



MASCULINITY AND FAMILY VIOLENCE: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PAKHTUNS' VIOLENT MASCULINITIES IN PARENTAL & SPOUSAL RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Violence by no means is restricted to an ethnicity, culture, or society, rather is a universally prevalent phenomenon existing since the human's existence. Men by their prime nature and nurture are harsh, hard, rough, and tough, which compel them to dominate any of the social situations. Particularly, Pakhtun men are more dominant because of the cultural provision and traditional space to them. Such dominance is evident in all spheres of life ranging from simple form of socialization to complex economic and political decisions and protection of the family. To elaborate such conception, the current study is qualitatively framed by studying Pakhtun men incarcerated in central prisons of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province for violent crimes like murder and assault. The in-depth interviews from the selected sample size reveal that violence is compulsion in Pakhtun society for men because it's a matter of survival and existence. Violence is committed for ensuring peace at home and bringing social order and social control in family.

Keywords: Pakhtun men, masculinity, violence, family (spouse and kids)

JEL Codes: J16

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Domestic violence encompasses a variety of patterns ranging from slight form of assault or emotional, verbal, economic or sexual abuse within the familial or residential sphere to high mass devastations leading to coercive forms of marital rape, violence leading to disfigurement or death. The empirical information in this research asserts on the fact that women are most vulnerable in terms of domestic violence. In the typical Pakhtun culture, where women are living miserable lives and are excessively dependent over male partners for financial support, physical and mental security, facilitation and other aspects of life; makes them more prone to violence and disparity. Evidently, it is a virtually accepted fact that wife or female partner is more commonly the victim of domestic violence, though the victim can also be the male partner, or both partners may engage in abusive or violent behavior, or the victim may act in self-defense or retaliation. Whereas women in the developed world are openly encouraged to report the acts of violence or disparity to the authorities, which is rarely practiced in the Third World or traditionally governed societies. It has been argued that domestic violence against men is most often unreported because of social pressures including the fear of stigmatization on their masculinity, and perceived lack of machismo and other denigrations (Lupri & Grandin, 2004; Migliaccio, 2001). Domestic violence often occurs through the misinterpreted sense of justification by abusers' belief where the victims are entrapped through seclusion, power and control, deficient financial resources, fear, or shame. Similarly, the women's susceptibility to domestic violence among Pakhtuns has long standing in the cultural patterns. It follows several patterns (as the empirical findings reflect) that specifically a wife is most often targeted. The information reveals that women are the sole victims of domestic violence whether she is a mother, sister, daughter, or wife; while among these, wife has been most often the center of such violence.

Resultantly, the acts of violence, most probably draw negative effects on children living in households experiencing violence and irregular aggression, who then adopt such approach in their future (Schechter, Zygmunt, Coates, Davies, Trabka, McCaw, Kolodji, Robinson, 2007). Consequent upon such habit throughout the course of life while living among Pakhtuns, either a common, normal, and educated person may become cruel and violent or may be forced to

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escape from the existing setup as changing the system may not be the task of an individual. Further, the Pakhtun cultural traditions are the centuries old customary laws that are governing the lives of all the followers where a slight deviation may lead to a huge social and cultural casualty for the violators or deviants.

II. THE STUDY'S ARGUMENT

Although the gender differences are relatively small when the interaction is examined with strangers, but in the intimate relations (when come in conflict), such a gender gap exceeds alarmingly. Research throughout the globe reveal in terms of high incidence of domestic violence that men are much more likely than women to injure their spouses severely (Browne, 1993; Morval, 1992). In fact, an estimated 2 to 4 million women in the United States are assaulted by their male partners each year (Browne, 1993; Stahly, 1996). In addition, a study conducted in Canada reports that 45 percent of women over the age of 18 had experienced violence from husbands, boyfriends, or other men they knew (Violence Against Women Survey, 1993). Victims of domestic violence often report that the experience was traumatic where women suffer from extreme physical injuries and in some cases disfigured and mutilated, which draw both physical and psychological trauma (Matlin, 1999). Relevantly, the primary information (obtained from the field) also emphasizes over the fact that during domestic violence, women are most often victimized in terms of injury.

