

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Perception of Females Regarding Gender-Based Violence in Jhelum, PakistanMAIRA GUL¹, FARAH AHMAD², KASHAF AQEEL ZAIDI³, SARA GULL⁴¹Medical officer, Military Lands and Cantonments, Cantonment Board Jhelum Dispensary.^{2,3}Department of community health Sciences, Ziauddin University Karachi⁴Medical Officer, Cantonment Model Dispensary, Walton Cantt, LahoreCorresponding author: Maira Gul, Email: anoshay85@gmail.com, Cell: +92-336-5344162**ABSTRACT**

Introduction: Gender based violence is not only a violation of women's basic human rights but also emerged as a major public health issue. This fact is also recognized in Pakistan as a result of international recognition of the problem, its prevalence in the society and documentation of its consequences by various agencies and boom of electronic and social media.

Objectives: The main purpose of this dissertation was to assess the causes of gender-based violence and perception of females by interviewing them and to determine the attitude and practices of females regarding gender-based violence in our society.

Study Design: This cross sectional study was conducted in District Jhelum between June 2017 to September 2017.

Methodology: This was a cross sectional study done in district Jhelum. The calculated sample size was 300 with 1% bound of error and 95% confidence interval. The data was collected through the self-designed questionnaire. Inclusion criteria was women 18 years or above in District Jhelum. Informed consent was taken prior to the interview. Exclusion criteria included women below 18 years of age and those who refused to give consent.

Results: 300 female respondents from different regions of District Jhelum were approached. 33.3% of the respondents belonged to the age group of 26-35 years. 29% belonged to the age group of 18-25 years. 21.3% belonged to the 36-45 years of age, 12% belonged to 46-55 years and 4.3% were above 56 years with mean age of 31.5±1.13. 28.3% were single, 65.7% were married, 0.6% were separated, 2% were divorced and 3.3% were widowed. 23.6% of the respondents had primary education, 21.3% had secondary education, 22% had college (diploma/higher diploma) and 33% were undergraduate and post graduate. 41% (n=123) were only house wife while 59% (n=177) were working in private and government institutes. 85.33% (n=256) reported that they have heard about this term, while 14.67% (n=44) reported that they don't know about gender based violence. While assessing the association between marital status and knowledge it was found that n=163 who were married had knowledge about this term as compared to unmarried (n=77). This showed that married females were more familiar with the gender based violence. Although the study no association of marital status with knowledge ($p=0.189 > 0.05$) using Pearson Chi-Square test. Practical implication

Conclusion: The study showed that much of the females are aware of the gender based violence. Depending upon the results of the study it can be concluded that married women suffer more from gender based violence as compared to unmarried women in our society. There are different factors which can lead towards this curse and they should be controlled at the social and community level. The problem should be solved by educating men, by persuasion of community leader, guidance and counseling of men.

Keywords: Gender-based violence, Perception, Attitude, Practice, Society.

INTRODUCTION

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a complex topic for Pakistani women as they are a marginalized portion of population, therefore, GBV may be seen through lens of their perspective for better understanding (1). Gender-based violence is a systemic issue that affects all socioeconomic, ethnic and cultural groups around the globe (2). Violence against women includes many forms of violence like violence by a partner, rape or any form of sexual assault, female genital mutilation, trafficking of women and honor killings (3). The adverse health effects of violence on women include physical, psychological, sexual and reproductive consequences. (4) The strategies and interventions in area of gender-based violence are vaguely defined as perspective of affected women are not given due consideration. (5). Gender based violence is not only a violation of women's basic human rights but has also emerged as a major public health issue due to the advent of social media. (6) However, it is a relatively neglected public health issue and coordinated efforts are needed for effective control. (7). The effective response to gender-based violence needs multisector involvement including health, education and law enforcement agencies. (8)

Pakistan is world's sixth most populous, with a very poor ranking on Gender-related Development Index (9). The prevalence of GBVs in Pakistan is among the highest in the world (10). Women are advancing in every field but gender equality is yet to be established in Pakistan. (11) These findings are consistent with other data available on the topic that in Pakistan large number of victims of gender-based violence are working women. (12) Very few studies in our region have focused on practices and behavior

in association with GBV. (13) Health education, health promotion programs and victim counseling courses have proven to be effective in increasing awareness and hence reducing the prevalence of gender-based violence. (14) Various studies have been conducted globally for early identification and intervention in females with a history of gender-based violence. Moreover, researches have proven interventions in males to be effective in reducing the prevalence of gender-based violence. (15). The Government of Pakistan is committed to curb gender-based violence and a separate ministry has been established to improve women's condition and to protect their rights (16).

