

Violence against Women: A Developmental Issue

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Abstract

Violence against women is acknowledged as a widespread and serious issue that concerns all over the world. This article proposes to problematize the relationship between domestic violence as a developmental issue that hinders the initiatives for women. This phenomenon is not restricted to a particular community, but affects global development (Bradley, 1988). Knowing the broad range of the topic, this research examines only violence against women specifically in domestic setting, its types of violence, and its link to development initiatives for women. Taking Pakistani society as example, this article investigates how in Pakistani society women development is affected by domestic violence. In conclusion, it may be assumed that domestic violence is not an individual problem of any community where women development program may initiate, but it should be dealt in a wider spectrum, being a major concern in development measures for women.

Keywords: Women, Domestic violence, Developmental issue, Pakistan

Violence against Women Defined

Violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon that has affected every 3rd woman in their life¹. Description of violence against women is not as easy as it appears. In simple words, it ranges from physical assault to mental torture, Domestic violence can be defined in various ways, however, broadly speaking, it is defined as a controlling act that harms the health, safety and wellbeing of another person. Davies (1994) defines domestic violence that occurs in power relationships. This term covers episodes of physical and sexual infringement that includes punching, stabbing choking, acid throwing and setting on fire. This result leads to bruising to killing. The occurrence of domestic violence is as old as the human urge to control and exercise power. Domestic structures and relationships might have changed with time. However, the urge of control increases when it relates to imbalance of power between women and men. Domestic violence is partly caused by women's status in the family but besides this, there are also other dynamics, which are operational in the society like male domination, dominant versions of masculinity and male powerlessness have impact on occurrence of violence.

Gender-based violence has severe social and economic impacts, costing some countries up to 3.7% of their GDP, more than what they spend on education. It affects women and girls across all socio-economic backgrounds, perpetuating a cycle of violence where children exposed to it are more likely to become victims or perpetrators. Addressing this issue requires a community-based approach, engaging multiple stakeholders and tackling risk factors like harmful gender norms and the acceptance of violence. Sustainable change demands collective, long-term efforts to challenge these norms, ensuring a safer, more equitable future for all.

Although many feminists' organizations and women action groups working in many countries, for making violence against women a public issue, its prevalence and its impact on women's lives, still it is not publicly acknowledged as a crucial social problem as it should be. However, it existed in the past and is still present regardless of the diverse cultural and social differences worldwide (Leslie, 1996). Violence against women by men has been given central importance in feminist theory and feminist activism (Walby, 1990) because it has a very convincing influence on women's lives. Radical feminists look at male violence against women as to control women to maintain their supremacy. It works not only to the subordination of women but also supports the construction of the subordination (Kelly, 1988).

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialsustainability/brief/violence-against-women-and-girls>

Significance of the Research

The significance of addressing gender-based violence (GBV) or violence against women and girls (VAWG) cannot be overstated, as it constitutes a global pandemic affecting one in three women during their lifetime. The devastating impact of such violence extends far beyond physical harm; it includes mental torture and emotional trauma that deeply affect not only survivors but also their families and communities. Domestic violence, a prevalent form of GBV, involves various controlling behaviors aimed at harming an individual's health, safety, and well-being. The root causes of this violence often stem from an imbalance of power relations between men and women, male dominance, and entrenched social norms that reinforce gender inequality.

GBV is not confined to any socio-economic group; it transcends boundaries and affects women globally, regardless of culture, race, or economic status. This universality makes it a crucial issue to address in both developed and developing countries. The social and economic costs of VAWG are significant. It is estimated that violence against women can cost up to 3.7% of a country's GDP, more than what most governments allocate to education. This economic burden is coupled with long-term consequences, as children who grow up in violent environments are more likely to become either perpetrators or survivors of violence in the future.

The persistence of GBV highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive, community-based approach that addresses the root causes of violence, including harmful gender norms and power imbalances. While feminist organizations have made strides in raising awareness and pushing for societal change, violence against women is still not recognized as the critical social problem it is. A sustained, multi-stakeholder effort is essential to combat this issue, create lasting change, and ensure a safer, more equitable world for women and girls.

Objectives of the Research Study

The objectives of this research are as under.

