against women have been growing for the past two decades, a woman is physically abuses by her intimate partner every nine seconds, iii) In

India, more than five thousand women are killed each year because their In-laws consider their dowry inadequate. A tiny percentage of murderers are brought to justice, iv) In some countries of Middle East and Latin America, husbands are often exonerated from killing an unfaithful disobedient or willful wife on the grounds of honor, v) Rape as a weapon of war has been documented in several countries in recent years, though its use has been wide spread for centuries, vi) Throwing acid to disfigure a woman's face is so common in Bangladesh, that it warrants its own section of the penal code, vii) About two million girls (6,000 each day) are genitally mutilated, i.e., the female equivalent of what would be amputation of all or part of male penis, and viii) More than one million children overwhelmingly female are forced to into prostitution every year. In the wake of the AID epidemic, younger and younger children are being sought in the belief that they are less likely to be affected.

UNICEF's report (1997) states that in all societies, poverty, discrimination, ignorance and social unrest are common predictors of violence against women. Yet the most enduring enemies of a woman's dignity and security are cultural forces aimed at preserving male domination and female subjugation, i.e., often defended in the name of venerable tradition. Similar observations regarding VAW have been made by Arole (1997) and Chaudhry (1999).

This study was carried out to assess the situation of VAW in Pakistani community. The specific aims of the study were: i) To assess the incidence of the problem of VAW, ii) To study the various forms of VAW, iii) To point out the causes of VAW, and iv) To recommend remedial measures.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was carried out in District Toba Tek Singh (Punjab–Pakistan). To gather the data, an intensive Interview Schedule was prepared and for compiling results, the method of frequency and percentage analysis was adopted. Following were contacted for the collection of the

information; the Deputy commissioner, Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent (crime) of police, Assistant Director, Local Government and Rural Development, Assistant Director, Social Welfare, District and Session Judges. Besides, few-NGOs were also approached including Al Falah Association, Regional Development Network, Shaheen Youth Welfare Council, Mohib-i-Want organization, etc.

Divorce is usually seen as a major indicator and residual of incidences of VAW. So the divorce indicator was adopted to investigate the VAW incidences, for that purpose thirty two cases were selected from Union Councils' (UC) records and 35 cases were taken from Municipal Committee (MC), Toba Tek Singh. To bifurcate various forms of violence, 25 First Informatory Reports (FIRs) were obtained from different police stations. The cases were chosen on the basis of purposive random sampling.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Divorce cases of union councils. Thirty-two cases of divorce under Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961, have been obtained (Table I) from union councils (UCs). A look at the causes leading to divorce would by itself indicate that termination of marital relationship by divorce has always been preceded by different forms of violence in rural areas, which has been verified from the record of different UCs. It was found that the maximum (22%) divorces were due to accused infidelity of wife. In these cases, the complaints of forced marriages were blamed of having love relationships before the marriage. The relationships were found even affecting them after marriage. Sometimes, the pregnancy due to illicit relations i.e. 6% was also associated with infidelity. Husband's second marriage (20%) was second highest cause for divorce. It was found that husbands themselves gave divorce to first wife in five cases; whereas, in one case wife claimed divorce. This is against husband's attempt to show his superiority over his In-laws and wife. The reason was high demands of husband from wife and her family. In cases of refusal husbands preferred second marriage. The mother in law was reported to be responsible for divorce in 16% cases, as it was told that mother in law suspect the daughter in law as corrupting her son from her family. Husband's infidelity and exchange marriages were also cause of 6% cases. Exchange marriage's trend was found to be discouraged even in the rural areas of the district, except for the extreme cases. Rest of the cases were single in occurrence including wife's stand against accusation of infidelity, small amount of dowry, killing of son, suffering form T.B, conflicts between couple's fathers, property disputes, Infecundity for which always wife is blamed and drug addiction.

Divorce cases of municipal committee. Another 35 cases of divorce under Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961 have been obtained form MC, Toba Tek Singh's urban area.

Gathered information is shown in the Table II. It was found that 63% divorces were caused by misbehavior of wife with her in laws, 11% caused by issuelessness for which wives always are blamed, 9% were caused by wife's demand for divorce due to conflicts with here husband due to his non-cooperation, poor understanding, and an insulting behaviour towards wife's natal family members, etc. In one case (3%), wife claimed Khula (separation right given by Islam to the Muslim women), and one case was not sure about the real cause of divorce.

