

**EXPERIENCE OF PHYSICAL
VIOLENCE FACED BY EVER-
MARRIED WOMEN IN RURAL
AREAS OF PAKISTAN: AN INSIGHT
FROM DEMOGRAPHIC AND
HEALTH SURVEY (2017-18)**

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An alarmingly high rate of violence against women in Pakistan poses a serious threat to their health as well as the health of their families. A large sample of Pakistani women from five provinces (Sindh, Punjab, Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Gilgit Baltistan) were included in the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey data. The effects of intrinsic factors such as age, education, area, style of marital relationship, and wealth index, loss of pregnancy and number living children. Descriptive and bivariate analysis were used to examine the impact of different forms of violence on the probability of being physically abused by one's spouse in the past 12 months. The key findings showed that women who are younger, less educated, and from lower-income families are more likely to be victims of physical violence. There were clear regional differences, with KPK (39.7%) and Baluchistan (45.7%) reported the highest rates of violence. Women who

have unskilled or unemployed husbands were especially at risk, but education, for both women and their spouses, turns out to be a protective factor. Violence is strongly influenced by economic level; women in the quintile with the lowest income report the highest prevalence (28.2%), while those in the quintile with the highest wealth report the lowest prevalence (9.3%). Similarly, women who don't have access to the media were more likely to experience violence, underscoring the importance of knowledge and awareness.

Keywords: *Women, Physical Violence, Social Determinants, Pakistan.*

INTRODUCTION

The phrase "violence against women" refers to any act of "gender-based violence that causes or is likely to cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether taking place in a private or public setting." (UNGA,1993). Violence against women in Pakistan according to the Annual Report of the Aurat Foundation (2014), The term "violence against women" refers to any kind of "gender-based violence that causes or is likely to cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether taking place in a private or public setting."

According to The World's Women (2015), violence against women, such violations are considered violations of human rights and injustices against women, illustrating the pervasiveness of the gender power gap. Researchers in developing and advanced economies now pay more attention to violence against women on a global or

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worldwide scale. The primary socioeconomic factors that contribute to domestic violence include household size, length of marriage, the number of wives, religion, level of education, and age. Domestic conflict over money is one of the main causes of violence. This is hardly surprising given the poor and low-income economy's excessive stress and pressure on the wage earners. Most often, women's arguments with their spouses are brought on by financial stress. According to Ifeanyi-obi et al., (2017) other causes of domestic violence against women include failing to complete household chores, discussing marital issues with friends, and disobeying spouses.

The literature demonstrates a strong correlation between the education degree of the husband and aggression against the wife. In comparison to working women, housewives experience physical violence more frequently. The degree of domestic violence is also closely related to the work that spouses conduct. Physical violence against women who have an average number of children is rare (Rasoulia et al., 2014). In comparison to husbands who have greater socioeconomic standing, those with poor work status (low income) and low educational attainment level abuse their spouses less (Hoffman et al., 1994). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1994), women who earn less than \$10,000 per year respond to domestic violence by their husbands at a rate that is five times higher than that of women who earn more than \$30,000 per year. According to Xu et al. (2011), physical domestic violence increases when a wife's income increases relative to her intimate partner, even when their incomes are comparable. The same findings hold for education levels. Nearly 68% of women who witnessed their fathers abuse their moms as children have subsequently experienced domestic violence. According to

Ferdous et al. (2017), almost 68% of women reported witnessing their fathers assaulting their moms.

Physical abuse has an impact on the mental and physical well-being of women. Victims of physical violence endure ongoing depressive symptoms, anxiety, and discomfort (Ferdous et al., 2017). Violence may be extremely detrimental to a woman's physical well-being as well as her general mental health, and in extreme situations, it can even damage her sense of common self-worth (Women's Health, 2013). In Pakistan, 30.2% of women who had ever been married and resided in rural areas reported experiencing physical abuse at the hands of their spouses or other intimate partners in the year before to the poll, according to the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey PDHS 2017-18 (NIPS & ICF, 2019). This is a serious issue because physical abuse can have a lot of detrimental effects on women's health, happiness, and financial security.