Females are disproportionately the victims of family violence in terms of spouse battering, marital rape, and incest through infliction of genital mutilation (Henslin, 1996). In this connection, the feminist sociologists often adopt the conflict theory to explain such patterns of violence. They argue that violence against women is an expression of male power that males use violence to try to maintain a higher status (Alder, 1992). Henslin (1996) in this context is of the opinion that if men lose relative status as gender relations change, the continued high rates of violence by men against women can be expected because some assailants feel that violence offers them a sense of power not available in other spheres of life. In addition, the feminist sociologists also use the perspective of symbolic interactionism to stress how U.S culture promotes violence by males through video games in which females are hunted and killed (Henslin, 1996). Among these games, the zombies suck the blood of scantily dressed sorority females (Pereira, 1993) which reflects the U.S culture promoting and teaching violence to men in terms of associating power, dominance, strength, virility, and superiority with masculinity (Scully, 1990). Resultantly, by adding and associating strength and virility to masculinity is a paved way to produce and act violence. Based on such facts and figures, the current study is an attempt to investigate and identify the repercussions of Pakhtun men's violent masculinities specifically in intimate relations pertaining to their spouses.

III. PLAN OF WORK

The study is framed under the qualitative research design focusing on qualitative tools for data collection and methods of analysis. Data for the study was collected from the inmates of four central jails of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province including the Central Jail of Peshawar, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, and Haripur. Samples/respondents were selected from the jail records conveniently following the set-criterion for selection, which consisted of Gender, Ethnicity, Nature of Crime and Conviction and Age. An inmate qualifying the criterion of being a Pakhtun male, incarcerated for violent crimes (murder and/or assault) above the age of 18 were conveniently selected. The selected samples were thoroughly interviewed through an interview guide in a face-to-face interaction. The process of data collection continued till the attainment of saturation point under the criterion set by Guest, Namey and Chen (2020) i.e., the "new information threshold". The collected data is thematically analyzed following the Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis 6-step model.

IV. RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

IV.I. MASCULINITY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE; A DILEMMA OF THE PRESENT DAY

Domestic violence is a universally prevalent issue of concern, which affects the entire family but specifically affects children and women placing them physical, emotional, and developmental risk (Hornor, 2005). An excessive body of research is invested to study domestic violence during the recent decades where the early research focused on the nature of violence, its cycle and effects on family members especially children and women. The modern studies most often attempt and address the interventional and recidivist perspective of domestic violence, which to them goes in much favor of the family, society and children and women (Stover, 2005). In similar passion, the collected during this study examines and finds out that domestic violence in Pakhtun society does exist in its extreme and brutal form. Almost all the responses comprised of the fact that men have never been the victims of injury in households' clash. Men's exemption in this context is based on their dominant status over women as they have the authority to control their wives because they are powerful, physically strong, and above all they have the cultural provision and

acknowledgments of inflicting the injury and harshly behaving with their wives. Men have dominance in Pakhtun society almost in all spheres of life. They are the earners, the protectors, the facilitators and breadwinners, so they have the social and economic powers, which reduce their victimization in domestic violence, for instance, *"...it's crystal clear; (laughing) being a Pakhtun you don't know it? It's incredible. Pakhtun men are never born to be victims (especially) in domestic chores and then (of) wives, impossible. Men are dominant, powerful, and authoritarian, and those who are beaten by wives can never be men and Pakhtuns"* (1A02-33RL).

Contrary to the aspects of social life in advanced countries, Pakhtun rarely impose their dominance over women through violence. It is a cultural provision to them, which is continuous since distant past. Pakhtun men do not need to express their masculinity through infliction of violence or injury only for showing and maintaining their dominance. It does not mean to say that there is no violence or injury among Pakhtuns rather the frequency of aggression, attempts of violence or expression of rage may be one of the dominant qualities of Pakhtuns but the pattern and procedure is different. The primary information in this context express that Pakhtun men most often get aggressive or initiate a violent act to injure the family members only for ensuring peace and contentment at home. In addition, to socialize the kids and other members are forced in religious patterns where the use of violence, slapping or aggression are common. The young ones are most often slapped and intimidated for violence when they do not offer their prayers. Besides, to take control of the household activities, they tend to be aggressive and violent and become so, because they are overloaded with excessive responsibilities and split roles (*"... I most often get angry over my sons, when they do not go for work and earning because this is our dire need, if they would not be working, what will we eat and how could we survive"*). One of the cases in this regard is worth-mention, which reflects the infliction of injury in different manners, such as:

