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Patriarchy and Gender-Based Violence in Pakistan

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Abstract

Patriarchal values are embedded in Pakistani society which determines the subordinated position of women. Patriarchal control over women is exercised through institutionalized restrictive codes of behavior, gender segregation and the ideology which associates family honor to female virtue. The abnormal, amoral, and harmful customary practices which aim at preserving subjugation of women, defended and sanctified as cultural traditions and given religious overtones. Abnormal and amoral traditional practices in Pakistan include honor killing, rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment, acid attacks, being burned, kidnapping, domestic violence, dowry murder, and forces marriages, custodial abuse and torture. According to a 2011 poll of experts by the Thomson Reuters Foundation Poll, Pakistan is ranked the 3rd the most dangerous country for women in the world. This paper aims to highlight the sufferings of women in Pakistan and consider that in patriarchal societies violence has been used as a social mechanism to perpetuate the subjugation of women. Patriarchal system necessitates the violence for the sake of its existence. With the help of existing data, the gender-based violence in Pakistan has been analyzed. This paper concludes that all forms of gender-based violence are committed to ensure the compliance of women. In order to eliminate violence against women, patriarchal system has to be changed which can be achieved by strengthening the social, political and economic position of women.

Keywords: Patriarchy; Gender-based violence; Violence against Women, Pakistan

Introduction

Violence against women and girls is a fundamental violation of human rights. It exists in every country of the world. It affects every segment of society and is prevalent among all age groups. Every day, women throughout the world are confronted with multiple forms of violence, including sexual violence by family members, strangers, and state agents; domestic violence, including spousal murder and being burned, disfigured with acid, beaten, and threatened; ritual honor killings; and custodial abuse and torture.

Gender disparity in Pakistan is clearly evident by seeing the country's ranking as 141st out of 142 with respect to economic opportunities and political participation of women. This gender inequality weakens women's position in society and makes her vulnerable to violence. The underlying belief behind that gender specific violence is the superiority of men over women. According to United Nations' Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, states that "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 Asia Forum on Women, Law, and Development (APWLD) in 1990, defined Gender-based violence as "any act involving use of force or coercion with intent of perpetuating or promoting hierarchical gender relations". Gender-based violence is a social mechanism to forcefully maintain and perpetuate the subordinate status of women compared with men.

Patriarchal values are embedded in Pakistani society which determines the subordinated position of women in Pakistan. Patriarchal control over women is exercised through institutionalized restrictive codes of behavior, gender segregation and the ideology which associates family honor to female virtue. The abnormal, amoral, and harmful customary practices in Pakistan which aim at preserving subjugation of women, defended and sanctified as cultural traditions and given religious overtones are amongst the most pervasive forces impacting upon the dignity of women. Gender-based violence is a major serious human rights problem in Pakistan and is reported to be on the rise (Amnesty International, 2002; Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2003; Human Rights Watch, 1999). Abnormal and amoral traditional practices in Pakistan include honor killing, rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment, acid attacks, being burned, kidnapping, domestic violence, dowry murder, and forced marriages, custodial abuse and torture. According to a 2011 poll of experts by the Thomson Reuters Foundation Poll, Pakistan is ranked the 3rd the most dangerous country for women in the world. An irony with Pakistani women is that if a victim woman speaks up about the violence either physical or sexual, she is seen with contempt and considered that she has lost the dignity of her and her family. In order to avoid being worthless in Pakistan society, many cases of rapes go unreported.

Gender-based violence is an expression and a symptom of a patriarchal social system. According to Walby (1990), violence has been identified as a social mechanism in the subordination of women by the men. Also, some of men often exercise violent behavior against women to assert their authority. Patriarchal system necessitates the violence for the sake of its existence. Feminist analysis thus states that a patriarchal society is a direct cause of gender-based violence. Violent behavior of men against women in Pakistan can best be understood as a part of a patriarchy that subjugate women through socio-cultural values and norms of society which define and dictate the place and conduct of women.

