

## Social Practices Fostering Crime Against Women and the Law in Pakistan

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### **Abstract**

*This paper focuses on discriminatory social practices fostering crime against women and the corresponding laws in Pakistan. Based on analysis of both primary and secondary data, it gives a picture of prevailing crimes against women in Pakistani society and explores the evil social practices that foster these crimes. Pakistani laws are also found lacking to curb different forms of violence against women in past. The overall patriarchal social arrangement with its male domination, cultural norms, women's segregation in private sphere of home, unfavorable attitude of law enforcing agencies, customary to not report crime against women to police, lack of women's education and political participation are considered as reasons for persistence of anti women social practices and discriminatory laws. Recent increased in women's participation in political forums and the law amendments done to protect women are considered as harbinger of change. The paper also provides recommendations to curb crime against women in Pakistan.*

**Key words:** Violence against Women, Crime against Women, Law, Pakistan.

### **Introduction**

Pakistan is part of the region called "patriarchal belt" (Caldwell 1982). The region has a "classic patriarchy" prevailing in all aspects of social life (Kandiyoti 1988). In this context, women are assigned with lower status than their male counterparts. This discrimination against women is visible in all aspects of social life. Women suffer from low literacy rate, lack of education, restricted mobility, difficulties in access to health facilities, a lower labour force participation rate and lack of

economic, social and political independence. Women are mostly segregated in the private sphere of home. This lack of interaction with the public sphere outside home keeps majority of women away from the resources and human resource networks that are the source of social and political power to male patriarchs at all levels; within family, tribe and overall society.

Due to women's lower status, they become vulnerable to several evil social practices which victimize them physically, psychologically and socially. These social practices legitimized several crimes against women as efforts to preserve the traditional tribal and feudal culture. This social and traditional acceptance results in several crimes against women that went unnoticed thus are creating a web of women's misery with no way out of it. The available laws and the efficiency of law enforcing agencies are also not sufficient to promote these victimizing social practices as crimes against a particular gender and to curb them for broader social justice.

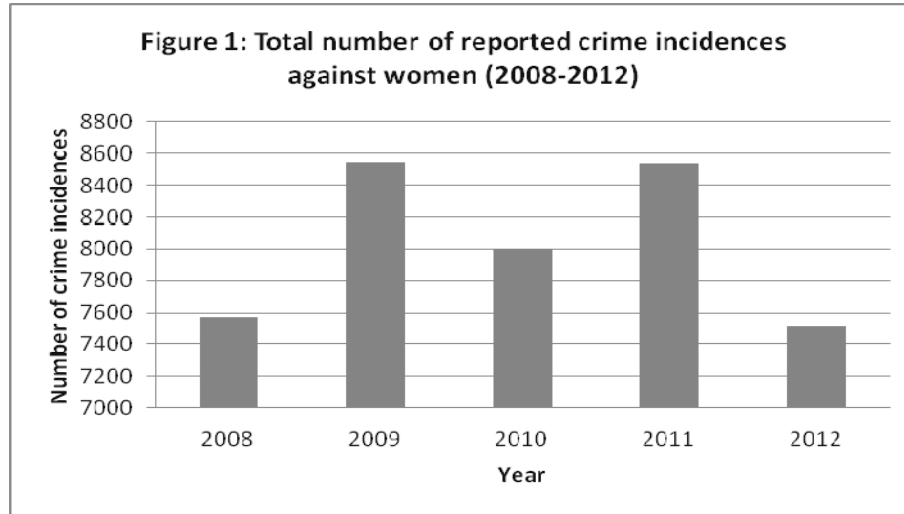
### **Method**

The paper focuses on social practices fostering crime against women and law in Pakistan. The arguments and recommendations made in this paper are based on both the primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected through a survey conducted to collect information from respondents with the help of a questionnaire. The number of respondents was 140 men and women. Keeping in view of the technical knowledge about the laws and the cross cultural anti women social practices prevailing across Pakistan, the educated respondents were purposefully selected. The data was statistically analyzed and presented in descriptive and graphical forms. The secondary data was collected from books, articles, newspapers, technical reports, and internet resources. The effort was made to analyze the problem studies here in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