1. To examine the reasons of gender-based violence, that impact on women's lives.
2. To analyse the social and economic costs of violence against women

Theoretical Framework of Domestic Violence

There are two main theoretical frames describing the cause of domestic violence, neither of which provides a complete explanation (Sen, 1998). The first theory on the causes of domestic violence attributes it to individual characteristics, such as stress, poverty, unemployment, or substance abuse, framing it as a private issue. While these factors contribute to domestic violence, this explanation is limited because the issue spans all socio-economic and racial classes worldwide. Such a narrow view overlooks the broader, systemic causes that go beyond individual or psychological factors. Domestic violence likely stems from deeper societal and cultural influences, including gender inequality, power dynamics, and harmful norms, which perpetuate violence across diverse contexts. A more comprehensive approach is needed to fully understand and address it. Sen (1998) and Karp & Manchandra (2015) highlight domestic violence as a structural issue rooted in the subordination of women, shaped by cultural, socio-economic, and political power dynamics. It is not an isolated issue but reinforced by social norms at family, community, and state levels. Systemic change is necessary to address its root causes.

This paper briefly focuses on the second approach, which is employed by Bradley (1988) and other radical feminists.

While there is substantial support for the second theoretical framework, the underlying factors cannot be ignored. That does not mean that all men in patriarchal society commit violence against at some level with his partner. So individual characteristics in every situation supported by social norms to use violence. Although it seems that domestic violence is legitimated by structural elements in society, it has also link with individual periodic factors. The intricacies and multifaceted nature of the relationship with socioeconomic factors associated with violence requires further research.

How Extensive is Domestic Violence

It is not easy to answer to what extend domestic violence occurs, but the result of researches showed that it takes place at a very large scale throughout the world. Domestic violence is a leading cause of physical harm and death of women in internationally. It is often ignored or even overlooked by the state as it is viewed as a private matter (Visaria, 2008). Domestic violence exists regardless of race, class or age for all the women of the world. For example, according to IWTC (1992) report, in Bangladesh 50 % of women are murdered by their husbands as compared to other murders. In Papua

New Guinea, between the years 1979-1982, a healthy percentage of 73 of all the women murdered were murdered by their husbands (Heise, 2011). In 1995, nearly half of all murder victims in Russia were women murdered by their male partners. In 1993, 14,000 women were killed by their partners another 54,000 were seriously injured (Visaria, 2008). It seems that these deaths are caused by a preventable social problem, a problem caused by women's status within the family and society. Sadly, the prevalence of domestic violence has been a constant threat to women's lives. Heise (2011) in a World Bank study found that domestic violence is a leading cause of disability and death among women worldwide, comparable to the global burden of HIV, tuberculosis, cardiovascular disease, or cancer. This applies to both industrialized and developing countries.

Domestic violence is generally considered as a hidden problem. Firstly, not in the sense that is repressed by victims and unnoticed by society, but in the sense that those people see it as a normal phenomenon and, therefore, consider it not an issue. In addition to that, it occurs in the private domain of the household. The second reason in communities deny this issue, fearing that an acceptance of VAW' existence is an attack on the integrity of the family and thirdly, the official statistics of the victims are usually unreliable. These statistics are based on reported incidents of abuse communicated from police, welfare and hospital records, women using emergency housing or form phones or through field surveys (World Development Report, 1993).

Types and Effects of Domestic Violence

It is a fact that all types and forms of violence affect women's health significantly. Physical violence is the most often reported crime as compared to other types of violence. Other types of violence such as emotional, physiological, economical, are invisible and sometimes not considered as violence at all. All of them have a profound effect on women's health and life.

It is not only the physical abuse, like wife beating, which is to be considered as violence against women by their male partners but, there are other types of domestic violence which frequently occur within the intimate relationships. Maynard and Winn (1997) identified types of domestic violence like emotional, economic, physical and social abuse. Physical violence is the most basic form of domestic violence, including heavy injuries, unsuccessful pregnancies and murder (Maynard and Winn, 1997). Karp and Manchandra (2015) argue that fear of violence not only compels but also limits women's behavior,

Heise (2011) highlights the health costs and consequences of violence against women, from industrial to developing countries and concludes that victimization is a foremost cause of health issues in women. This physical violence leads to health issues. Women suffer through the physical and mental torture and deprived of their basic human right as individuals (Visaria, 2008). Economic violence generally includes when women don't have control over their own income. In many cases, although women contribute income in family economy, their partners take control on their income, and they are not allowed to use it according to their own will.