Patriarchy and Feminist Theories

Patriarchy

Patriarchy as a concept is defined in many ways in feminist literature. Some use the term patriarchy to refer a historical specific concept as male power women and younger men (Millet 1969; Hartman 1979) ; some use it by referring a male ideology having base in the psychological level by referring symbolic power of (Mitchell 1974), others use social system of gender relations, among them some emphasizes the root of patriarchy is biological and argues that it is a sexual system of power depends on male hierarchical ordering of the society (Eisenstein 1979) ; and others emphasize its manifestation in the economic relations of production (Atakan, 2014) According to Lerner (1986) patriarchy is “the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general”. Lerner points out that the dominance of male is systematic and institutionalized in important institutions of society. Walby (1990) identifies patriarchy as system of social structure and practices wherein men dominate oppress and exploit women. Also, she identifies six structures of patriarchy which comprises of paid work, housework, sexuality culture, violence and the state and their relationships of these create different forms to capture the depth of women’s subordination. Likewise, Hunnicutt (2009) states that there are patriarchal systems at the macro level (bureaucracies, government, law, market, religion) and patriarchal relations at the micro level (interactions, families, organizations, patterned behavior between intimates). The concept of patriarchy was mainly developed and used by feminism theories to explain the continuance male dominance in modern societies. Contemporary feminist theories, including Liberal, Radical, Marxists, and Socialist theories agree on the point that the patriarchy is a system of power relations resting on male domination; however, they differ in explaining the sources of women’s subjugation. Among the feminist theories, in which patriarchy is a central concept, are classified as Radical Feminist, Marxist Feminist and Socialist Feminist theory.

Feminist Theories

Feminism is support of social equality for women and men, in opposition to patriarchy and sexism (Macionis, 2012) Main arguments of radical feminism are “personal is political”; the basis of the oppression of women is patriarchy. Radical feminists see patriarchy as the basic system of power on which relationships of human in society are arranged. Also, patriarchy is seen as the primary and fundamental social division in society.

Radical Feminism

Radical feminists differ in their interpretations of the basis of patriarchy, but most agree that it involves the appropriation of women’s bodies and sexuality. Radical feminists believe that patriarchy is so deeply rooted in society that even a socialist revolution would not end it. Instead, reaching the goal of gender equality means that society must eliminate gender itself (Macionis, 2012).

One conceivable approach to accomplish this objective is to utilize new reproductive technology to separate women’s body from the processes of childbearing. With an end to motherhood, radical feminists argue that society could be leave behind the entire family system, liberating women, men, and children from the oppression of family, gender, and sex itself (Dworkin, 1987). Radical feminism seeks egalitarian and gender-free society and which can be achieved, it states, by the abolition of patriarchal system. Radical feminism has great contribution on the issue of gender-based violence. Radical feminist are the first feminist theorists who promoted the thought that patriarchy could clearly demonstrate male violence against women (Brownmiller, 1975; Caputi, 1989; Firestone, 1972; Griffin, 1971; Millet, 1969; Russell, 1975). Radical feminists argue that male violence against women is central to male supremacy, as domestic violence, rape and sexual harassment are all part of the systematic oppression of women. Since Patriarchy is systematic and institutionalized in important institutions of society, gender equality can only be achieved by getting rid of patriarchal system.

Marxist Feminism

Marxist feminists differ from radical feminists by their explanation of the roots of women’s oppression with class analysis. Accordingly gender inequality derives from men’s domination over women’s labour in the capitalist system rather than from an autonomous system of patriarchy (Walby, 1990). Class inequality is regarded to be fundamental feature of society and is seen to determine gender inequality. Also, they tend to view classism rather than sexism at the ultimate causal factor behind the oppression of women. Both the Marxist and radical feminist schools of thought emphasize the role of power relationships and both emphasize the potential for exploitation of the weaker party. Beyond that, however, their views differ fundamentally from each other. Radical feminists focus on the role of gender and patriarchy, while Marxists focus on the role of class and capitalism.

Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminism being rooted in the socialist tradition, views that capitalism strengthens patriarchy by concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a small number of men. The family form created by capitalism must change if we are to replace “domestic slavery” with some collective means of carrying out housework and child care (Macionis, 2012). It is deeply critical of capitalist institutions and practices and regards women’s inequality as the result of the combination of capitalistic economic relations and male domination (patriarchy), arguing that both must be fundamentally transformed before women can achieve equality (Chafetz, 1997). Among them, the socialist feminist approach emphasizes both women’s reproductive and productive labor. It also links women’s oppression with the interrelation of patriarchy and the capitalist organization of labour process.

Gender-based Violence in Pakistan

Honor Killing

Women’s bodies are associated with the honor of the family. In order to protect this honor, men feels entitled to regulate and direct women’s sexuality and their way of living. Thus, men restrict women’s freedom of living in order to protect their honor with the help of socio-cultural values of society. As family’s honor is embodied in the bodies of women, they must guard their virginity and chastity after all, a man's honor lies between the legs of a woman.

When a woman engages in an illicit sexual relationship, she not only undermines the ownership rights of other to her body but also challenges the traditional social order erected on patriarchy. In the matter of honor, it is irrelevant whether a woman is guilty or alleged to be guilty of illicit sexual relationship. The matter which effects on the man’s honor is the perception of people. Rumour, belief, insinuation are enough to defile honour and demand remedial action. If the woman shames the family, then she must die-only "blood cleanses honor.

Women are often not provided an opportunity to respond to the allegations before their male family members take the law into their hands and murder them to restore their honor. In this way, they publicly demonstrate their power to protect their honor. Honor killing rather than being seen as a crime in these societies, is regarded as an appropriate and legitimate punishment for those who dared to violate and harm the traditional honor code. The public perception and their remarks pertaining to honor issue forced people to take law into their hands who consider this a brutal and cruel practice. Thus, he is compelled to kill the woman of his family. By killing women of his family he not only defends his honor but also dramatically demonstrates the power of his masculinity (Ruane2000). If a man regards honor killing as barbaric practice and avoid to indulge in the killing of woman who dishonored him and his family, will be regarded and insinuated as ‘socially impotent’ and beghairat (without honor).

Killing in the name of honor is getting its justification from patriarchy social norms and values prevalent in Pakistan. Honor killing is committed by man who assumes that the conduct and behavior of his women have, in some way, violated the traditional honor code and brought disgrace to him and damaged his honor. By killing the women, the perpetrator removes the 'stain' she has brought to the family and restores his honor in the community. Sharing this view, the police generally ignore honor killings; view them as private family matters (Henslin, 2015).

Some people call it "honor killing Industry" and there is a solid reason for it. After the disclosure of many stories in media where women have been killed in the excuse of honor just for the sake of vested interests of stakeholders including tribe's people, police administration and tribal mediators. In the cases of fake honor killing, it has revealed that the reason behind the fake honor killings can be desire to obtain land, unable to repay loans. Also, some men are known to have murdered a woman of their own family in the excuse of honor to implicate someone in the debtor's family to ensure the loan would be extinguished in compensation.