### **Prevalence of crime against women**

There is a variety of discriminatory practices and types of violence women are faced with in Pakistan. The reports showing statistics regarding different forms of crime committed against women in

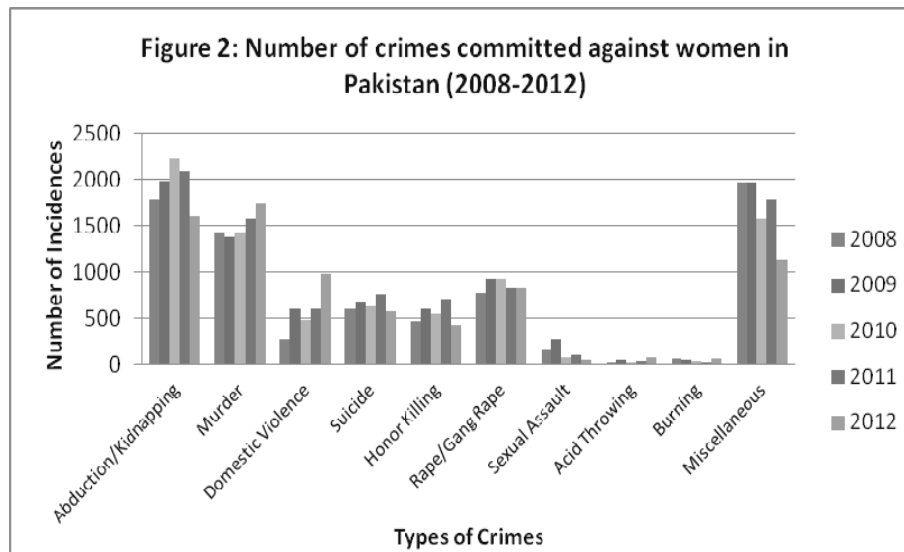
Pakistan are sufficient to show the dire situation (Azhar, 2012; Perveen, 2013).



Source: Statistics are taken from two reports written by Azhar (2012) and Perveen (2013) and analyzed by the researcher for this paper.

The total number of incidence of violence and crimes committed against women was 7571 in the year 2008, 8548 in 2009, 8000 in 2010, 8539 in 2011 and 7516 in 2012 (Azhar 2012; Perveen 2010; 2013), as shown in the graph presented in Figure 1. It shows that such violations of women's rights and crimes against them are wide and occurring in large number. The graph shows that the number of reported incidences ranges from 7000 to 8500 during last five years.

The most common categories of crimes or violence committed against women in large numbers are abduction or kidnapping, murder, domestic violence, honor killing and rape or gang rapes, etc. The graph presented in Figure 2 clearly shows a large number of reported incidences of these types of violence or crimes committed against women all over Pakistan.



Source: Statistics are taken from two reports written by Azhar (2012) and Perveen (2013) and analyzed by the researcher for this paper.

Some other types of crimes like sexual assault, acid throwing, burning, and cultural practices like *wanni*, *sawara*, and marital rapes are usually less reported to media and law enforcing agencies. It does not mean these crimes and anti women social practices do not exist in society. The graph presented in Figure 2 also shows a sufficient number of sexual assault, acid throwing and burning cases. A large number of cases of different kinds of violence against women are categorized as miscellaneous. This category includes *wanni*, *sawara*, custodial violence, torture, trafficking, child marriage, incest, sexual harassment, harassment at work place, attempted murders, land encroaching and etc.

Besides that media also frequently report about exchange of women for settlement of disputes within tribes or families. At the same time *Jirgas* are also reported to be playing an important role to legitimize anti women social practices like such exchanges of women as goods or commodity.