Our research aims to provide perceptions of the female population from a district in Jhelum, a small city in Pakistan. Regarding gender-based violence and help in understanding the local needs before implementing behavior modification interventions. This will provide an assessment of possible causes, current limitations in legislature and community level which will help in devising effective strategies to overcome this. The reduction in gender-based violence will empower women, give them a higher sense of security and improve Pakistan's image in the community of nations.

METHODOLOGY

This was a cross sectional study conducted in District Jhelum between June and September 2017. The calculated sample size was 300 with 1% bound of error and 95% confidence interval. In-person interviews were conducted in different hospitals, health camps and district headquarters of Jhelum and consecutive sampling technique was applied. Inclusion criteria was women 18

years or above in District Jhelum. Informed consent was taken prior to the interview. Exclusion criteria included women below 18 years of age and those who refused to give consent. Demographic profile variables included age, marital status, educational level and occupation. The questions were related to perception regarding gender-based violence. The questionnaire was developed through literature review and researches conducted on similar topics.^{5,10} A pilot study was conducted on 10 participants (excluding the study sample). The reliability of the questionnaire was also determined by Cronbach Alpha which was 0.8. Written consent was obtained from every participant before filling out the questionnaire. The data was collected by using the purposive sampling technique.

Before beginning data collection, the researcher and advisors conferred on the study's aims, data security, the nature of the open-ended semi-structured questionnaire, as well as the process for ensuring the highest possible quality of the collected information. After the data has been transcribed, it is unlikely that the researcher will be able to enroll enough individuals to examine the concepts for transcription verification. Complete information was supplied in the final report so that readers could verify its accuracy. The study was rigorous because it paid close attention to detail, followed established protocols, and was consistently and accurately conducted. Credibility was established by peer assessment. Individuals with experience in or training in qualitative research assessed the data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions on an ongoing basis. We met with a group of researchers with similar training and experience to review our data analysis and topic development in a single sitting.

Data was entered and analyzed using SPSS version 20. Descriptive analysis for numerical data was done through mean and standard deviation and for categorical data through frequencies and percentages. The study variables were summarised by several means, including graphs, frequency tables and descriptive summaries. Chi square test was applied to identify associations between demographic factors and opinion about gender-based violence. A p-value of less than 0.05 was taken as significant. Institutional ethical approval was taken prior to the initiation of the study.

RESULTS

Our study included 300 female respondents from different regions of District Jhelum. Mean age of the population was 31.5 ± 1.13 years with a significant proportion n=100 (33.3%) in the 26-35 years age group and n=87 (29.0%) in the 18-25 years group. Whereas, n=64 (21.3%) females were between 36-45 years of age, n=36 (12%) were 46-55 year old and n=13 (4.3%) were above 56 years. Most of the females were married n=137 (65.7%) while n=85 (28.3%) were single, n=2 (0.6%) were separated, n=6 (2%) were divorced and n=10 (3.3%) were widowed. Of those who were married, n=78 (26.0%) had been married for more than 1 year but less than 10 years. N=88 (29.3%) of the respondents had marriage duration less than 1 year whereas, n=73 (24.3%) was between 11 to 20 years. Mean duration of marriage was found to be 10.9 years with a standard deviation of 1.32. A significant proportion of the sample n=99 (33%) had an education level equivalent to undergraduate or postgraduate, reflecting on a literate sample. N=71 (23.6%) of the respondents had primary education, n=64 (21.3%) had secondary education, and n=66 (22%) had completed a college diploma. Majority of the women were working, n=177 (59%) were employed in private and government institutes while n=123 (41%) were housewives.