"I haven't inflicted any harm on others except the one and only (which was my revenge). I haven't touched anybody else maliciously in my life. Being a single person in family; I hadn't any opportunity to fight with someone, injure somebody (laughing) and literally I am missing this event in my life when hear about the fights between siblings; which is absent in my life. I wish, I should have siblings, with whom I used to fight and then resolve our issues and become friends" (3M05-48RL).

Such a desire for having siblings for fight reflects three conceptions; (1) Pakhtun's nature and nurture for being violent all the times who search for recreation in violence; (2) the lack of recreational facilities to them, which tend them to find refreshment in unhealthy circumstances; (3) joint family (which is the core value of Pakhtuns) experiences more conflicts and provides more opportunities for a violent and hostile environment to the family members.

Association between gender and domestic violence is a debated and notorious issue for social scientists because there are numerous factors that restrict the acquisition of authentic data (Chan, 2011). To undertake studies on issues pertaining to gender-based violence are hampered by silence of researchers that lead to persistence of abuse in family and other relations (Susan, 2013). The mixed viewpoints in this regard hinder the conclusion that what constitutes the domestic abuse because people having hard experiences of violence have become habitual with it and consider it as a routine act (Boundless Sociology, 2013). In this regard, a review article (2010) entitled *"Are Men the More Belligerent Sex?"* highlighted that women most often initiate and commit domestic violence than men and astonishingly, they are mostly victimized by the said form of violence *"because men are stronger on average than women"* (Lilienfeld & Arkowitz, 2010). Furthermore, in cultures where patriarchy is practiced and masculinity is engraved, physical violence or battering of wives might not be a matter of concern in such societies (Chan, 2011).

"... Pakhtun men are powerful, dominant, and brutal, it's true. I'm also a family man and never tolerate the dominance of my wife and kids. I've a strong hold on my entire family (wife and kids). They cannot go against my decisions. I thrash them frequently whenever they commit any mistake. Well, you will consider me an atrocious man, but I'm not because I do this to socialized them and make them fault-free. They will be ready for future hardships when spend a hard time at home. They are not allowed to make complaint against me, and should live calmly with me, because they have no other option".

This conception is widely practiced among Pakhtuns. Almost all of the Pakhtun male members (having families) consider it their right and responsibility to socialize their family members, keep them in control and ensure peace at home. It is considered that parent especially father is nominated as a social controller on family, because both the wife and children are insufficiently mature to understand the consequences of their actions and might commit mistakes at any instance, which might produce some unexpected results. Doing so, they are convinced that the spouse and children will take care of their action by fearing that if the father knows, what will happen.

Similarly, a study conducted in five continents addressed the strong association between gender disparity and frequency of domestic violence; the authors attributed that domestic violence is significantly gendered and women suffer the most; however, going by their broader paradigm, “partner abuse can no longer be conceived as merely a gender problem, but also (and perhaps primarily) as a human and relational problem, and should be framed as such by everyone concerned” (Esquivel-Santovena, 2013). In an effort to shift consciousness about the connections between gender and abuse, many organizations have made efforts to use gender-neutral terms when referring to perpetrator-ship and victimhood such as ‘*family violence*’ is used rather than ‘*violence against women*’ (Chrisler & McCreary, 2010).

Contrary to the notion of gender-neutrality in violence; studies still heavily focus on the idea that masculinity has key role in infliction of violence on its counterpart femininity. Although, women beating especially wife beating was declared illegitimate in many countries especially United States, yet the actual figures are still doubtful, as the enormous portion of cross-cultural studies reflect that women are more exposed to domestic violence than men (Compton, 2010; Brinkerhoff, Lynn, Suzanne & Rose, 2008; Dobash & Dobash, 1992). It is evidently approved through a consensus about women’s subjection to some severe kinds of abuse, which is most often inflicted by abusive partners (Compton, 2010; Brinkerhoff *et al.*, 2008). The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) states that “violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which has led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men” (Rafferty, 2013; UN, 1993).