### **Social practices fostering crimes against women**

The list of crimes committed against women in Pakistan is large. The variety of the ways to discriminate and deprive women of their legal

and social rights is difficult to list in a comprehensive way. It ranges from the use of abusive language to the murder of women (The Commission of Inquiry for Women, 1997; hereafter CIW). In the following paragraphs an effort is made to recount and discuss the prevailing social practices that foster some of the most frequently occurring and reported crimes against women. These long persisting social practices and crimes harming women's status in society may include verbal abuse, physical and psychological abuse as domestic violence, dowry, child marriage, exchange marriage, *watta satta*, *walwar*, *sawara*, *wani*, honor killings, marriage with *Quran*, wife beating, rape, gang rape, marital rape, acid throwing, incest, stripping in public, trafficking, forced prostitution, sexual harassment in street or workplace, etc.

Our society is marked with women's control by male patriarchs within and outside family regarding decisions that effect women's life. The young girls as the lower status members of family always remain excluded from all sorts of social and economic decision making within household. They are socialized to unconditionally accept the will of their elders, especially male members of family. The most common incidence of this lack of decision making power to women appears in rejection to women's right of their choice in selection of life partner. Similarly, the decisions regarding women's education, labour force participation, and appearance in public sphere are taken by male family heads. Outside homes these decisions about women within a community are also controlled by communal, tribal or feudal heads. This social arrangement has been given name as the patriarchal "gender contract" (Moghadam 1998). Apt to this situation is Moghadam's (2004) description that in patriarchal societies if women have to appear in public sphere, she has to go through male patriachs at different level.

Marriage related social practices are also source of victimizing women in other several ways. The dowry is considered ceremoniously essential for marriage in our society. But this socially accepted part of social and financial exchange of valuable items has implications on the status of women in her husband's house after marriage. The offered dowry for any marriage contract may condition woman's security and well being accordingly. Besides that the marriage of a girl is also used

for settlement of disputes, compensations in crimes committed by male family members or the exchange to get rid of financial loans. In this way, despite having respective law prohibiting and declaring the marriage of girls less than 18 years of age as crime, girl child are suffering from child marriage. The exchange marriage, *watta satta*, and *walwar* (the bride price) traditions also reduce women's status to the level of a valuable commodity that can be exchange for something else. The *Hak bakshwai* or marriage with *Quran* is also the tradition used to preserve family property from division or transfer to other families in case of marriage of women members of family.

*Wani* or *Swara* are culturally accepted practices in tribal societies. Women are considered as an easy exchange for their misdeeds or crimes committed by their tribal or familial males. Women are given from the offender's family or tribe to the victim's family or tribe. The male dominated patriarchal environment within family and society results in a consideration that women are an easy exchange to remove the punishment that may be awarded to the male family patriarchs by law or law enforcing agencies. Therefore, the informal tribal councils are mostly consulted for such exchanges. These tribal councils of elders (*Jirga*) play major roles for socially and culturally legitimizing such victimizing practice (Shah 1998).

Domestic violence, wife beating, marital rape and stove burning are also the results of patriarchal power arrangements and women's lower status within family. The male family members are socially allowed to control their family women and young males in a way as they feel it better. The law enforcing agencies also do not interfere in such cases considering them as domestic affairs that should be dealt internally within family. Similarly, the act of killing women for the sake of honor of men in family is again a social practice resulting from the patriarchal arrangement of society. The men in family or tribe are socially perceived to be endowed with a so called honor. But the responsibility to maintain that honor lies on the head of women within family or tribe. This situation makes it easy and legitimate for men to kill women for maintaining their social status and honor within community. Sometimes the killing of women in the name of honor is planned for financial gains or to get rid of rivals (Jilani and Ahmed 2004). In short all kinds of violence or crimes

against women are the result of patriarchal social arrangements of Pakistani society.

### **Discriminatory laws**

Besides evil social practices, Pakistani law is also insufficient to curb such crimes against women. As the law institutionalized women's lower status within society, for long the situation remained same. Several laws, especially those promulgated during the so called Islamization period of general Zia-ul-Haq, were legally reducing women to the lower social status and deprived of their rights (Iqbal 2007; Jilani and Ahmed 2004; Quraishi 1997; Weaver 2007; Weiss 2003). The most criticized laws for discriminating against women were the Hudood Ordinances introduced in 1979.