The high rates of physical abuse against women in Pakistan's rural communities are caused by a variety of variables. Pakistan is a patriarchal society where women are supposed to be subordinate to men who are viewed as the heads of their houses. This can give rise to the idea that males can physically abuse their wives in order to control and discipline them. The likelihood of violence against women can be influenced by poverty, illiteracy, and a lack of access to opportunities for education and employment. Because they worry about losing their source of income, women who depend financially on their spouses may be less inclined to disclose violence. There are some cultural norms in Pakistan that support or even encourage violence against women. For instance, some individuals think that a woman who is "disobedient" or "unchaste" should be physically punished. Pakistan Demographic and Health

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Survey (PDHS, 2017–18) conducted by the National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS) with the assistance and technical aid of ICF, also discovered that rural areas had a higher risk of physical violence against women than urban areas do. This is probably due to a number of things, such as the more conventional beliefs that are frequently held in rural areas, the fact that women in rural areas may not have access to education or work possibilities, and the isolation that they might encounter.

The issue of physical violence against women in Pakistan's rural communities can be solved in a number of ways. Even while physical abuse of women is a severe issue in Pakistan's rural communities, it is not insurmountable. It is possible to lower the danger of violence and enhance the lives of women in these areas by addressing the issues that contribute to this issue. The victim's (women's) performance can also suffer in terms of productivity and fitness. In societies like Pakistan, it is a widespread issue that domestic violence against women is not reported. Due to social shame, cultural traditions, and their dependence on their intimate partner; women do not report incidences of violence because they view them as personal family matters. Reporting the violence and asking for assistance are still uncommon.

Nearly 56% of married women who have experienced sexual or physical abuse have not told anybody or sought assistance to lessen or end the abuse. Only 30% of these women have sought assistance, and 14% have never sought assistance yet have told someone. Some women sought help from the police, attorneys, or social services. Women who had just seen physical abuse frequently stated that they were afraid of further violence (47%) or couldn't stand further violence (30%). However, 11% of the women who reported the violence experienced

some threats. In a similar vein, 11% more women reported feeling ashamed for asking for help (NIPS & ICF, 2019). Violence of many kinds, inequality, and injustice are practically universal in emerging nations. Every year, thousands of women die in dowry-related incidents in Colombia, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan, and India. These incidents are often twisted by partners' acid attacks on the victims' faces.

In the twenty-first century; it has emerged as one of the major social challenges. Latif (2009) emphasizes that Pakistani patriarchal society is marked by men being in charge and women being seen as less important than men. Women are primarily in charge of running the family and raising children. Women from higher social classes have access to things like healthcare and schooling, but women from lower social classes have a hard time having power, even in their homes (Mohiuddin, 2007). Women, especially those from low-income families, are more likely to get married young, have trouble going to school, lose their independence, and not get enough mental support (Qadir et al., 2011). Further, these women are also victims of domestic violence, which includes the most common types of physical, mental, and emotional abuse (Ali & Gavino, 2008). In general, women's accomplishments are often forgotten in many areas of life.

According to Hossain (2016), women in Bangladesh who experience domestic violence, forced marriage, dowry-related fatalities, rape, exploitation, suicide, and smuggling endure physical and mental health challenges. Domestic violence is more prevalent among poor women in industrialized nations than it is in families with higher socioeconomic positions and educational levels (Vameghi et al., 2018). Pakistan has the sixth-largest population in the world and is a developing nation. Women

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in Pakistan, whether they reside in urban or rural areas, experience various forms of violence, including rape, dowry-related violence, torching, acid attacks, honor killings, threatening (emotional violence), custodial abuse, and sexual assault (Rehman, 2009).