Amnesty International (2000) reported that several hundred women are killed each year in the name of Honor in Pakistan. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) released a report in 2000 which reveals that in the period of last 11 months; at least 266 women have been murdered in the name of honor in around the vicinity of Lahore, the second big city of Pakistan. In Pakistan, Punjab is the province where most of the honor killing incidents occur. Just in the year 2000, about 672 women were murdered in the name of honor. It is believed that hundreds of honor killing, especially in tribal areas of the North of Pakistan, are go unreported each year due to social connivance (HRCP, 2000a). According to the report of HRCP (2015), since 2008, more than 3,000 women have been victims of honor killing in Pakistan. With the passage of time, there is increase on the frequency of honor killing and it has been moving from villages and tribal areas to the cities. 2011 poll of experts by the Thomson Reuters Foundation Poll reported that more than thousand women and girls are killed in the name of honor every year in Pakistan. Also, it revealed that more than 90 percent of Pakistani women endure domestic violence. In Pakistan, generally the cases of domestic violence go unreported and regarded it as private matters.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment refers to comments, gestures, or physical contacts of a sexual nature that are deliberate, repeated, and unwelcome. Mostly the victims of sexual harassment are women. There are mainly two reasons for that, which are, cultural and structural. First, culture of our society tends to encourage men to be sexually assertive and to see women in sexual terms. As a consequence, social interaction among men and women can easily take on sexual overtones. Second is the structural reason. Gendered nature of the workplace and of the education system wherein typically men are in a position of power over the women, sexually harass women. A male boss does harass a female employ, or a male professor harasses a female student

or employee. These men realize that subordinate women may find it hard to resist their sexual advance for fear of reprisals that can be a female employee may be fired or not promoted, and a female student may receive a bad grad. Sexually harassment is common place in Pakistan. When women go out of homes, they go through the penetrating eyes of male who regard women as a sexual toy to their pleasure. From their own neighborhood and colony to the public transport, from school to vocational centers, from working place to shopping center, women face sexual harassment in Pakistan.

Rape and Sexual Assault

Rape and sexual assault have been considered the primary instrument to be utilized as a mechanism of revenge or punishment in a patriarchal society. However, There is a common misperception among people about rape that it is the fault of women who invite/incite/instigate men's sexual desires by her provocative dresses or behavior; or because she ventured outside the defined permissible parameters among strangers. The subordination and subjugation of women centered on the power of men to intimidate and punish them sexually. The philosophy behind sexual violence is fundamentally about power, not sex, and should be regarded as a dimension of gender stratification. Some feminist theorists are of the view that men have used rape and the intimidation of rape in history to exercise their control over women (Brownmiller, 1975).

Sociologists explain sexual assault in two ways. As they explained sexual harassment in two categories, similarly, their explanation of sexual assault and rape fall into cultural and structural categories. According to them, the three cultural beliefs- that women enjoy being forced to have sex that they ask or deserve to be raped, and that men should be sexually assertive or even aggressive-combine to prepare a cultural recipe for rape. On shedding light on the structural explanations for rape, sociologists stress the importance of the power difference between women and men. In male dominated societies, rape and other sexual violence against women are likely outcome since they provide space to men to exhibit and preserve their authority and power over women.

The fear of rape having terrified women and making their lives uncomfortable, restrict their economic opportunities. This fear limits where and when she is able to do work, thereby limiting her income choices which may keep her dependent on others financially. In other words, the mere presence of rape threats may limit women's liberty of social interaction, deprive them the right of self-determinations, and force them to be dependent on men and ultimately subjugate to men (Griffin, 1986). It can also be said that these cases can be increased by war and asylum and that girls may be the most vulnerable to rape (Snoubar & Duman, 2016). Sometimes some people marry their children to keep them from becoming victims of rape and sexual harassment as do the refugees in the Middle East, which increases the problem (Snoubar, 2016). HRCP (2015) reported that just in the year 2014, 597 women and

girls were gang raped, 828 raped and 36 stripped in public in Pakistan. A woman-based foundation put an estimation of a total of 7,852 cases of violence against women were reported in Pakistan, in 2013 (Asmat, 2016). Another report released by Madadgaar which indicates that gender-based violence in one or the other form continued unabated. During 2001, at least 587 cases of rape, including gang rape, and sexual assault were documented in different parts of the country (Khan, 2001) which indicates the upward tendency in this form of violence against women.