“... nobody can stop us (the men) to leave authority over our family. None of such laws are acceptable to us. If they want to imprison us for it, they can do, but we would not leave our due role. It is the due role and responsibility of a male member who is heading a family to be a bit harsh and hard on kids and women. We don’t enjoy such things, but it is our responsibility and we compelled to do so. We live in such a society where we need to live with immense care. If our children commit any wrong such as immodesty to other women, it will indulge the entire family to an unending process of enmity. To avoid those consequences, we need to be careful and inflict some violence on them to protect them from larger and unending hazard.

As discussed in multiple ways during this research, that violence (in any form) is a form of criminality and subject to sanctions almost in all the countries. It reveals the notion that masculinity has been deeply engraved in social structures to cause, influence, and inflict violence both *homogenially* and *heteroginially* or with the same gender or the opposing. The discussion led to the uniform reports that most of the violence is confined to females because of the masculine strength that men acquire both biologically and socio-culturally accompanied by economic powers. Masculinity thus remains a grounded cause for infliction of violence and a core tendency to indulgence in criminality.

In this regard, one of the respondents expressed his actual feelings that why the wife is victimized in matters of domestic conflicts. It says that,

“... Its wife, no one other than her is victimized. Although I admit that this is not right to express your aggression of others on your wife, but still for surviving in a Pakhtun family, we must do so. Because among Pakhtuns, we cannot be harsh with our mother (as she is most prestigious), sister (as she is like a guest at home and will leave it after getting married) and daughters (as they are our lives, and very innocent who cannot be exposed to violence). So, the only option (rests with us) is the wife, who is more frequently targeted of violence because we are compelled and forced. If we are targeting our mothers, sisters, or daughters; we confront excessive cultural stigmatization and traditional restrictions; while on the contrary, victimizing women is a culturally approved and acknowledged act of men. It is against our masculine identity to be soft and humble with our wives, rather we are men because we are hard, harsh, dominant, and powerful than our wives. Further, we are weaker than our mothers, because if she curses us, we believe that we will never find a smooth and comfortable life; we cannot target our sisters and daughters, as they are weak and guests at home and in Pakhtun culture, disrespect of guests and weaker is not allowed. Wife (being a woman) is delicate and weaker, but in terms of social or marital relations, she is powerful (being the queen of house) but on the other hand we (men) are the kings of houses, so Kings are always powerful than queens and if we submit our wills to them, we shall be ready to confront the cultural disgust and resistance, which is impossible” (2M05-37RM).

V. CONCLUSION

Domestic violence by no means is limited to specific area, culture, ethnicity and/or society. The facts and figures presented in this study reveal that existence of violence in human society is as old as the human’s civilization. None

of the society is violence-free, but there can be variation, fluctuation, and differences in terms of violence's infliction, frequency and intensity. The fact is also proved that men by their prime nature and nurture are aggressive and dominant and love to dominate their family members. Talking about Pakhtun men; they are famous for their violent nature especially when exhibiting masculinities. The study finds that in exhibition of men's masculinities, the victimization of wives and kids is a routine matter. Wives and kids are more vulnerable to domestic violence in a typical Pakhtun society, for which there exist some justifications. Pakhtun men consider themselves as the sole saviors and facilitators of the family, which is true that they are because women are culturally restricted to participate in economic and political matters. Playing the role of earning, feeding, and protecting the family solely, they are compelled to be harsh, hard, and violent to some extent to bring and ensure social control in their homes and vicinity. In addition, the Pakhtuns' cultural patterns and traditions are also harsh, and they do not tolerate any misconduct against their women and land. It is believed that leaving the women and kids unattended and unnoticed may be a pathway towards a mire of extreme apathies in the form of endless and brutal enmities. Conclusively, such debate is further debatable; it is continued since distant past and will continue, because such justifications to their violent masculinities are not accepted in the moder and civilized scholarships but from the indigenous perspective, these men have some space of being harsh and violent, which is a source of their survival. The rational approach does explicit the fact that survival is better than death because enmity among Pakhtuns is an invitation to an ensured death.

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