Women are denied access to health care facilities, educational opportunities, and independence in social and economic decisions, among other fundamental rights (Hassan, 1995). Overall, 28% of women (including 23% of women who experienced physical violence, 1% of women who experienced sexual violence, and 5% of women who observed both physical and sexual violence) are affected by violence, according to NIPS & ICF (2019). Women aged 15 to 19 are more susceptible to all forms of violence by 33%. The most frequent types of injuries described by women who have been subjected to violence are cuts, eye injuries, sprains, bruises, cuts, pains, and dislocations, as well as burns.

Women have been significant in keeping the peace around the world. The participation of women has been essential in promoting lasting peace on a local and global level. People worldwide are increasingly aware of women's importance in achieving and maintaining peace. When the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) in 2000, it clarified that women must be fully and equally involved in all efforts to keep and support peace and security (United Nations, 2000). Since UNSCR 1325 and later decisions, women have had to be involved in peace talks, girls and women have had to be protected from gender-based violence during wars, and gender views have had to be included in efforts to build peace.

Evidence supports the idea that peace processes are more likely to happen successfully when women are involved. A study by the International Peace Institute found

that having women involved in negotiations makes it 35% more likely that peace deals will last at least 15 years (O'Reilly, 2015). Women bring different problems and points of view to peace talks. They often focus on fundamental rights, economic fairness, and community healing, all of which are important for making peace last. Women's different experiences and points of view help make peace agreements that include everyone and deal with more than just ending violence. These agreements also try to fix the underlying social and economic problems that keep conflict going (Paffenholz, 2015).

UN Women (2020) stated that violence against young women and girls is common because many people have wrong opinions about them. Young women are often not allowed to participate in activities that aim to build peace. On the other hand, the next generation is seen as more open and aggressive, and they have promised to participate in both marketing peace and marketing violence. People can change their violence and contribute to the calm growth of society if they are given chances to improve their social and economic situation. In an Agenda for Peace in 1992, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali defined peacebuilding as the deliberate effort to identify and bolster mechanisms that enhance and stabilize peace to prevent a return to violence. Peacebuilding became synonymous with the process of establishing peace after a conflict (UN,1992).

It is known that women's and girls' involvement in building peace is essential, but significant problems still need to be fixed. Because of gender biases and social rules, young women and girls are often left out of decision-making processes. In many situations, women are seen as passively taking harm rather than actively making things better, which could make it harder for them to help build

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peace. Additionally, women who work to build peace may face opposition, racism, and even physical harm (Anderlini, 2007).

The prevalence of physical violence is a critical public health and human rights issue, particularly in the rural areas where socio-economic and cultural factors may increase susceptibilities. In Pakistan cultural norms and patriarchal system is deeply rooted, and understanding the Determinants of this type of violence are crucial for generating focused interventions. Physical violence against Pakistani women takes many different forms and negatively impacts their health and wellbeing. As a result, this issue needs to be addressed. Examining the causes of physical violence is necessary, and corrective actions must be taken to stop the violence. The study will shed light on the various types of violence that Pakistani women experience physical abuse from their partners. We will talk about how frequently physical violence occurs and how often Pakistani women experience the violence and how it might be decreased. The study also adds value by utilizing the most recent (NIPS & ICF, 2019).

There is significant research on physical violence globally however, there is scarcity in the literature of physical violence faced by ever-married women in rural areas of Pakistan and much of the literature is focusing on urban setting but not in the rural settings. Moreover, studies focus on the immediate consequences of violence, however, fail to explore the long-term effects on women participation in peacebuilding and violence prevention. The dearth of thorough research on the factors that contribute to physical violence in rural areas, such as autonomy for women, educational achievement, and socioeconomic status, is another significant gap.

Objectives

1. To analyze the prevalence and determinants of physical violence experiences faced by ever-married women in rural areas of Pakistan, Using data from DHS 2017-18

Hypothesis

H₁: There is a significant relationship between the prevalence of physical violence and the socio-economic, educational, demographic, autonomy related factors among ever-married women in rural areas of Pakistan, based on DHS 2017-18.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the prevalence of physical violence and the socio-economic, educational, demographic, autonomy related factors among ever-married women in rural areas of Pakistan, based on DHS 2017-18.

