

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF VIOLANT ISSUES IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF PAKISTAN.

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**ABSTRACT** *Violence against women has become an important and debatable issue all over the world after the arrival of feminism and feminist ideology. The present research is conducted to study the role of media in the reporting of problematic and chronic issues of violence against women in Pakistan. Data is collected from two most popular News networks of Pakistan, one is Dawn News and the second is Express News. Content analysis of broadcasted news reports of violence against women in Pakistan during the period from January, 2013 to April, 2013 is done. The objective of this descriptive and analytical study is to explore the positive / negative role of popular media in the protection of rights of women or in violence against women in Pakistan. The Universe for the present study is the most popular media of Pakistan. The technique of systematic sampling is used. By using SPSS the descriptive method is used to represent the findings of the research the relationship among the data collected is also explored through statistical methods. The hypothesis about these phenomenon and linkages among them are tested through chi-square test. The findings of the study reveal that the most popular news channels of Pakistan portray the issues of violence against women in a biased way. It is revealed that media usually give a very little space in their daily news broadcasts to the problematic issues of women, which are the main reason of violence against women in Pakistan.*

**Key Words:** Violence, women issues, sexual harassment, child marriage, honor killing.

## INTRODUCTION

Violence against women has always been a very important issue all over the world. Especially after the popularity of feminist ideology and feminist movements, this issue has got more importance in public and media debates. Violence against women is a kind of violent action which is actually aimed to harm women whether in their domestic life or publically. Violence against women is a kind of physical or mental violence which causes some physical, sexual or psychological harm towards women on the grounds of gender discriminations[1]. Violence is a term which is used for some kind of physical or mental torture which have an intention to harm someone on gender grounds [2]. Physical torture and mental torture are very common examples of domestic violence in many countries in the world.

United Nations General Assembly defines Violence against women as

patriarchy[5]. Although there are some religious and legal rights which women of every society is allowed to enjoy but it is rather difficult to seek justice and equality of rights in a patriarchal society [3]. There are some countries where women are living in the societies which are still under the control of some very strict social, religious, cultural traditions and customs.

Similarly, there are a number of countries in which the state governments are responsible for violence against women through some discriminatory laws and legislations against women but more or less the cultural and traditional values are usually the main reason of violent behavior toward women in most of the countries and societies [6]. Likewise there are some countries in the world which have made and passed such kind of legislations and laws which could be helpful in the elimination of violence against women. Women of young age are usually become more the victim of different kind of violence in the society. Similarly the violence against women also varies from class to class and

Any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Likewise, Violence in some countries is considered as a justified way of giving punishment to have discipline [3]. There are a number of societies or customs, which allow some kind of violence against women as punishment and discipline rather these violence usually affect the women's life and health as well. The cultural and social values of some countries are so strict that women could not be able to live there life with their own will and decisions. Patriarchy and gender inequality are the main reasons of violence against women all over the world[4]. While in Pakistan as well the main reason of violence against women is the male dominance and

geographical areas as well [3]. The women of rural areas of lower class are usually become more victim of different kind of violence than of higher class and urban areas. In Pakistan 75% of women live in rural areas and belong to lower class with poor economic participation, which are the main reasons of violence against women.

Islam has guaranteed a very high status for women than by any other religion in the world. Islam has always talked about the equality of rights and opportunities between men and women but Islam in some countries has adopted and absorbed the traditional values of Hinduism and Buddhism, where it is considered as the right of men to control the dependent members of the family or indirectly females of the family [3].

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Men and women are created equal and they have equal rights and respect in the society. While on the other hand there is a discrimination prevailing all over the world with

the women of every society and every religion. Everyday a number of women face not only discrimination but also violence from their counterpart in different fields of their life. According to a report published by the World Bank in 1993, one third of women in the world have faced violence, at least once in their life time. It is found in most of the cases of violence that some family member or spouse of mostly women is the abuser of that violent act [1]. Moreover Feminists believe that Patriarchy is the root cause of violation of women rights. Male domination in the society sometimes causes most of the cases of violence against women, remained unreported or underreported. Especially the cases of sexual harassment are usually unfiled as well unreported in media, due to the shame and embarrassment attached to the honor of the family. Likewise [7] found through a study about the sexual harassment at workplace and analyzed that only one fourth of reported cases of sexual harassment are filed in court for justice.