Forms of divorce. Data on different forms of VAW have been presented in Table III. All these cases in which, 26

Table I. Divorce by Cause in Union Councils

S. No.	Cause	Frequency (%)
1.	Suspected infidelity of wife.	7 (22)
2.	Husband seeking second marriage.	6 (20)
3.	Lack of understanding between husband and wife created by husband's mother	5 (16)
4.	Pregnancy due to suspected illicit relations in absence of husband.	2 (6)
5.	Suspected infidelity of husband.	2 (6)
6.	Conflicts arising out of exchange marriage.	2 (6)
7.	Wife taking stand against husband's accusation of infidelity.	1 (3)
8.	Small quantity of dowry.	1 (3)
9.	Suspected killing of son by wife.	1 (3)
10.	Wife's serious sickness from TB (lack of husband's responsibility)	1 (3)
11.	Conflict between fathers of couple.	1 (3)
12.	Drug addiction by husband.	1 (3)
13.	Infecundity.	1 (3)
14.	Conflicts on property between couple's parents.	1 (3)
Total:		32 (100)

Table II. Divorce by cause in MC, TTS

S. No	Cause	Frequency (%)
1.	Misbehavior of wife (with In-laws)	22 (63)
2.	Infecundity.	04 (11)
3.	Rukhsati (send off) delayed.	04 (11)
4.	Wife's demand for divorce due to conflict with husband.	03 (09)
5.	Divorce by wife (Khula)	01 (03)
6.	No cause given.	01 (03)
Total:		35 (100)

Table III. Violence by form

S. No.	Forms of violence	Frequency (%)
1.	Conflict based Violence	7 (27)
2.	Sexual assault	7 (27)
3.	Rape	5 (18)
4.	Child sexual abuse	2 (08)
5.	Killing by burning	2 (08)
6.	Suicide by burning	2 (08)
7.	Killing by gun fire	1 (04)
8.	Wounding by gun fire	1 (04)
Total		26 (100)

women were victimized by eight different forms of violence were cognizable offences. The largest number among these offences consisted of conflict based violence, sexual assault and rape, following by other offences, like child sexual abuse, killing by burning, suicide by burning one self killing by gun fire and wounding by gun fire. The record of recent cases of 21 female victims of burns, consisting of 57% married women, and 43% unmarried were received from the DHQ hospital TTS; 86% of these victims had died due to injuries, while the remaining 14% survived the injuries; 28% had burns covering more than 50% of their bodies.

Causes of VAW. Different cases gathered for investigation provided diverse nature of causes and reasons for VAW. The causes are discussed as under the general and specific headings.

General causes. The following causes of Violence, based on the views of different respondents comprising government agencies, NGOs, focus groups, individuals as well as victims of violence themselves are: i) Poverty of family (less income with more family members), ii) Ignorance (lack of education especially knowledge about family about the Islamic values), iii) Frustration of husband of wife or both, (due to internal or external factors like husband frustrated by situation at the work place beyond his control or wife frustrated by aggressive attitude of her in laws, iv) Dowry brought by daughter in law below the expectations of her in laws, v) Daughter in law demanding to live separately from her in laws, vi) Mother or wife advising her to behave in a certain way with her in laws, or raise certain demands that may not be acceptable to in laws, vii) Influence of inherited culture on different aspects of life, particularly in the shape of certain customs and traditions, viii) Practical difficulties for wife in seeking Khula through the family court which encourages the husband take advantage or her weaker position.

Specific causes include i) Suspected infidelity of husband or illicit relations of wife, particularly when husband is away from home for long time, ii) Suspected infidelity of husband or illicit relations detected by wife, iii) Husband seeking second marriage without convincing reasons, iv) Lack of understanding between husband and wife reacted by wife's in laws especially mother in law, v) Conflicts arising out of exchange marriage, vi) Sickness of wife not taken seriously, and treatment not arranged for her, drug addiction by husband, vii) Infecundity for which wife is always blamed.

SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions are made as remedial measures:

Immediate

- Create awareness about women's rights and responsibilities of community towards them.
- Implement National plan of Action (NPA) for women at district level by activating district core groups (DCG).
- Women police stations should be made efficient regarding protection of female rights.
- Develop a network of effective reporting concerning violence cases.

Long term

- Female education should be promoted.
- Consent of girls should be sought before getting them married.
- Women employment opportunities should be created, so that, the female dependence may come to an end.
- Dowry control laws should immediately be enforced.
- Social mobilization for changing existing cultural practices which are against the rights of the women should be stopped, also make efforts to amend the community's views about women rights should be organized to create more awareness.

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