Theoretical Framework

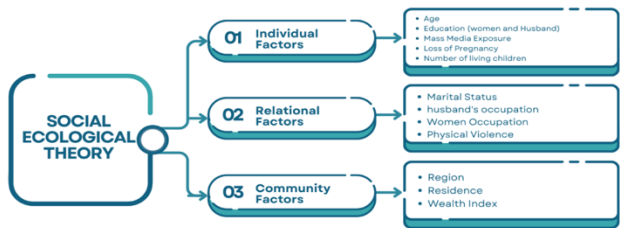
Social-Ecological Theory

The theoretical framework used in this study is Social Ecological Theory (SET), which views violence as the outcome of interactions between social, relational, individual, and community elements. When analyzing the complex factors impacting the physical abuse experienced by married women in rural Pakistan, SET is especially pertinent, because it incorporates geographical, cultural, economic, and sociodemographic aspects. SET offers a thorough framework for examining how societal, relational, community, and individual elements interact to influence the frequency of physical violence. For example, societal norms (such as patriarchal ideals) and relational dynamics (such as unskilled work) combine with economic distress (a community-level factor) to make violence more likely. To lessen violence and advance gender equality, interventions guided by SET can target these interrelated

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layers, emphasizing geographical inequities, economic empowerment, and education.

Proposed Theoretical Framework



METHODS

In this study, secondary data from the Pakistan Demographic and Health Surveys (PDHSs), conducted in 2017–18, were analyzed. These PDHSs are classified as large-scale, nationally representative cross-sectional household surveys that are financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and carried out as part of the global MEASURE Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) Program. The National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS & ICF, 2019) conducted these surveys with the technical support of ICF International and the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. With the technical assistance of ICF International and the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS, 2019) carried out these surveys.

A collection of PDHSs contains the largest household dataset with data on physical violence, fertility patterns, marital status, and other socio-demographic characteristics. Each PDHS used a random two-stage cluster sample approach, where eligible ever-married

women (aged 15–49) were recruited from rural and urban sampling units initially, and including questions about physical violence, types of violence, and loss of pregnancies. In the PDHS, numerous field teams with a mix of one male and three female interviewers, a field editor, and a supervisor collected data. The sample size used for this study was 3303 Domestic sample weight was applied and types of residence selection variable was applied rural =2. The sample size was reduced to 2067. Ever-Married women in Pakistan who are facing physical violence in rural areas of Pakistan.

Sample

This research limited the analysis of women's physical violence (15–49 years), faced by Ever-married women from 2017 to 2018. Therefore, the sample size used for this study was the sample size used for this study was 2067 after applying individual sample weight, respectively.

Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for this research are Ever-married women (15–49) who are facing physical violence.

Description of Variables

In this study physical violence against women by their partner is outcome variable in the domestic household survey (DHS) domestic violence module; a chain of questions was asked to women for their experience of physical violence

Outcome Variable: The outcome variable for this research is the physical violence on Ever-Married women, types of physical violence were divided into several categories, including shake, Push or throw, slap, hit her through pulling hair, twist her arm, punch her, drag her, kick her, beat her, burn her, choke her, attack or threat her with any type of weapon (0=if No, 1=if yes) We consider here physical violence as if ever married women have faced

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at least one act of violence (ages 15-49. Various variables related to women's physical violence on ever-married women were selected based on literature. These included Number of living children (1 if at least 1 child, 0 otherwise), Number of pregnancy losses (1= if lost a child, 0= otherwise).

Socio-demographic Details

The sociodemographic parameters were regions/provinces (Islamabad, Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, FATA, Baluchistan, and Gilgit Baltistan), spatial classification (rural, urban), Age of respondents (15–24, 25–34, 35–49 years and older), level of education (primary, secondary, and higher), and work status of respondents and their spouses (employed, unemployed), and the quintiles of wealth (poorest, middle class, richest, richest, and poorest). Mass media exposure was a covariate (yes/no) for information availability.