Due to the importance and sensitiveness of the issue, a resolution was designed and passed by the United Nation to memo rate 25<sup>th</sup> November as *International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women*.

In 1995 a conference held by United Nation in Beijing passed a declaration for protection of women's rights as violence against women.

The Beijing declaration states in article 117 that

*Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared to men.*

Article 118 states

*Violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement.*

Pakistan has a male dominated society with men in power not only politically, economically but also socially. Man and women are separated socially on different grounds of duties and rights. Main authority and decision power is the right of men and women have to accept the decisions of men in every matter, either they are wrong or right [8]. Therefore in a patriarchal society like Pakistan, it is really difficult to talk about such sensitive issue like the violence against women. From the last few decades, now Pakistani government have identified the problematic issues of women and accepted the violence against women as one of the key cause of discrimination and exploitation of rights of women in society [1]. Moreover, [9] states that violence against women and chronic issues of Violence against women are no more a family or domestic matter but rather it has become a public issue. Therefore such a kind of problematic issues should have to be given proper place by media to highlight the problems which are caused in the society because of violence against women. Some of the issues are discussed as are usually considered important under patriarchy for violence against women all over the world.

#### **Physical Torture:**

In some male dominant customs and patriarchal societies violence against women is justified as punishment and for the cause of discipline in society and family. For some people physical torture and domestic violence is also

considered as the private matter of the concerned family that is why government or state agents don't feel the need to report or take action against the abusers of such violence against women [3]. According to a statistical study done by World Health Organization (WHO), women from 20% to 50% accept that they have faced physical torture from their male partner, at least once in their life. In many Asian countries like Pakistan, women are treated as citizens of second class and inferior to men. While in majority of countries the main reason for women to seek divorce from their husbands is physical torture, which they face from their husbands.

#### **Sexual Harassment:**

Sexual harassment and cases of rape have reached on the top place on the list of violence against women in many countries. Unwanted sexual favor and some verbal (sexually colored comments) or physical conduct for having sexual relation is called as sexual harassment [1]. It is revealed through a survey study that 87% of women face sexual harassment in every country. According to a report of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) there has been a very high increasing level of cases of sexual harassment and rape during the last decade in the country, with the estimation of one woman is raped in every two hours (HRCP, 2000b). Moreover, according to some other reports this figure is very high because due to some social pressures and shame attached with such types of cases, majority cases are remained unreported in media and never filed in the court.

Especially the cases of sexual harassment are usually unfiled as well unreported in media, due to the shame and embarrassment attached to the honor of the family. Likewise [7] found through a study about the sexual harassment at workplace and analyzed that only one fourth of reported cases of sexual harassment are filed in court for justice. The same report of HRCP also found that there is a very high increase in the cases of gang rape as well, during the last few decades in the country.

Additionally to all this, one more very painful violent act is this that in a number of places in the tribal areas the women are raped in public or in front of their family members, in exchange of some quarrel between the male groups of two families.

#### **Child Marriage/ Marriage with Quran:**

In this modern era of 21<sup>st</sup> century, these violent issues of child marriages and marriage to Holy Quran are very common in tribal areas and in some rural areas of Province of Sindh. For the sake of protection of family's property from distribution, usually the girls of small age are compelled to marry some man of old age in the family or to marry with Holy Quran. According to the reports of different NGO's there are still more than 5000 women in the Province of Sindh, who are married with Holy Quran [3]. While child marriages and odd age marriages as well exchange marriages are very common in all areas of the country.

#### **House Burns/ Dowry Violence:**

In majority Asian countries including Pakistan and India, the cases of House burns and Dowry violence are on their rise. A number of women are died every year in the result of stove burning. It is considered as the extreme kind of domestic violence, because in most of the cases of house

burns the women are victimized usually by their husbands or by their in-laws just because of dissatisfaction from the dowry of the victimized women.

**Honor Killing:**

In countries like Pakistan 5000 women are killed on the name of Honor killing every year all over the world. The countries which are on the top of the list of cases of honor killing are Jordon, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Yemen, Morocco, Pakistan and Gulf countries [10].

compensation of some crime which is done by some male member of that family [11].So the women are victimized with such are kind of violence which should have to be reported in media with a sense of responsibility.

**HYPOTHESIS**

H1: Television News Channels give more coverage to the issues of violence against women.

