

Is Patriarchal Mindset in Families the Main Reason for the Rise in Domestic Violence?

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Abstract

With time the rate of domestic violence is escalating and it remains a pervasive issue in society with intricate causes and devastating consequences. This paper which is based on secondary data investigates whether patriarchal mindset in families along with the role of socio-economic factors serve as a primary or root cause of domestic violence. By analysing these intersecting causes, this study highlights how patriarchy, deeply embedded in society today and economic instability jointly sustain cycles of violence. These claims are supported by thorough research and documented evidence. The paper also explores profound consequences focusing on the mental health damage that domestic violence causes to the victims as well as the rest of the family.

Keywords

Domestic Violence, Patriarchal Mindset, Socioeconomic Factors, Mental Health, Family Violence

1. Introduction

Domestic violence also referred to as domestic abuse is a form of physical, mental, sexual, or emotional abuse perpetrated by one partner or family member against another. Such patterns of abusive behavior may occur in any relationship like marriage, dating, cohabitation or even between family members. About 30% or 1 in 3 women are victims of physical or sexual abuse worldwide ([World Health Organization \(WHO\), 2021](#)). As stated by a report of The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in 2020 about 90% of females in Pakistan experienced domestic violence at some point in their lives ([Omar, 2023](#)). As a Domestic Health survey stated 56% women faced physical violence in FATA, this is 48% in Balochistan and 43% in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ([Ali & Inam, 2023](#)). These Pakistani figures are particularly significant given that this paper draws heavily on the Pa-

kistani context; however, to demonstrate that the issue extends beyond any single nation, in the United States 10 million people are affected by domestic violence each year; one in four women and one in nine men are victims (Huecker, 2023). Many people share this belief that the gap between two genders is gradually closing and that gender inequality is improving in today's world. Due to the rise of feminism, many assume that women are now gaining the same rights as men and that both genders are nearly equal. However, statistics stated before indicate otherwise. Many men still commit acts of violence against women, showing gender inequality persists and that some men continue to view themselves as superior to women. They often perceive their wives or partners as their personal property and believe that just being in a relationship or marriage gives them the right to control, dominate and even harm women.

For the purposes of this paper, "patriarchal mindset" is defined as a belief system in which men are considered inherently superior to women and therefore entitled to authority, control, and dominance within the family and society. This mindset normalises male dominance, reinforces gender-based hierarchies, and legitimises the use of power or force to maintain control over women and children.

This paper aims to provide a correlation between domestic violence and its wide ranging consequences and through that identify potential solutions to this global issue. The two major issues associated with intimate partner violence: patriarchy as a driving force and its consequences on mental health status, will be discussed in detail to provide a deeper understanding of the problem along with socioeconomic causes which lead to violence against women. The paper begins with literature review where patriarchy and socio-economic backgrounds link to domestic violence is discussed along with mental health as both a consequence and a cause. This is followed by methodology discussing the specifics of the research. Next is the discussion section that builds on reviewed literature analyzing how patriarchy, socioeconomic conditions and cultural attitudes intersect to reinforce domestic violence and its consequences. Finally the conclusion summarizes the key insights and offers recommendations for addressing the issue.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Patriarchal Mindset and Its Theoretical Link to Domestic Violence

Throughout centuries the power has always been unevenly distributed within families, with men assuming authority and women being relegated to the subordinate roles. This is called patriarchy. Patriarchy, defined as the belief system in which men are considered inherently superior and therefore entitled to authority, control, and dominance, is a system where men are prioritized over women. It is when men are considered the head of household and this leads men to believe that they are in control and are entitled to act without restrictions. This belief not only reinforces aggressive and dominating behavior within their homes leading to violence against partner and children but can also extend beyond the household,

manifesting sexual harassment, assault and other forms of gender based violence. This behavior is then reinforced by society and culture. Functionalist sociologists believe that the perfect type of family is where the husband is the breadwinner, and the wife has an expressive role, and her job is to provide comfort to her husband. From a Marxist perspective, scholars such as Blundell have argued that men who experience subordination in the workplace may redirect frustration onto domestic relationships, where they perceive themselves to retain control (Blundell, 2014).