Ethical Considerations

All DHS survey protocols and questionnaires have been reviewed and approved by the ICF Institutional Review Board. Each respondent was allowed to read an informed consent statement before the interview, allowing them to decide whether or not to participate. The informed consent statements explained that participation is voluntary and provided details about the interview's goals, expected duration, methods, possible risks to participants, and contacts who could provide additional information.

Statistical Analysis

Utilizing SPSS version 25, data analysis was carried out. First, sample weights were determined, and a weighted analysis was carried out. Frequency and percentage representations of descriptive statistics were shown. Cross-tabulation and chi-square tests were used for analysis. After that, investigations were carried out to determine the

relationship between socio-demographic traits and physical aggression against ever-married women. Statistical significance was defined as a p-value 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Respondents' Characteristics to measure determinates of Physical violence n=2067

Characteristics	f	%
Age		
15-19	103	5.0
20-24	353	17.1
25-29	459	22.2
30-34	383	18.5
35-39	323	15.6
40-44	214	10.4
45-49	233	11.3
Marital Status		
Married	2,003	96.9
Widow/Separated	64	3.1
Region		
Punjab	1,115	53.9
Sindh	351	17.0
KPK	481	23.3
Baluchistan	120	5.8
Husband Education		
No Education	750	36.3
Primary	336	16.2
Secondary	626	30.3
Higher	290	14.0
Women Education		
No education	1,286	62.2
Primary	324	15.7
Secondary	292	14.1
Higher	165	8.0
Wealth index		
Poorest	549	26.6
Poorer	568	27.5
Middle	460	22.3
Richer	297	14.4

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Richest	193	9.3
Husband Occupation		
Unemployed	94	4.7
Professionals	890	44.5
Agricultural	475	23.8
Unskilled/ domestic	541	27.0
Women Working Status		
Working	213	11.3
Not working	1,854	89.7
Loss of Pregnancy		
No	1,312	63.5
Yes	755	36.5
Number of Living Children		
0-1	588	28.4
2-3	640	31.0
4-4	295	14.3
5	544	26.3
Exposure to Mass Media		
No	897	43.4
Yes	1,170	56.6

Table 2. Descriptives of Experience of Physical Violence Faced by Ever-Married Women

Characteristics	f	%
Ever been pushed, shook or had something thrown by husband/partner		
Yes	325	15.8
No	1,741	84.2
Ever been slapped by husband/partner		
Yes	452	21.9
No	1,615	78.1
Ever been punched with fist or hit by something harmful by husband/partner		
Yes	150	7.3
No	1,917	92.7
Ever been kicked or dragged by husband/partner		
Yes	113	5.4
No	1,955	94.6
Ever been strangled or burnt by husband/partner		
Yes	29	1.4

No	2,038	98.6
Ever been threatened with knife/gun or another weapon by husband/partner		
Yes	21	1.0
No	2,046	99.0
Ever had arm twisted or hair pulled by husband/partner		
Yes	208	89.9
No	1,859	10.1

Table 3. Descriptives Experience of Physical Violence (n=2067)

Characteristics	f	%
Physical Violence Faced by Ever-Married Women		
Yes	511	24.7
No	1,555	75.3

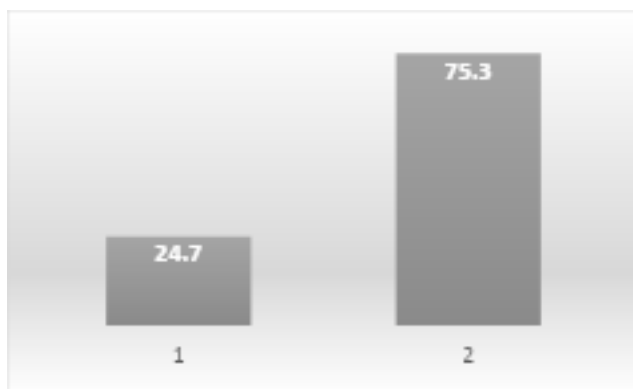


Figure 1. Physical Violence Faced by Ever-Married Women

Table 4. Association of Physical Violence faced by Ever-Married women with all the key variables