Upward tendency in the cases of rape has also found in the report of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Its estimates suggest that for every two hours, one woman was raped somewhere in Pakistan (HRCP, 2000b). Other studies suggest that real figures could be far higher than this, given that many cases of rapes and sexual assault go unreported due to social pressures. According to the compilation of local newspapers instances, in Punjab alone more than 300 instances of rape had been reported in initial six months of 2000. According to HRCP (2000b) there is a sharp rise in the incidences of gang rape over the years. Report demonstrates that last year 212 instances of gang rape were documented. The increase in the incidences of sexual assault is due to the patriarchal system where male is dominant over women.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is common place in Pakistan and women endured this violence silently. The instances of domestic violence are seldom reported as they are often treated as private matters. Men regard it their basic right to threaten or be physically violent to their wives to correct her behavior when women are seen as being disobedient. Sociologist Gelles right said that with the exception of the police and the military, the family is “the most violent group in society” (quoted in Roesch, 1984:75). Domestic violence is a form of physical, sexual and psychological misuse of power exerted used against women. Since the extended family system is common in Pakistan, women suffered from violence perpetrated by in-laws in terms of dowry issues or petty family issues.

Sociologist explanation about the occurrence of domestic violence falls into the categories of both structural factors and cultural factors. Structurally, in the prevailing patriarchal system in Pakistan weaken the status of women. Women are subordinate and subjugate gender in a patriarchal system and are more likely to suffer from gender-based violence including rape or domestic violence. Cultural explanations of sociologists uncover the myths associated with the intimate relationships. Many men continue to believe that their wives should obey them; any disobedience from their partner gives men “right” to hit them. Thus, this sort of ideology makes it much easier for men to hit their women.

It is generally estimated that 80 percent of women in Pakistan undergo domestic violence. The level of violence is often associated with economic dependency and powerlessness of women and gender-based violence tend to serve as a social tool to

perpetuate the status quo of gender related social order. The extreme form of domestic violence is continued incidences of stove-burning. Many of these instances are perpetrated by husband and in-laws either due to the dissatisfaction with the dowry of victim or any petty family dispute. The newspapers compiled reports in the year 1999; about 201 Pakistani women were documented to have incidences of injuries while cooking (UNICEF, 1999). Just in year 2000, about 206 women died of in the incidences of stove-burning (Niaz, 2003). An estimation of survey indicates that there is a rapid surge in the incidences of deaths due to stove blasts in Pakistan. The death tolls of victims are 800 in 1989, 1100 in 1990, and 1800 in 1991. In three years the cases of deaths due to stove blasts increased more than double. In another report, it was found that in the first six months of 1992, 500 women died of stove burns. Pakistani women who experience violent behavior often avoid seeking help and do not share details of their painful experiences. The statistical data of 2009 shows 608 incidences of domestic violence were reported around the country. Looking at the high number of cases of murder and honor killing, one can easily understand that the cases of domestic violence are grossly under-reported.

Acid attacks

Acid attacks have been on increase in the Pakistan. Acid attacks are often perpetrated intentionally to disfigure the victims by spraying, throwing, or pouring acid onto the faces and bodies of victims. The motivation behind these attacks is to cause severe physical pain and emotional pain to the victim who has rejected their proposal of love or marriage or sex. Also, these attacks are perpetrated concerning the marriage and dowry issues.

The increasing occurrences of acid attacks can be noticed in the report of the Acid Survivors Foundation. The report of this foundation documented 1,090 cases of acid attacks across the country between 2007 and 2014 (HRCP, 2015) only in year 2015, 55 incidents of acid attacked occurred in Pakistan. Only 17 culprits have been arrested so far. Other perpetrators have got impunity; the lack of firm action against these barbaric people encourages them to attack on innocent victims mostly women. Because they know they will get off scot-free after committing this heinous crime.