However, it is a fact that men, though less frequently reported, are also victims of this abuse. Such cases are among the least reported, as men usually don't want to seek help because it makes them feel inferior. Much of the silence is a result of male ego, which not only fuels violence as men assert dominance to preserve their sense of power, but also discourages them from admitting victimization as doing so is perceived as a threat to their masculinity. It is reported that 13.8% men and 27.4% women from teenagers to adults have been victims of some kind of domestic violence and almost 49% male victims failed to tell anyone that they suffered from abuse, a proportion considerably lower than 19% of female victims globally who also remain silent (Mankind, 2023).

In many countries, it is thought that wives must submit themselves to their husbands and men have power and authority. This is even a systemized law in some like, Yemen marriage regulations state a woman has to do everything with her husband's permission and has to obey him (Amnesty International, 2021).

Moreover, it was well established that abusers themselves may have faced abuse and this led them to think that it is the only way to resolve conflicts or they might have faced neglect and grew up with deep rooted cultural ideologies like gender inequality. During the 1970s 2 sociologists Russel and Rebecca Dobash were researching Domestic violence in Scotland. They explained how it wasn't just about behavior of few people who were disturbed but is spread worldwide and male partners resort to physical violence over minor grievances such as a spouse returning home later than expected (Women's History Network, 2010). This pattern of physical harm is confirmed by global health data that states, almost 75% of women who survived have been injured in some way¹. Evidence from Europe further corroborates this, a report shows that 80% victims of domestic violence in Germany were women out of which 133 women were killed by their partners (Karadag, 2023).

According to reports, children who witness their father hitting their mother are more likely to replicate such behavior in adulthood, as they come to regard it as normal. Without intervention of societal change, this pattern will repeat across generations. Consequently, domestic violence is not only a personal or familial issue but a societal one, rooted in deeply entrenched beliefs about male dominance. Children raised in these environments then adopt these attitudes themselves continuing this cycle and reinforcing these norms that allow violence to persist.

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Fast Facts: Preventing Intimate Partner Violence | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/intimate-partner-violence/about/> (2022).

2.2. Socio-Economic Background's Link to Domestic Violence

Research suggests that patriarchal attitudes tend to be more prevalent in rural areas, where access to education and economic resources is more limited, though it is important to avoid oversimplifying the complex demographic, economic and cultural relations involved. Limited access to education is therefore considered another factor contributing to domestic violence. A clinic-based survey was conducted by "Journal of Women's health" which showed that reported cases of IPV (intimate partner violence) was 22.5% to 15.5% in rural and urban areas respectively (Peek-Asa et al., 2011). While this study was conducted in the United States, the pattern identifies that rural settings correlate with higher IPV rates and is consistent with findings from other regions. During 2021, 427 married women in Isfahan, Iran were studied through domestic violence questionnaires 37% were working and 63% were housewives. The results of this investigation showed that socioeconomic status and violence was deeply related (Dabaghi et al., 2023). This research suggests that employed women tend to have greater awareness of their rights and are less likely to tolerate gender based discrimination, which may help explain the lower rates of domestic violence among working women compared to those who are not employed outside the home. It is important to note, however, that this observation is drawn from a specific regional study and may not generalise universally. Working class people are also more aware of equal rights of women and men and would most likely not favor one gender over the other. This shows why the ratio of working women facing domestic violence is much lower than the housewives.

This evidence suggests that lack of education in women due to patriarchy is the major reason for damaging women's mental health. Thus, domestic violence cannot be understood solely as a personal or moral failing but it is shaped by broader socio-economic conditions that create stress and trap victims in abusive environments. It is important that schools work on empowering their students and teaching them equality. This would increase the rate of career oriented women and help build a safer environment with reduced cases of domestic violence. In addition to this rules and laws like a federal law of 2013 "The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013" protects victims of domestic abuse providing housing protection and programs especially for women with children (U.S. Department of Justice Seal, 2023). Along with this FVPSA or "The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act" helped families that experienced domestic violence by offering shelters and resources². This is how victims from low socioeconomic class could also be protected.