Characteristics	Physical Violence faced by Ever-Married women		
	No	Yes	P
Age			
15-19	80.4	19.6	0.03
20-24	80.7	19.3	
25-29	71.4	28.6	

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30-34	72.3	27.7	
35-39	75.2	24.8	
40-44	74.4	25.6	
45-49	77.7	22.3	
Marital Status			
Married	75.4	24.6	0.52
Widow/Separated	71.9	28.1	
Region			
Punjab	80.0	20.0	
Sindh	86.6	13.4	
KPK	61.3	38.7	0.00
Baluchistan	54.2	45.8	
Husband Education			
No Education	71.6	28.4	
Primary	71.1	28.9	
Secondary	77.5	22.5	0.00
Higher	85.5	14.5	
Women Education			
No education	71.9	28.1	
Primary	72.8	27.2	
Secondary	82.9	17.1	0.00
Higher	92.1	7.9	
Wealth index			
Poorest	72.5	27.5	
Poorer	66.5	33.5	
Middle	80.2	19.8	0.00
Richer	79.5	20.5	
Richest	90.7	9.3	
Husband Occupation			
Unemployed	62.8	37.2	
Professionals	78.4	21.6	
Agricultural	79.8	20.2	0.00
Unskilled/ domestic	68.4	31.6	
Women Working Status			
Working	75.2	24.8	0.99
Not working	75.2	24.8	
Loss of Pregnancy			
No	75.2	24.8	0.69
Yes	75.2	24.8	
Number of Living Children			
0-1	82.1	17.9	0.00

2-3	75.2	24.8	
4-4	78.9	21.1	
5	66.0	34.0	
Exposure to Mass Media			
No	69.5	30.5	0.00
Yes	79.7	20.3	

The majority of respondents are in their reproductive years, as showed by the fact that the two age groups with the highest percentage of women surveyed were 25–29 years old (22.2%) and 30-34 years old (18.5%). The age group of 15–19 years old has the lowest representation (6.0%). A considerable portion of respondents (96.9%) are married, whereas only 3.1% are widowed or separated. This demographic makeup supported the results of previous research, like Shahid et al. (2020), which reported similar age distributions and marital patterns in Pakistan's rural areas, highlighting the importance of early and universal marriage for women in society.

Given that women in the reproductive and married life periods are often critical to household stability and community progress, these demographic characteristics had important implications for WPS frameworks. Prioritizing married women in rural and conflict-prone areas for peacebuilding initiatives is another recommendation made by UN Women (2020), which highlighted the importance of understanding their experiences of violence and sidelining to construct WPS-related interferences.

Punjab accounts for the largest percentage of participants (53.9%), tailed by KPK (23.3%), Sindh (17.0%), and Baluchistan (5.8%), which showed both survey representation and population density. While the low presence from Baluchistan underscores issues with geographic accessibility and sociopolitical instability, the

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high concentration in Punjab is consistent with its status as the most populated province.

There are notable differences in education, according to the data. While their husbands are somewhat better educated, with 14.5% obtained higher education, the majority of women (62.2%) had no education and only 8.0% had higher education. World Economic Forum (2022), report on the Global Gender Gap which highlighted the ongoing educational disparities in South Asia, particularly in rural areas, is in line with these findings. These inequalities hamper women's active involvement in decision-making and endure their socioeconomic dependence, which further impairs their capacity to support peacebuilding initiatives. Since educated women are more likely to support peaceful conflict resolution and oppose patriarchal practices that fuel violence, women's empowerment via education has been recognized as a key component of WPS agendas (UNDP, 2020).