Hudood Ordinances included a set of five ordinances; (1) Offence Against Property (enforcement of Hudood) Ordinance 1979, (2) Offence of Zina (Enforcement of Hudood) Ordinance 1979, (3) Offence of Qazaf (Enforcement of Hudood) Ordinance 1979, (4) Prohibition (Enforcement of Hudood) Order 1979, and (5) Execution of the punishment of whipping ordinance 1979 (CIW 1997). The most victimizing among these laws was the Zina Ordinance. It almost failed to distinguish between the crime of rape and the self intended crime of adultery. It described same standard of evidence (four male adult eye witnesses) and the same Hadd punishment (of whipping and stoning) for these two different crimes (Government of Pakistan 1979). The prescribed evidence made it almost impossible for rape victims to prove the crime committed against them. Besides that under this law it was also possible to accuse the rape victims for the crime of illicit sexual intercourse on her part on the basis of lack of prescribed evidence of four male eye witnesses and appearance of her pregnancy.

Besides Hudood ordinances, the Qanoon-e-shadat (law of evidence) 1984 also reduced women's attestation of evidence to that of half of a man's witness in cases of future obligations or financial implications (Government of Pakistan 1984). Qisas and Diyat Law also helped to foster the killing of women in the name of honor. This law makes the murder of women a crime not against the state but against the heirs of the victim. It provides the opportunity to victim or her heirs for choosing either causing the same loss to the perpetrator as

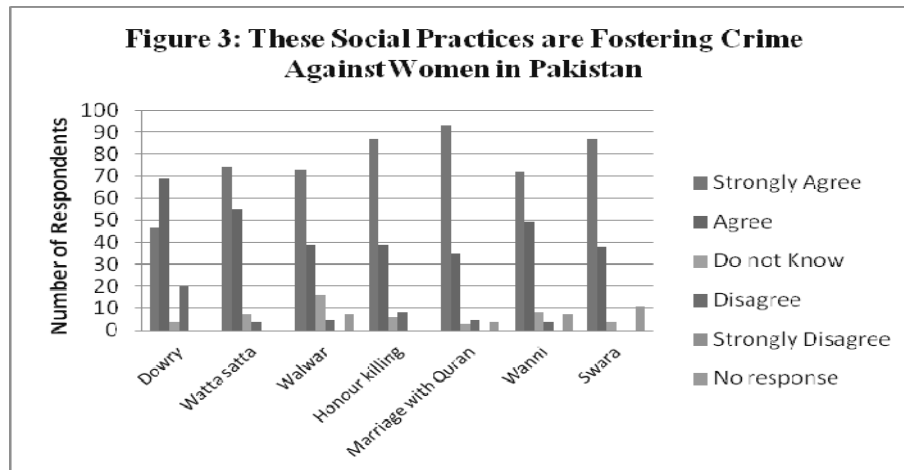
done to victim (Qisas) or demanding a monetary compensation in case of bodily harm or murder (Diyat). Usually, the honor killings are done by the male family members. In this way the family or tribe either chooses to demand easy compensations for avoiding any punishment to their male patriarch of the family.

### Presentation of Data

The analysis of primary data shows that majority of the respondents believe that social practices of dowry, *watta satta*, *walwar*, honor killing, marriage with *Quran*, *Wanni*, and *swara* are fostering crime against women in Pakistan. The graph presented in Figure 3 shows that a visible majority of the respondents are agree with the ideas that several social practices, as named above, are fostering crime against women in Pakistani society. It is found that more than 82% of the respondents agree (i.e. 33.5% are strongly agree and 49% are agree) that the social practice of dowry is a source of crime against women. Besides that, the social practice of *Watta Satta* is also considered leading to victimization of women by more than 91% of the respondents. It is also observed that 80% of the respondents are agree (i.e. 52% are strongly agree and 27.8% are agree) that the social practice of paying *Walwar* is a source for fostering crime against women.