H2: Television News Channels report the chronic issues of violence against women in a negative way.

**METHODOLOGY**

The content analysis of all the news reports, which were broadcasted daily from both the channels. Through the purposive sampling, the three different hours are selected every day in the morning and evening news bulletins. The reported news is analyzed with a mixed mode of qualitative and quantitative method of study.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

Table.1.Issues of violence against women reported in the “Dawn News” during January 2013 to April 2013.

Issues	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
House burns	7	2.3	2.3
Honor killing	21	7.0	9.3
Sexual Harassment	176	58.7	68.0
Physical Torture	89	29.7	97.7
Child Marriage	7	2.3	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

**EXPLANATION**

This table shows all the reported issues of violence against women inthe “Dawn News”. The diagram shows that 176 reports are about the sexual harassment, 89 reports are about the physical torture, 21 reports are about honor killing, 7 reports about the child marriage and the remaining 7 reportsare about the issue of house burns. If we compare all these reported issues of violence against women then mostly news reports are about the sexual harassment.

In Pakistan, after the implementation of law of Qisas and Diyat, the provision for murder was provided to murderer who was able to justify his act of violence on the basis of this statement that victim was engaged in an immoral act, which could not be accepted and tolerated in an Islamic state and Islamic law. Just like honor killing, “Vanni” or “Swara” is also one of a very chronic issue in Pakistan.

Accordingto the custom of Vanni in Punjab and Swara in Kheberpakhtun, young women are exchanged or paid in form of forced marriages to the hostile or rival family as a

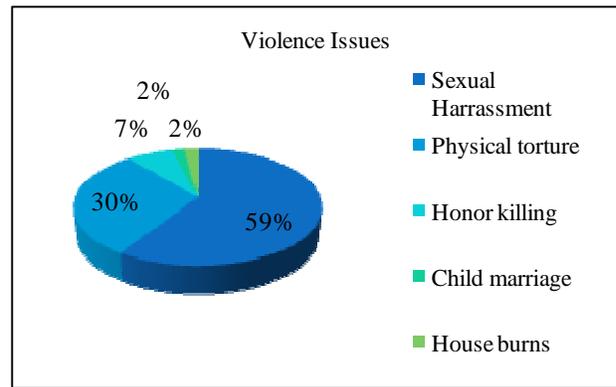


Figure:1. Issues of violence against women reported in the “Dawn News” during January 2013 to April 2013.

**EXPLANATION**

The figure.1 indicates all the reported issues of violence against women in the “Dawn News.” The diagram shows that the 59% reports are about the sexual harassment, about 30% reports are about the physical torture, 7% reports are about the honor killing,2% reports about the child marriage and the remaining 2% are about the issue of house burn cases reports of violence against women in Pakistan. If we compare all the reported issues then mostly news reports are about the sexual harassment.

Table. 2. Issues of violence against women reported in the “Express News” during January 2013 to April 2013.

Issues	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
House burns	23	7.7	7.7
Honor killing	51	17.0	24.7
Sexual Harassment	146	48.7	73.3
Physical Torture	61	20.3	93.7
Child marriage	19	6.3	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

**EXPLANATION:**

This table 2 shows all the issues of reports about the violence against women in the “Express News”. The diagram shows that 146 reports are about the sexual harassment, 61 reports are about the physical torture, 51 reports are about the honor killing, 19 reports are about the child marriages and the remaining 23 reports are about the issue of house burns cases. If we compare all the reported issues of violence against women then mostly news reports are about the sexual harassment.

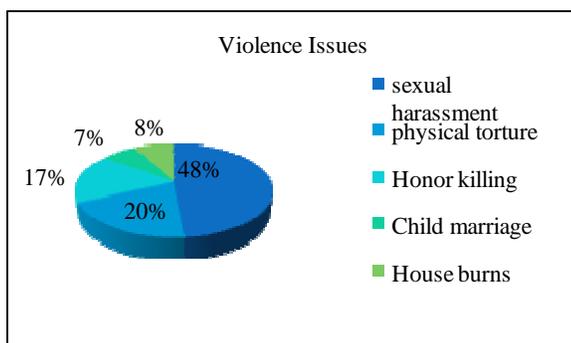


FIGURE: 2. ISSUES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REPORTED IN THE “EXPRESS NEWS” DURING JANUARY 2013 TO APRIL 2013.