2.3. Mental Health as a Consequence and Cause of Domestic Violence

Mental health is the social wellbeing of a person's physiological and emotional

²Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services. The Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofvps> (2023).

health. The most common problems a person faces due to gender discrimination is depression, anxiety, Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), etc. During 2019, it was reported that 1 in 8 people suffered from a mental health disorder globally. These statistics rose in 2020 (WHO, 2022).

Mental health has a complex, bidirectional relationship with domestic violence. On one hand, experiencing domestic violence can severely damage a victim's mental health. On the other, preexisting mental health conditions can increase a person's vulnerability to becoming either a victim or a perpetrator of violence. It is therefore important to distinguish between these different pathways.

A person who has experienced domestic violence will have an increased risk of PTSD or suffer from anxiety and depression. Such individuals may feel angry and frustrated towards themselves and lower their self-esteem. Research was conducted funded by National Institute for Health research in the UK, the research which mentioned that women with depressive disorders are about 2.5% more likely to be victims of domestic violence as compared to those without these issues whereas for anxiety it is 3.5 % greater. With this the chances of women with PTSD were 7 times higher to experience domestic violence than those without mental health problems (Marketing, 2021). It should be noted that these statistics highlight vulnerability and do not imply causation, and that trauma resulting from abuse may itself contribute to these mental health conditions, illustrating the cyclical nature of this relationship.

Domestic violence will have a long-lasting impact on the victim causing economic hardships as the victim would take time off work. This could be because they are seeking medical attention or processing the trauma. The victim may also face hardships while searching for employment. In some cases victims may be compelled to leave their homes to escape the abuser, resulting in housing instability. Domestic violence will have long lasting impacts on a person's mental wellbeing; they are likely to develop trust issues. It is common for victims of domestic abuse to isolate themselves and withdraw from loved ones leading to loneliness. In certain cultural contexts particularly in South Asia, this isolation can extend extreme outcomes. For instance, in many areas honor killing is also very common which is also considered a part of Domestic violence. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan recorded that in 2020, 197 men and 323 women have been a victim of honor killings and in 2023 there were 215 victims which included 70 men and 145 women (Zafar et al., 2024).

Furthermore, severe anger issues, use of drugs and low self-esteem can also lead the person to displace their frustration out on family members especially children. It can also lead to the victim being an addict and not having the relationship with their child that they were supposed to. They might start losing grades and suffer from depression damaging their mental health, a child can become a victim of abuse themselves. A media report titled "Where Pakistan's domestic violence law fails" states that at a private shelter home in Rawalpindi, a mother cried while she told her 14 months old son Muhammad Zayan about the torture and violence she

faced from her husband and in-laws for 2 years. Even though Zayan was too young to understand this situation, his activity during the interview clearly showed that he was worried by his mother's tears (Mehboob, 2022).

As the evidence demonstrates, damaged mental health makes it hard for the victim to maintain employment, meaning they may be unable to provide for their families. Economic hardships are the most serious problem associated with damaged mental health because of domestic violence. Governments need to provide incentives to overcome this issue. They should work towards giving these victims extensive therapy free of cost. While free therapy is an important step, it is equally important that such interventions are combined with legal reforms, shelter access, and social support systems to address the full range of consequences. Government-led initiatives in other parts of South Asia offer instructive examples of this integrated approach. In Bangladesh through government's Women Friendly Hospital initiative medical care and social assistance were given to survivors of family abuse (Pande, 2017). The United Nations has always shown a zero-tolerance policy to domestic abuse addressing and eliminating it. Its undying efforts not only provide immediate relief for survivors but also challenge cultural and structural factors that perpetuate this violence.

3. Methodology

This research is based on secondary data analysis. Relevant literature was gathered through databases including Google Scholar, PubMed, and official organisational websites. Key search terms used included "domestic violence", "intimate partner violence", "patriarchy and gender-based violence", "socioeconomic factors domestic abuse", and "mental health domestic violence". Sources were selected from a date range of 2010 to 2025, with priority given to peer reviewed journals, government reports, and internationally recognised organisations. Inclusion criteria required sources to be empirical, from credible institutions, and free from apparent bias.