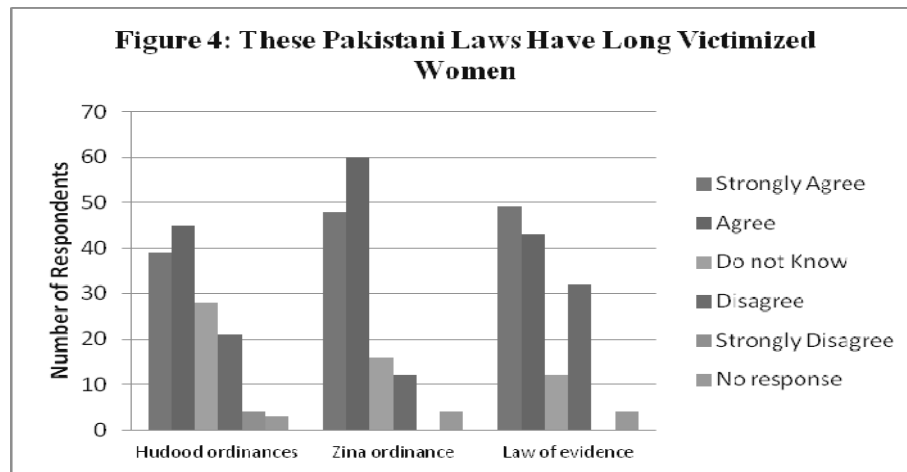
Almost 90% of the respondents are agree (i.e. 62.14% are strongly agree and 27.85% are agree) that the social practice of honor killings is a source of crime against women in Pakistan. Again more than 91% of the respondents found agree (i.e. 62.4% strongly agree and 25% agree) with the idea that social practice of marriage with *Quran* results in crime against women in the country. The social practices of *Wanni* and *Swara* are also considered as fostering crime against women in Pakistan by more than 86% and 89% of the respondents, respectively.





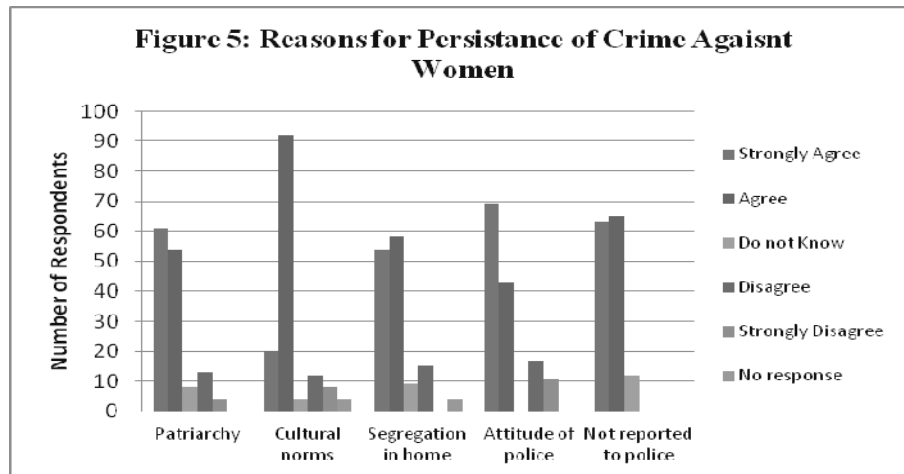
Similarly, the data analysis, as presented in graph in Figure 4, shows that several laws were also serving as a source of women's victimization in Pakistan. It is observed more than half (i.e. almost 60%) of the respondents agree that hudood ordinances were serving as a source of victimization of women in Pakistan for long. Still a significant number of the respondents (i.e. 20%) showed their lack of knowledge in this regard. While only 17% disagree that hudood ordinances were source of women victimization in the country.