In so far as economics are concerned, only 9.3% of women are in the richest quintile, while the majority are in the poorest (26.6%) and worst (27.5%) strata. Furthermore, only 10.3% of women are employed, and 89.0% are unemployed, underscoring their financial reliance on male family members. According to Kabeer (2015), who discovered that women's vulnerability to abuse is increased by low economic autonomy, this economic marginalization is associated with increased risks of domestic violence. Simultaneously, the husbands' occupations are dominated by professionals (44.5%), followed by domestic and unskilled labor (27.0%) and agricultural labor (23.8%), with only 4.7% of them jobless. This indicates that they are more likely to be involved in activities that provide income. These economic trends highlight the urgent need for focused initiatives to increase women's financial

independence, which is a fundamental component of the WPS framework.

Pointers of family and reproductive health also highlighted the difficulties women face. Pregnancy loss was reported by a considerable percentage (36.5%), the figure that highlighted the deficiencies in maternal healthcare facilities in rural areas. Moreover, 26.3% of women having five or more children, fertility rates are high, which are consistent with research showed that women in rural Pakistan frequently do not have access to family planning facilities (NIPS & ICF, 2019). Women's duties are limited to survival and caregiving due to high fertility rates and inadequate maternal health services, which makes it difficult for them to participate in peacebuilding initiatives.

The Results of this study showed the considerable portion 43.4% of women lack access to mainstream media, their knowledge of their rights, health, and legal safeguards is restricted. According to studies by Khan et al. (2022), the media can empower rural women by spreading awareness about peace initiatives, legal redress, and violence prevention. Long-drawn-out media access is vital for progressing WPS purposes because it makes it easier for women to participate in community-level peace initiatives and interact with larger societal matters. The study showed the association ever-married women experience of physical violence with all the key variables and Age and physical violence has a statistically significant relationship ($p=0.03$), which is in line with research showing that younger, reproductive-aged women are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence during their childbearing years (Nasrullah et al., 2019). These results are consistent with the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) paradigm, which emphasizes how crucial it is to address gender-based

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violence at critical junctures in life in order to empower women and foster harmony in families. Although widowed or separated women are slightly more likely to experience physical violence (28.1%) than married women (24.6%), this difference is not statistically significant ($p=0.52$). In line with ingrained patriarchal standards, similar trends have been noted in research such as Ali et al. (2020), which found that bereaved or separated women may experience abuse from in-laws or extended family members. These vulnerable groups should be the target of interventions under the WPS framework to end violent cycles.

There are notable regional differences in the prevalence of physical violence ($p=0.00$). Sindh (13.4%) and Punjab (20.0%) had the lowest rates in the rural areas, while Baluchistan (45.7%) and KPK (38.7%) had the highest rates in their rural areas. According to Zakar et al. (2013), these differences reflect sociocultural norms, tribal practices, and resource accessibility. Effective legal safeguards and support networks for women are frequently absent from areas with greater rates of violence, highlighting the critical need for region-specific initiatives to improve women's security and peacebuilding.

Physical violence and women's education are inversely correlated. The frequency was highest among women with no education (28.1%) and lowest among those with higher education (7.9%). There is statistical significance in this link ($p=0.00$) and backed by previous studies, including Abramsky et al. (2011), which discovered that educated women are more likely to seek assistance, fight assault, and get legal protections. In a similar vein, wives whose husbands were more educated (14.5%) reported considerably less violence than those whose husbands were less educated (28.9%). These results support WPS's mission to empower women with education

by highlighting the importance that education plays in promoting fair gender dynamics.

The prevalence of violence is significantly influenced by economic position ($p=0.00$). The highest rates of violence were reported by women in the richest quintile (9.3%) and those with spouses in agriculture (19.8%), while the lowest rates were reported by women in the poorest quintile (20.5%) and those with unskilled/domestic working husbands (33.5%). This finding correlates with the research by Jewkes (2002) and Kabeer (2015), economic hardship intensifies power disparities within households, making economically dependent women more susceptible to abuse. In addition to making, it more difficult for women to get help or leave abusive relationships because of financial limitations, poverty also raises the stress and frustration that can lead to aggressive conduct. Comparably, qualitative research highlighted that South Asian rural women frequently experience exacerbated vulnerabilities as a result of economic hardship, a lack of social support, and restricted access to legal resources (Zakar et al., 2012).