Among the participants, n=256 (85.3%) had heard about gender-based violence while n=44 (14.7%) reported having no knowledge about it. An insignificant association was found between marital status and knowledge regarding gender-based violence (p-value =0.189). Respondents were asked about their experience of gender-based violence. N=43 (14.3%) reported violence by a family member, particularly husbands among the married females. A significant association was found between

marital status and gender-based violence with a higher proportion of married females experiencing violence (p-value of 0.000).

Table 1: Level of agreement on issues that relate to gender violence

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender violence happens because men want to establish control over women	149	49.7	94	31.3	27	9	9	3
Gender based violence is the result of power inequality between women and men	148	49.3	108	36	23	7.7	15	5
Male violence against women varies in degree and intensity according to the specific circumstances	148	49.3	84	28	44	14.7	11	3.7
Women commit violence as a way to ensure their own survival and security	114	38	102	34	44	14.7	18	6
Gender based violence is not exclusively a woman's concern	30	10	83	27	52	20.7	61	20.3
It is more acceptable for a man to have many sexual partners than for a woman.	85	28.3	87	29.1	43	14.3	36	12
Women are not smarter than men	53	17.7	37	12.3	45	15	44	14.7
Most men like to go out with woman just for sex	83	27.7	62	20.7	48	16.3	40	13.3
Most women like to show off their bodies.	67	22.3	41	13.7	64	21.3	40	13.3
Woman should not have the same freedom as man.	62	20.7	59	19.7	41	13.7	52	17.3
Woman should be more concerned with becoming good wives and mothers rather than desiring a professional or business career.	87	29	58	19.3	33	11	54	18
In a working couple, the husband should do a share of the housework such as washing dishes and doing the laundry.	117	39	66	22	18	6	17	5.7
More encouragement in a family should be given to sons than daughters to go to college.	63	21	33	11	38	12.7	56	18.7
If a person is being abused, they could just exit the relationship.	58	19.3	34	11.3	85	21.7	55	18.3
Most women are concerned about whether men like them.	54	18	75	25	58	19.3	36	12
Women are just as likely to be violent toward their partners as men.	67	22.3	70	23.3	68	22.7	36	12
Women are more likely to be sexually abused by a stranger than someone they know	105	34.3	81	26.3	72	24	34	11.3
Financial difficulties are the most common reason for problems that involve violence in relationships.	146	48.7	85	28.3	28	9.7	16	5.3

Table 1.0 depicts agreement of respondents on issues related to gender-based violence and identified male partner's wish to establish control, sharing responsibilities and financial disagreements as common issues.

Moreover, only n=191 (63.7%) reported that they have noticed attention towards gender-based violence in the community while n=109 (36.3%) had noticed no attention towards the issue. When asked if anyone in community had undertaken activities to combat gender-based violence, n=70 (22.7%) stated yes and the majority n=230 (76.7%) reported no. A small proportion of the population n=28 (9.3%) reported participating in social activities to combat gender-based violence in the past three months, while remaining n=272 (90.7%) had not.

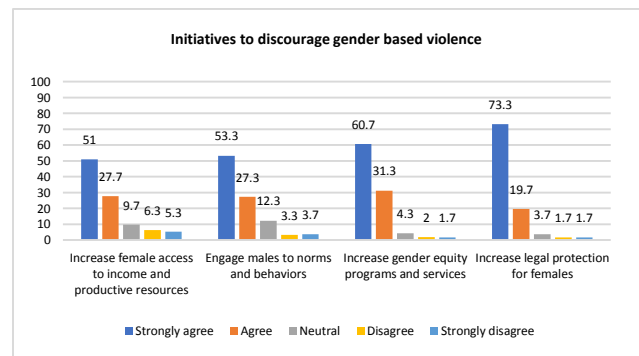


Figure 1: Level of agreement on the initiatives to address perception of gender bases violence