It is also observed that 77% of the respondents were agree that zina ordinance victimized women for a long period of time. Simultaneously, 11% of the respondents did not know anything in this regard. Only 8.5% of the respondents disagree with this idea of women's victimization under zina ordinance. In response to a similar question regarding Law of evidence, more than 65% of the respondents found believing that law of evidence is also a source of victimization of women by giving them half worth to their evidence in comparison of men. Still a significant number of respondents (i.e. 22.8%) disagree that law of evidence victimized women by giving half worth to their evidence. It is found that more than half of the respondents were believing that all these three laws were source of victimization of Pakistani women.



The data analysis also shows that there are several reasons for long persistence of violence and crime against women. The main reasons found were the overall patriarchal set up of society, and its cultural norms, women's segregation in the private sphere of home, unfavorable attitude of law enforcing agencies, and the customary to not report the cases of violence against women to law enforcing agencies (See Figure 5).

The data analysis show that dominant believe among respondents is that patriarchy (male domination of women) is a major reason for long persistence of women victimization in Pakistan. Almost 82% of the respondents agree (including 43.57% are strongly agree, 38.5% are agree) with this belief. Only 12% of the respondents disagree with this belief. While only 5.7% showed their lack of knowledge in this regard. It is found that cultural norms are considered by a large majority of respondents as reason behind women's victimization. Almost 80% of the respondents agree (including 14.28% are strongly agree and 65.7% are agree) that cultural norms are responsible for women victimization. Only 14% of the respondents were found disagreeing with this idea. Another 2.8% were found unaware in this regard along with 2.8% who did not respond to this question.

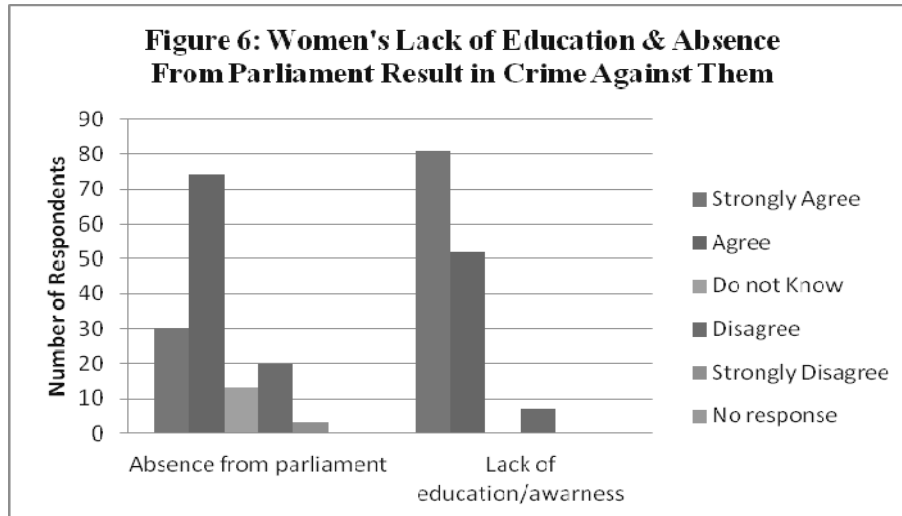


Women's segregation in the private sphere of home and their low contact with the public sphere is also considered leading to victimization of women. Almost 80% of the respondents agree (including 38.5% as strongly agree and 41.4% as agree) with this belief. Only 10.7% of the respondents disagree with this idea. Besides that 6% respondents said they do not know in this regard. Only 2% did not respond to this question.

Unfavourable attitude of law enforcing agencies (especially of police) seems an important reason behind persistence in crime against women in the country. Almost 79% of the respondents (including 49% as strongly agree and 30% as agree) considered that gender insensitive attitude of police is one reason behind high rate of crime against women. Only 12% of the respondents disagree with this idea. Non of the respondent either showed lack of knowledge or did not respond to this question.

It appears that mostly the cases of violence against women are not reported to the law enforcing agencies. This contributes to persistence of violence and crime against two men in country. Almost 91% of the respondents (45% as strongly agree and 46% as agree) that not reporting of violence against women is a cause behind crime against women in Pakistan. Non of the respondent disagree with this idea. While 8% showed their lack of awareness in this regard. The data also shows two major reasons for women avoiding to report crime

done against them as bad reputation caused to family and the long and length legal procedures and further victimization in the hand of police.