The general effects of wife abuse, whether it is physical or mental, have a profound impact on women's lives. Furthermore, as Visaria (2008) says, threat or act of physical violence and psychological violence like verbal abuse, deprivation of physical and economical resources all burden women's mental health. Consequences of violence on woman, emotionally and psychologically, present a wide range of problems. For example, women may be paralyzed by shock and become under huge stress from the ever-present threat of an occurrence of violence. This can make them depressed and this may lead to a significant ratio of suicide (Kishor & Johnson, 2004). Commonly, a few of the instant physical and psychological responses associated with physical violence are invasive memories, anxiety, distrust, depression, distrust of one's own realism, self-blame, self-harm, chronic pain, sleep disorders, and eating disorders (Visaria, 2008).

In addition to that, it is understood that coexistence of these symptoms generally reduces ideas and decision-making capability from the victim. As mentioned by Koss (1990) and Heise (2011) the apathy, along with economic barriers, restricts women's lives and limits their participation in activities beyond the home. The absence of supportive initiatives further hinders their empowerment and opportunities.

Women in Pakistan

Pakistani society is a patriarchal society, and it is not different from the rest of the world. Wife-abuse is an airily common phenomenon in Pakistan, like other countries. Women are often viewed as inferior, with husbands assumed to have ownership and the right to dominate them, including using

force. This reinforces domestic violence, which is rooted in patriarchal norms and societal attitudes about gender relations. Hina (1998) a renowned Pakistani woman activist writes about this phenomenon, wife battering is so widespread that it frequently goes unnoticed as a serious form of violence against women, with incidents seldom reported and viewed as private family matters. Law enforcement often urges women to reconcile with their husbands to avoid shame, even when faced with significant injuries. This prevailing mindset discourages women from pursuing assistance, trapping them in ongoing cycles of severe violence. The annual report for 1998 of the HRCR states that "Women's subordination has become so ingrained in customs and traditions that much of the widespread domestic violence against them is often viewed as normal behavior (P:10).

Reports from just one women's organization² in a large city indicate that about 5000 cases of wife beating were brought to it over an eight-year period. A sample survey (HRCR, 2008) revealed that 82% of women in rural Punjab feared violence from their husbands over minor issues, while 52% of women in the most developed urban areas reported being beaten. Burning by husbands or in-laws was a prevalent form of violence, with 282 reported cases in Lahore in 1998, of which only 35% survived. Additionally, more than two-thirds of both men and women viewed disobedience as a justifiable reason for physical punishment, and employed women seeking independence were more likely to face abuse than those engaged in unpaid labor. Generally, their partners take women independence as challenge to their authority and superior position in the household. Most women in Pakistan are vulnerable to violations of their rights to life, liberty, and security due to societal attitudes and cultural practices that condone violence against them. The law fails to provide adequate protections or foster an environment conducive to women's fundamental rights, while state institutions lack the sensitivity and capacity to address gender-specific violence. Law enforcement rarely assists women victims, and judicial decisions often reflect biases stemming from dominant social attitudes.

The underlying cause of this violence is the effort to exert control over women's freedom of movement, decision-making, and autonomy in all areas of life.

This social acceptance of woman as men's property and women's subordinate position as compared to men has encouraged men to treat women as they wanted to. Society mostly views wife battering as a private and internal family matter and no one other than wife and husband interferes in it. Consequently, standard human rights are often disregarded in these situations, with violence viewed as a necessary "corrective measure" for which the wife is blamed. Even women take it as a normal thing in their marital relationships.

In other words, how can these women who don't have their basic human rights participate in national development of the country? Do women with physical and psychological disorders perform their required role in any developmental work? And if they cannot, how can those countries escalate development? This is one of the big reasons why Pakistan is lagging in overall development. When Bradley's (1988) takes the idea of domestic violence as an obstacle in women's participation in development, it may be applicable to Pakistani situation. Pakistani women also have the same status and are facing the same unequal power relation in marital lives. Unfortunately, in the third world countries like Pakistan, these crucial social issues cannot get the prime importance they should get because of other major issues like poverty, illiteracy, etc. This perspective frames domestic violence as a cultural, private, or individual issue that cannot be addressed by state action, relegating it to the realm of social reform (Hina, 1992).