Figure 1.0 shows the level of agreement of participants with initiatives to address the perception of gender-based violence. Majority of the population agreed on increasing legal protection for females with implementation. Respondents were asked about the level of agreement regarding opportunities to address gender violence. Majority of the women n=148 (49.3%) strongly agreed with sensitization of the community towards the negative effects of gender violence while n=93 (31%) agreed. They had mixed views regarding enforcement for changes in cultural paradigms that allow

gender-based violence to continue with a significant proportion n=65 (21.7%) being neutral and n=64 (21.3% strongly disagreeing while n=55 (18.3%) strongly agreed. A significant majority n=237 (79%) was in favor of defending the rights of females which are denied through harmful but culturally tolerated practices. The most commonly listed opportunity was promoting women’s movement organizations who have the experience and knowledge to tackle GBV.

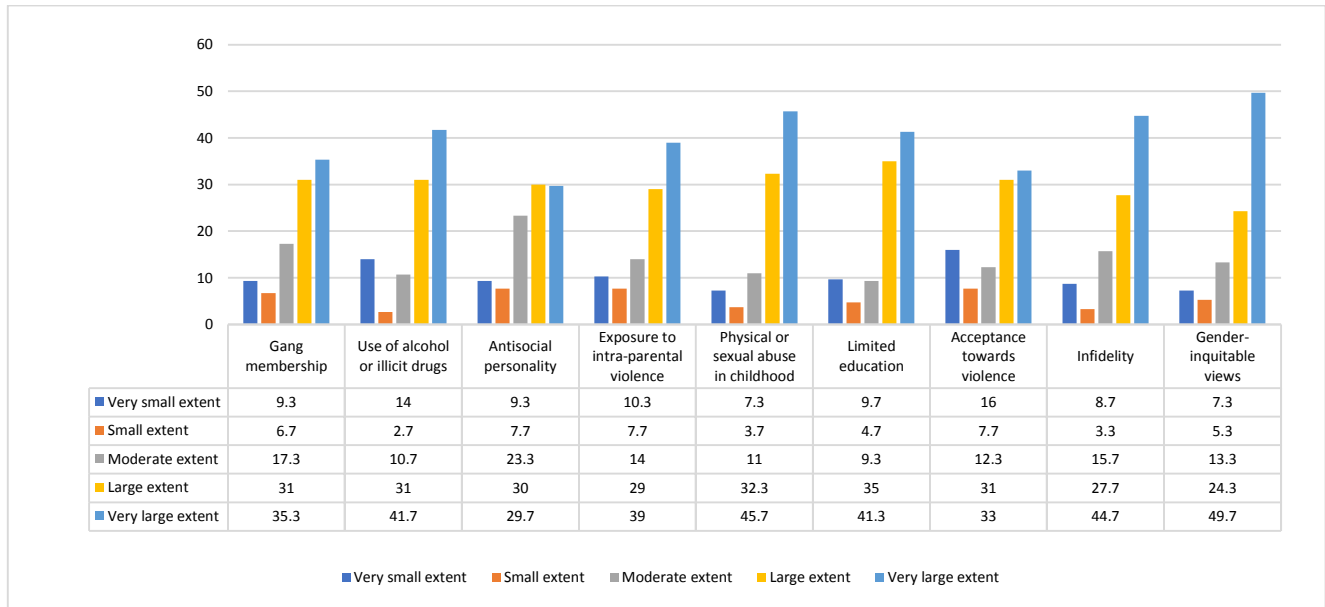


Figure 2: Extent of the factors that increase the risk of committing sexual violence in men

Figure 2.0 reflects the extent to which the abovementioned factors increase men’s risk of committing sexual violence. A few identified causes including gender-inequitable views, history of physical or sexual abuse as a child, infidelity and limited education as the responsible factors on a very large extent. Respondents were asked about their opinion about those persons who are engaged in GBV. N=121 (40.3%) reported that they should be educated in this regard, n=37 (12.3%) reported that the problems should be resolved by the community leaders, n=42 (14%) reported that they should be arrested and charged for what they are doing in the community and n=100 (33.3%) reported that these kinds of persons require guidance and counseling.