Table-1 below compares categories manifest of various forms of overt violence of offences, number of incidents and the percentages recorded during 2008 and 2009 for cases of Violence against women (VAW) (Source: Perveen, 2010)

Categories of Crime	Number of Cases of VAW in Pakistan during Jan-Dec 2008 to Jan-Dec 2009		Percentage Increase/Decrease
	Year 2008	Year 2009	

Abduction/Kidnapping	1,784	1,987	11.38%
Murder	1,422	1,384	-2.67%
Domestic violence	281	608	116.37%
Suicide	599	683	14.02%
'Honour' killing	475	604	27.15%
Rape/Gang rape	778	928	19.28%
Sexual assault	172	274	59.30%
Acid throwing	29	53	82.75%
Burning	61	50	-18.03%
Miscellaneous	1,970	1,977	0.35%
Total	7,571	8,548	1290.00%

Forced Conversion of Minority's Women in Pakistan

Women of religious minorities live in constant fear of being kidnapped and converted to Islam with forceful marriages. Annually, Hundreds of young girls belonging to Hindu and Christian religions are forcibly converted to Islam, but the state apparatus and actors as well as national electronic and print media remain blind to injustice with women. Asian Human Rights Commission reported that, each year at least 1,000 Pakistan girls belonging to other religions are forced into Muslim marriages and forcibly made to convert Islam.

Violence in Police Custody

Women are even not safe under the custody of law enforcement agencies. There are many incidences of custodian violence including sexual assault and rapes perpetrated by policemen during police custody are reported. A report published in 1992, found that in police station, 70 percent of women were subjected to sexual or physical violence and that no single perpetrator had been punished for such barbaric crime. Just in year 1999, 41 women suffered from custodial violence. Out of them only 6 incidences were of minor type, whereas, in 21 cases women were gang-raped and 14 were abused physically. In year 2000, at least three cases of deaths of women resulted from severe male-treatment at the hands of law-enforces, reported (Niaz, 2003). Many of the incidences of custodian violence go unreported due to the fear of reprisal.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Gender-based violence is an expression and a symptom of a patriarchal social system. Violence has been identified as a social mechanism in the subordination of women by the men. Feminist analysis states that a patriarchal society is a direct cause of gender-based violence. Violent behavior of men against women in Pakistan can best be

understood as a part of a patriarchy that subjugate women through socio-cultural values and norms of society which define and dictate the place and conduct of women. Patriarchal values are embedded in Pakistani society which determines the subordinated position of women in Pakistan. The abnormal, amoral, and harmful customary practices in Pakistan which aim at preserving subjugation of women, defended and sanctified as cultural traditions and given religious overtones are amongst the most pervasive forces impacting upon the dignity of women and causing gender-based violence. When a woman's conduct and behavior is regarded as a threat to the patriarchal system, it is her body that is to be penalized and punished for wrong-doing. Beating, burning, sexual abuses, even killing in the name of honor are few examples of that punishment. Violence against women is increasing due to patriarchal mind-set that is supported and encouraged by a dysfunctional legal structure which only aims to control women behavior and conduct. Crimes against women are grossly under-reported. Even those who seek for justice often do not get justice due to structural factors including weak criminal justice system, powerlessness of women and lack of societal support. Under these circumstances, the majority of Pakistani women tolerate these crimes and injustices in silence, with hardly a voice raised in protest.

The increasing cases of gender-based violence are also encouraged by male-functioning of state machineries. Where women can go for justice? When law-enforces are also engaged in the abuse of women; when judiciary system does not dispense justice to women and when parallel informal justice system consist of mal-chauvinist tribal leader operates, then women are easily subject of violence without getting any justice.

Thus, when a woman's conduct and behavior is regarded as a threat to the patriarchal system, it is her body that is to be penalized and punished for wrong-doing. Pakistani governments, whether elected or dictatorial, failed to legislate to protect the rights and real honour of women, but instead they also have formulated several laws that protect perpetrators of violence against women. Violence against women is a human right issue and by taking the human rights approach, the mechanism of state and state actors can be made responsible for such violation of rights even if they occur in the private domain of family and community. The serious and firm actions of status apparatus and state actors can reduce somehow the occurrence of violence against women. However, In order to eliminate violence against women, patriarchal system has to be changed which can be achieved by strengthening the social, political and economic position of women.

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