Women who experience pregnancy loss and have more children are more likely to experience abuse. Compared to mothers with 0–1 child (17.9%), those with five or more children (34.0%) had considerably higher rates of violence ($p=0.00$). According to NIPS & ICF (2019), high fertility frequently corresponds with financial stress and troubled relationships, which exacerbate violence. The likelihood of violence is considerably decreased by having access to mass media ($p=0.00$). Compared to women who had access to the media, those who did not report a higher prevalence of violence (30.5%) (20.3%). This bolsters research by Khan et al. (2022), which highlights how advocacy efforts in the media can

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raise awareness of women's rights and accessible resources, enabling them to confront abusive practices.

CONCLUSION

A summary is provided in this section. It illuminates the study's goals and conclusions. We talk about some policy suggestions in the conclusion. In Pakistan, there are many distinct types of physical abuse. The common occurrence of physical violence in society has an impact on the physical and emotional health of women. Using the PDHS 2017–2018, we want to assess the household characteristics that are associated with physical violence against women in Pakistan.

We look at the respondents' and their partners' demographic information, including their age, region of residence, level of education, employment status, and wealth. According to the findings, younger women experience greater physical violence than more experienced or older women. A woman is more likely to experience physical abuse if she is from a province other than Punjab since those areas are less developed than the province of Punjab. Physical violence is positively correlated with employment level. Physical abuse is less likely to affect women who have higher levels of education. Females with more education are better equipped to stop physical violence because they are aware of problematic situations and work to avoid or prevent them. Education offers women additional opportunities or methods to respond to difficult circumstances or stressful situations in general. A highly informed wife may be more aware of and report assault. To show their power, husbands mistreat their wives more non-physically.

In terms of the traits of the spouse, we discover that the husband's higher education shields his wife from

domestic abuse. Husbands who are younger than their wife they are more violent towards their wives. The findings also indicate a negative relationship between domestic violence against women and a husband's employment status. Women who are educated are better equipped to confront their violent husbands or gender-based prejudice. Better educational and employment options increase the family's income, lessen stress and fights, and offer better means to settle disputes. High levels of education for women will help them become economically independent, which will assist prevent or lessening domestic abuse against them.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

There are strengths and limitations to this study. The use of nationally representative data from PDHS to examine the factors influencing the overall experiences of physical violence that ever-married women in Pakistan's rural areas endure is a significant strength. Although this study has several strengths, including a sizable sample size and nationally representative data, there are several limitations to consider when analyzing the results. One significant drawback is that the analysis is based on secondary data, which leaves out certain important details necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the experiences of married women in Pakistan's rural areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The issue needs to be acknowledged at the national level. Even if the Pakistani government has given this subject some thought, regular follow-up is still required. Enough educational programs should be available for men and women at equal levels in all nations and cultures. Women should have adequate work and political party involvement

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options, as well as safety and security, The government should mandate that the program be implemented in all Pakistani healthcare facilities to properly screen for all forms of domestic abuse and violence. In addition to medical facilities, the government can establish crisis centers for women who have been violated in major healthcare facilities such as tertiary hospitals around the nation, Rural Health Centers (RHC), and Basic Health Units (BHU). Both men and women should participate in awareness campaigns. Resources such as physicians, nurses, and psychologists employed by governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should be used to do this. Media, booklets, role plays, dramas, and discussion shows are examples of indirect approaches. Reforms are also required for the judicial and police systems, which restrict women's access to the legal system. Female police officers should receive training on how to handle victims of domestic abuse to assist women feel safe and protected. The victims would indeed feel more at ease if the police station had a doctor or nurse on staff.

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