Discussion and Results: Domestic Violence as Developmental Issue

First, let's see what development means. Development can be defined as meeting the basic needs of all individuals while providing opportunities for everyone to pursue a better life. This broad definition emphasizes economic opportunity, equity, human rights, dignity, democracy, peace, and overall well-being. According to this broad definition, development focuses on fostering economic opportunity, equity, human rights, dignity, democracy, peace, spiritual and emotional-wellbeing. Therefore, keeping this definition in mind, it is explored that women's status in society and especially in domestic settings, it seems that two women are suffering from unequal power relations with their husbands. Women have very few options for choosing opportunities for their lives. Every so often, women are not allowed to use their capabilities and potentials to fulfil their ambitions for a better life for themselves and their families. Generally, their basic human rights are ignored in such a way that

² (Report of the Commission of Inquiry for Women Pakistan August (1997)

even women themselves take abusive relationships as normal, natural and socially accepted phenomenon.

Domestic violence has been prevailing so much that after many years of hard work and efforts to integrate women into development and making development projects to improving women's lives, has not been so much of success. Because in the past, domestic violence has not been addressed as an obstacle in development. Besides this, the link between women, development and violence has not been considered as crucial as it should be.

While the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985) did not address violence against women in its agenda for achieving equality, development, and peace, the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women does call for addressing this critical issue such as linkage between gender, violence and development. Additionally, it also suggested measures for making suitable policies and institutionalized support for victims of the violence (Carrillo, 1992). Robin (1984) reported on women's conditions in the 1980s and again in 1996, highlighting the widespread prevalence of gender violence against women in over seventy studied countries. Additionally, UNIFEM's projects confirm that violence against women remains a significant barrier to women's lives across various regions of the world.

The Fourth World Women Conference held in Beijing in 1995 included in its report, violence as a major area of concern for women. A shift in the discourse on women in development aims to transform the perception of women from mere beneficiaries to active participants. This redefinition of development emphasizes a process that replaces constraints with choices. Domestic violence significantly inhibits women's choices in development, as it impedes their public participation, undermines their economic efficiency, and increases health burdens. Additionally, it places a strain on limited national resources, further hindering progress toward gender equality and development (Heise, 2011). A World Bank (2013) study on health estimated that rape and domestic violence account for five percent of healthy years of life lost among women of reproductive age in developing countries. Similarly, an Inter-American Development Bank study by Morrison (1997) revealed that domestic violence led to a loss of \$1.56 billion in Chile—over 2 percent of the country's GDP in 1996—when only considering the impact on women's wages. This data proposes that the economic consequences alone are serious matter that deserve special attention to violence as a developmental importance. Decisions made by a country regarding sustainability, investment in human resources, and community participation significantly impact women's health. In turn, women's health influences the nation's capacity to achieve its developmental goals, highlighting the interconnectedness of women's well-being and overall national development (Fulu, 2007). For a country to effectively invest in communities, its programs must directly or indirectly impact women's health, rather than solely focusing on economic growth. Given that women play a significant, though often underrecognized, role in the economy, their health and ability to fulfill their economic responsibilities are crucial for local, national, and international development. In other words, economic activity is intricately linked to health and development.

The most concerning aspect of domestic violence is that it can disrupt women's participation in development activities at various stages, hindering their progress and contributions (Heise, 2011). Through its effect on women's health and available choices, clearly hinders women's abilities to achieve the goals of development. Their involvement in development activities is constrained by the long term physical and psychological effects of violence (Heise, 2011). It may prevent women from going to family planning clinic or attending literacy classes. So not only violence but fear of violence keeps women out of any activity which could make their life less dependent on men. Heise (2011) and Carrillo (1992) discuss this situation that domestic violence restricts women's ability to make free choices regarding employment and participation, diminishing their potential economic contributions to their families, communities, and nations. It also limits their opportunities to develop the skills necessary to escape abusive relationships economically. Central to family violence are men's fear of women's independence and their desire to maintain the existing power dynamics, which perpetuate cycles of abuse and subordination.