Many different resources were used when conducting this research making sure they were all valid and reliable. Relevant studies, reports, and statistics were collected from international organizations like World Health Organization (WHO), government institutions, human rights bodies like Amnesty and even peer reviewed journals. Authentic articles were also used that had no biased or vested interests showcasing their credibility. Time sensitive data was avoided for accurate information. <https://mankind.org.uk/> was used while mentioning statistics of male victims suffering from domestic violence which is a well reputed website. It provided factual information, with quantitative data and accurate statistics which were later rechecked to back up the claim. It provided entirely scientific research and is an official United Kingdom's charity organization which was published in 2023, making it time efficient as well. Perspectives of well known sociologists were sourced from Cambridge IGCSE® sociology Coursebook by Blundell which covered all 5ws and had expert testimony. As this is a literature based study, no pri-

mary fieldwork was conducted instead the findings were drawn from sociological theories, global data and regional case studies after thorough research.

4. Results

The following section presents the synthesised findings from the secondary literature reviewed, organised thematically. **Table 1** provides a systematic overview of the key studies and reports included in this analysis, detailing the geographical context, sample or data type, thematic focus and principal findings of each source.

Table 1. Summary of key studies and reports reviewed.

Author(s) & Year	Country/Region	Sample/Data	Theme	Key Finding	Relevance to Study
WHO, 2021	Global	Survey data	Prevalence	~30% of women experience physical/sexual IPV	Establishes global scale of DV
Omar, 2023	Pakistan	HRCP report	Prevalence	90% of Pakistani women reported DV at some point	Pakistan-specific prevalence
Ali & Inam, 2023	Pakistan (FATA, Balochistan, KPK)	Domestic Health Survey	Prevalence/Region	Physical violence: 56% FATA, 48% Balochistan, 43% KPK	Rural/provincial disparity in Pakistan
Huecker, 2023	USA	National statistics	Prevalence	10 million affected/year; 1 in 4 women, 1 in 9 men	DV prevalence in developed-country context
Peek-Asa et al., 2011	USA	Clinic-based survey	Socioeconomic/Rural-urban	IPV: 22.5% rural vs 15.5% urban	Links rural setting to higher DV risk
Dabaghi et al., 2023	Iran	Cross-sectional; n = 427	Socioeconomic status	Significant link between low SES and DV; 63% victims were housewives	Connects economic dependency to vulnerability
Mankind, 2023	UK	Organisational stats	Gender/Male victims	13.8% men vs 27.4% women experienced DV; 49% male victims told no one	Gendered underreporting patterns
Marketing, 2021	UK	NIHR-funded review	Mental health	Women with PTSD 7x more likely to experience DV; depression raises risk 2.5x	Mental health as cause and consequence
Karadag, 2023	Germany	Official police stats	Prevalence/Femicide	80% of DV victims were women; 133 killed by partners	Gendered nature of DV in developed nations
Zafar et al., 2024	Pakistan	HRCP report	Honour killing	323 women honour-killed in 2020; 145 in 2023	Patriarchal norms linked to lethal outcomes
Blundell, 2014	UK (theory)	Sociological theory	Patriarchy	Marxist/Functionalist perspectives on male dominance in family	Theoretical grounding for patriarchy-DV link
Pande, 2017	Bangladesh/South Asia	Policy review	Intervention	Women Friendly Hospital initiative improved survivor outcomes	Evidence-based government response

Three overarching patterns emerge from the literature. First, patriarchal mindset is consistently identified across studies as a significant structural driver of domestic violence in both developing and developed national contexts, supported by cross-national prevalence data (WHO, 2021; Karadag, 2023), sociological theory (Blundell, 2014), and legal analysis (Amnesty International, 2021).