**EXPLANATION:**

The figure.2 shows all the issues of reports about the violence against women in the “Express News”. The diagram shows that the 49% reports are about the sexual harassment, about 20% reports are about the physical torture, 17% reports are about the honor killing, 7% reports are about the child marriage and the remaining 8% are about the issue of cases of house burns. If we compare all the reported issues of violence against women then mostly reports are about the sexual harassment.

**Testing for association b/w the attributes of issues and reporting of the “Express News” from January 2013 to April 2013.**

This test is performed to check the association between the attributes of issues and reporting of the “Express News” from January 2013 to April 2013. We check, is there any association among the attributes characterized? This test is performed on the 5% level of significance and chi-square test is used for checking the association. The cross table of the issues and their reporting is given.

**Table.3**

Attributes	Reporting				Total
	None	+ve	_ve	Neutra l	
House burns	20	0	3	0	23
Honor Killing	0	24	22	5	51
Sexual Harassment	2	37	84	23	146
Physical Torture	1	15	43	2	61
Child marriage	0	7	9	3	19
Total	23	83	161	33	300

The table.3 shows the relationship between the attributes of issues of violence against women and their reporting by the “Express News” during January 2013 to April 2013. From the table.3 we can see that the sexual harassment issues are mostly repeated in the news reports. 146 news from the total 300 contain the reports about the sexual harassment issues which are about the 50%.With some negative and socially restricted language and way of reporting was adopted to report for the news of sexual violence in the newspapers. In these 50% issues maximum number of cases are negatively reported. From the 146 reports 84 are negatively reported which is 58%. When we apply the chi-square test to check the

association between the issues and their reporting then we see that there is association between the attributes at 5% level of significance. (Chi Square = 2.44).

**Testing for association b/w the attributes of categories and issues of the “Dawn News” from January 2013 to April 2013.**

This test is performed to check the association between categories and issues of the “Dawn News” from January 2013 to April 2013. We check, is there any association among the attributes characterized? This test is performed on the 5% level of significance and chi-square test is used to check the association. The cross table of the categories and an issue is given in the table.4. The table shows the issues as attributes which are the reports published in the studied data of the selected newspapers.

**Table. 4**

Attributes	Reporting				Total
	None	+ve	_ve	Neutr- al	
House burns	06	01	0	0	07
Honor Killing	0	14	05	02	21
Sexual Harassment	0	163	09	04	176
Physical Torture	01	75	13	0	89
Child marriage	0	02	05	0	07
Total	07	255	32	06	300

The table.4 shows that issues of violence against women are mostly reported and highlighted by the “Dawn News.” About 255 from the total of 300news reports are reported positively about the different issues of violence against women which are the 85%. In these 85% women issues the maximum numbers of cases are about the sexual harassment. From the 255 reports of the women 163 are about the sexual harassment which is 64%. When we apply the chi-square test then we see that there is association between the attributes at 5% level of significance. (Chi Square = 2.65)

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

It is observed that all the reported issues of violence against women in the “Express News” shows that the 49% reports are about the sexual harassment, about 20% reports are about the physical torture, 17% reports are about the honor killing, 7% reports about the child marriage and the remaining 8% are about house burns. If we compare all the issues about the human rights then mostly reports are about the sexual harassment. Likewise, all the news reports of violence against women broadcasted through “Dawn News” shows that the 59% reports are about the sexual harassment, about 30% reports are about the physical torture, 7% reports are about the honor killing, about 2% reports are about the child marriage and the remaining 2% are about the cases of issues of house burns. If we compare all the reported issues of violence against women then mostly reports are found about the sexual harassment.

The role of media in reporting the issues of violence against women in Pakistan is looked rather lethargic and biased. The news media use the news reports of women issues for the sake of sensationalism. Usually most of the News networks report the women issues or news about violence against women in a negative way which sometime affects the role or development of women in society. Therefore, especially while reporting on some sensitive issues like sexual harassment or rape the media should have to avoid exaggeration and sensationalism and should not have to show the video clips or photographs of the victimized women or their families. While reporting on this sensitive issue of violence against women, the matter of confidentiality should have to be in priority of every reporter or journalist. Therefore in case of reports of violence against women, the media should have to be very responsible towards society.

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