The above-mentioned statements supported Bradley's (1988) idea. In her research article (1994) on Papua new Guinea, she indicated that how unequal power relation isolates women from their productive role. Drawing on their idea and following her, I also support her that, domestic violence presents women to participate in development work and creates fear of violent behavior form

their husbands which can occur at any time. Taking the example of third world countries, the situation becomes more undesirable, as the priorities of these countries do not include domestic violence at the top of the crucial issues on national agenda.

Domestic violence not only affects household women but also influences working women. Kimmel (2007) interviewed 50 working battered women seeking assistance from a victim services agency in a large metropolitan area and found that 56 percent had lost at least one job due to domestic violence. Additionally, 54 percent reported missing an average of three days of work per month because of the abuse. In another study, Kimmel surveyed battered women in shelters and concluded that 58 percent were employed at the time of the abuse, with their work performance severely impacted by absenteeism and tardiness related to the physical violence they experienced.

There is another dimension of the developmental program which I would like to mention. Development programs can also affect women in a way, which can intensify violence against women in household. A reciprocal concern is whether and how development efforts can impact violence within the home. As Kabeer (1998) discussed it, it is equally possible, however, that development efforts can shift and intensify gender dynamics within the household and aggravate incidents of violence. To determine the impact of development interventions on violence against women requires an analysis of specific factors and behaviors. Which triggers violence in individual households. Additionally, the ways in which gender dynamics of power within the household as well as the community are affected by development efforts.

It is crucial for development planners, as recommended by Rehman (1991), to recognize that development programs can significantly impact the existing social relations between women, men, and communities. Such programs may inadvertently lead to stigmatization, threats, violence, or even death as outcomes. Increasingly, some development initiatives are becoming aware that enhancing women's status can disrupt the fragile social dynamics traditionally rooted in men's power and control over women, highlighting the need for sensitivity in program design and implementation. The crux of male violence against women shows women's vulnerability, and helplessness against men. When it comes to women to make choices and gain opportunities by making themselves economically or socially independent, women's work seems challenging men's authority and their superior position as breadwinner and head of the household. So, they use diverse types of abuses against women to limit their productive activities. Realizing the adverse implications of women's lives, many international agencies pay a significant importance to gender issues. In its 2018 report, the World Bank identified domestic violence as a critical issue, emphasizing that investment in women's health, including programs addressing family violence, benefits not only women but also has positive spillover effects for national economies and households that rely heavily on women's paid and unpaid labor. Consequently, economies stand to gain from policies aimed at improving women's health, as health and productivity are closely linked. Thus, when improvements in women's health are paired with education and enhanced employment opportunities, they can significantly facilitate a nation's economic development (World Bank, 2018).

Conclusion

The basis of whole problem of domestic violence against women is that women must feel and practically demonstrate themselves as vulnerable, helpless, and inferior in their relationship with men in the societies all over the world. The abuse by men to their wives is used to make women realize about their status, social, economic, and emotional dependence on men. Besides this, violence against women denies women's basic human dignity. Additionally, it is the most fundamental form of discrimination against women, which restrict their opportunities and choices for making their lives better. It is believed that social acceptance of violence in societies is a denial of women's equality and right of development in all fields of life. It is true to say that if women are victims of domestic violence, they will never achieve their full potentials as a human being as well as agents of change for the entire world.

Heise (2011) underscored the seriousness of domestic violence by stating that it is not merely an individual or family issue but also a national and international concern, as the structural and specific causes are often similar across the globe. This international scope makes domestic violence a critical issue that international associations and development agencies must address by recognizing the important connections between domestic violence and the goals of social and economic

development. To elevate this issue on national and international agendas, there is a pressing need to highlight its linkage with development at international forums.

Recommendations

There is a need to address this important topic for future research. However, a few important recommendations are suggested for further research.

1. Encourage international efforts to connect domestic violence with global development to raise its importance on the world stage.
2. Create awareness programs that challenge harmful beliefs and help women understand their rights and strengths.
3. Strengthen national and international laws and support services for the protection of women from domestic violence and in case of violence, government must ensure women get justice and help.

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