Respondents were asked about activities of the community for the GBV and a significant proportion n=135 (45%) reported that no work is being done in the community. Whereas, n=57 (19%) reported that workshops regarding this are conducted in the community, n=8 (2.7%) mentioned outreach services, n=9 (3.0%) mentioned provision of clinical services and n=27 (9.0%) reported the provision of reading material. Majority of the participants n= 225 (75%) reported a change in attitude after participating in the study. However, n=75 (25%) mentioned the need for motivational material to be persuaded and motivated to know about and taking actions about GBV.

DISCUSSION

According to a poll taken by the Thomson Reuters Foundation in 2011, Pakistan is the third most dangerous country for women in the world. More than a thousand women and girls are murdered based on honor killings every year and 90 percent of Pakistani women experience domestic violence. (17) This poll was taken a decade ago and ever since the advent of social media and enhanced outreach of print and television media the awareness regarding gender-based violence has increased. 85.3% females in

our sample had heard about gender-based violence. In accordance with previous studies conducted, married females reported a higher incidence of violence. (18) This is probably because domestic violence is often underreported to sustain the honor and reputation of families and their husbands. In our culture, females are made to believe that they are defined by the male figures in their lives which is the husband after marriage. A difficult irony for women in Pakistan is that when a victim speaks up about physical or sexual abuse, she is seen as having lost her and her family’s dignity. Many rapes go unreported to avoid victim-shaming.

With an increasing recognition of the burden of gender-based violence and its long-term consequences, the global community is joining hands to work towards its elimination. (19) This explains the majority reporting a change in the attention towards gender-based violence. However, a significant proportion also stated that significant work was not being done in this regard and is possibly because the study was conducted in Jhelum, which is a small city and the current focus is more towards the bigger cities. Another contributing factor to this is the lack of reporting from the small cities and villages as opposed to bigger cities. Studies have found interventions including workshops as an effective strategy to spread awareness and encourage reporting. Additionally, recommendations have been made for workshops to be inclusive towards the male gender as they have a crucial role to play in women empowerment. (20) Furthermore, a proposed strategy from our study is an increase in legal protection in terms of easy reporting, faster court hearings and lawful punishment for the offender. Even though many laws exist and more will be made but the most important factor is the implementation of those laws. (8)

Research has identified some risk factors and protective factors among male offenders involved in gender-based violence.

Among important risk factors were recent physical victimization, childhood maltreatment, drug abuse, and the level of alcohol usage. The females in our study also agreed that a male with a childhood history of physical or sexual abuse has a higher probability of being an offender. Moreover, gender-inequitable views and limited education were also identified as additional risk factors. Therefore, among the possible measures to take against the offender, 40.3% of our sample suggested that they should be educated in this regard, 33.3% believed they required guidance and counseling while only 14% believed they should be arrested and charged for their actions. Furthermore, psychotic disorders have also been identified as a risk factor and must be excluded in offender's assessment. Increasing age and stable employment have been listed among protective factors against violence. (21)

Westerners usually associate the plight of Pakistani women with religious oppression. However, the main problem is with the mentality, which is deeply ingrained in strictly patriarchal societies like Pakistan. Religious misinterpretations and deep-rooted cultural norms make both educated and uneducated women struggle every day for basic rights, recognition, and respect. (22) Housewives usually experience violence from family members, whereas, working women are subject to emotional and mental harassment by their seniors.

After the global attention towards gender-based violence, women are getting offered equal education and employment opportunities. Organization do not want to forego the best-qualified talent only on the basis of gender. (23) Even in Pakistan, until a few years ago, various jobs were associated with a specific gender. However, the trends are changing and more women are now seen in previously male-dominated professions. More women are now seen in positions of leadership of businesses and philanthropy organizations. With a persistent global interest in this area, more progression will be seen for women in the years to come. (24)

CONCLUSION

The study showed that much of the females are aware of the gender-based violence. Depending upon the results of the study it can be concluded that married women suffer more from gender-based violence as compared to unmarried women in our society. There are different factors which can lead towards this curse and they should be controlled at the social and community level. The problem should be solved by educating men, by persuasion of community leader, guidance and counseling of men.

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