Second, socioeconomic conditions function as a compounding risk factor. Rural settings are associated with higher IPV prevalence (Peek-Asa et al., 2011), and economic dependency is linked to elevated vulnerability to abuse (Dabaghi et al., 2023). These findings are drawn from specific regional contexts and should not be over-generalised.

Third, the relationship between mental health and domestic violence is bidirectional. Pre-existing mental health conditions increase vulnerability to victimisation, while experiencing violence generates significant psychological harm including PTSD, depression and anxiety (Marketing, 2021). Intergenerational transmission further compounds these effects, as children raised in violent households demonstrate higher rates of replicating abusive behaviour in adulthood.

5. Discussion

The findings of this research highlight how patriarchal mindset—defined as the belief system in which men are considered inherently superior and entitled to dominance—remains a significant and independent factor driving domestic violence across both developed and developing nations. The statistical data shows that even though men remain silent victims of this abuse due to social stigma most of the victims are women. Socio-economic background is another factor leading to this abuse. It is proven that rural and less educated women face higher risks as they are not well aware of their rights in comparison to educated upper class women, who show lower exposure to violence due to awareness and independence. It must be acknowledged that the data reference in this paper spans multiple national contexts—including Pakistan, United States, United Kingdom, Germany and Iran—and that each context carries its own legal framework, cultural norms and reporting standards. These sources are drawn upon not to treat them as interchangeable but to demonstrate that patriarchal mindset operates as a driver of domestic violence across diverse settings. The paper also talked about different issues related to domestic violence along with their causes, consequences and about many cases of domestic violence victims worldwide. An article published by AIPC “Challenges of Families Who Experience Domestic Violence” talks on how domestic violence affects families in Australia (AIPC, 2021).

The mental health consequences of intimate Partner Violence are equally concerning as most survivors fall in severe depression, anxiety or even suffer through PTSD. The literature also highlights how in some situations economic hardships are the ones that perpetuate dependency on the abuser. Moreover, children raised in violent households are more likely stuck in this cycle of abuse where they continue this violence after their marriages as this is the only way they know how to live.

At the same time, the issue cannot be reduced solely to patriarchal mindsets. Other factors like poverty, use of substance, cultural attitudes and weak legal frameworks also intersect with gender norms to sustain violence. This means that effective solutions must go beyond education and awareness. They must include legal reforms, access to shelters, mental health services and social safety nets that empower victims to rebuild their lives.

While this paper emphasizes patriarchy as a central driver of domestic violence, it is important to acknowledge that the issue is multifactorial. Research shows that substance abuses, poverty, intergenerational trauma, cultural acceptance of violence and lack of access to mental health support can also escalate abuse within families. These factors interact with patriarchal norms reinforcing cycles of control and dependency. Recognizing these complexity ensures that solutions are not one dimensional but instead address the broader social, cultural and economic context in which domestic violence occurs.

6. Limitations

This study is subject to several important limitations. First, domestic violence is widely underreported across all regions which means that available statistics likely underestimate the true prevalence of abuse. Second, definitions of domestic violence vary significantly across countries and legal systems which makes direct cross country comparisons difficult. Third, as a secondary data study this paper is unable to establish direct causal relationships between patriarchal mindset and domestic violence; the patterns identified are correlational. Future research using primary data and standardised definitions would strengthen the conclusions drawn here.

7. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the research the hypothesis raised in the research question can be accepted, agreeing that patriarchal mindset in families is a major contributor of domestic violence. However, these patriarchal family structures do not act in isolation. A society that prioritises male dominance, silences women and normalises violence provides fertile ground for abuse. Other factors including poverty, substance use and intergenerational trauma also play a significant role and must be addressed alongside efforts to challenge patriarchal norms. Promoting equal education to all, along with strengthened governmental laws and awareness campaigns will decrease patriarchal norms creating a safer and more peaceful society free of violence.

Thus, this paper reinforced my own thinking that domestic violence cases are increasing due to patriarchal mindset in families. Through this research we can successfully conclude that this is a global issue which is frequently overlooked and is usually in favor of males due to a highly patriarchal society. Addressing these systemic issues is essential to protect victims and foster equality and justice.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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