The marginal representation or absence of women from political and legal decision making institutions like parliament is also considered as one of the major reason for long persistence of discriminatory laws and crime committed against them in Pakistan (see Figure 6). Almost 74% of the respondents are agree (including 21.4% as strongly agree and 52.8% as agree ) that women's lower participation in parliament results in persistence of discriminatory laws and thus resulting in persistence of crime against women in broader society. Another 16% of the respondents disagree with this idea and 9% showed their lack of knowledge in this regard.

Women's lack of education and awareness is also considered one reason behind long persistence of discriminatory social practices, laws and crime against them (see Figure 6). Almost 94% of the respondents agree (including 57.7% as strongly agree and 37% as agree) that women's lack of education and awareness is one reason behind all these social evils victimizing women in Pakistan. None of the respondents either showed their lack of knowledge or did not respond to this question. Only 5% the respondents disagreed with tis idea.

**Reasons identified for long persistence of crimes against women**

Besides recounting the evil social practices, crime and violence against women, and discriminatory laws, it is also essential to understand the reasons for their long persistence in our society. According to the above presented data analysis, following are some of the reasons for long preservation of women victimization from household to the state level.

1. Our society is a classic patriarchy in which male dominates and household serves the basic unit of social life. The control and victimization of women starts from these two realities. First, the domination of men in social and political life led to the reduction of women to a socially lower status within family, community and state institutions. This male domination also creates social attitudes, perceptions and ideologies that discriminate women as lower being. The control of women and the definition of their lower status start form within the family where they are deprived of social and political decision making authority and the resources available.
2. Most of these crimes are deeply rooted in culture of our society and usually not recognized as crimes (CIW 1997). The male dominated society and its corresponding traditional and cultural ideologies entail a social acceptance of crimes against women as traditional norms to protect traditional patriarchal and tribal cultures. Most of the above discussed victimizing social practices are the products of cultural interpretations of men's authority and status, their honor, and the appropriate code of conduct for women.
3. Besides male domination and the social acceptance of women's control by male family heads, the over emphasized inviolable sanctity of private sphere of home is also one of the reasons behind these crimes. As most of the crimes against women ranging from verbal abuse and wife beating to the killing in the name of family honor are usually committed by victim's family or close relatives within the private sphere of household. The

law enforcing agencies avoid interfering in most of these cases as declaring them a domestic matter of the family (Bettencourt 2000; CIW 1997; Human Rights Watch 1999, Jilani and Ahmed 2004). But this socially established authority of male members of family and the delimitation of private sphere of home as not encroachable by the law enforcing agency made women, who spent almost entire life span within this enclosed environment, vulnerable.

4. The culturally established social biases, attitudes and inequities producing violence against women are also firmly embedded in Pakistani social institutions. The legislative institutions, law and law enforcing agencies lack sensitization for women issues that reproducing women's victimization through discriminatory laws, lengthy and victimizing legal processes, and biased attitudes while providing justice (Cheema 2008). This institutional framework also helps to foster all forms of violence and crimes against women.
5. The discrepancies in reporting patterns regarding these crimes against women and the award of punishment to the perpetrators help to encourage the possible perpetrators to commit these crimes with low future implication or punishment to them. Incidences of honor killings, child marriage, exchange marriage, rape sexual harassment, domestic violence, kidnapping are mostly replicated all over the country because most of such case went unreported and unpunished.
6. Women victims avoid reporting these crimes because it may cause the shame and bad reputation to the family. But the victimizing procedures and exploitation by law enforcing agencies also prevent them from reporting these crimes. Therefore, the reports of such crimes to law enforcing agencies are rare. When reported these agencies themselves are not sensitive to women's issue. Women suffer their unfavorable attitudes and violence in custody. The fear of exploitation in custody of law enforcing agencies is one reason to cause

silence on such matters (Chadbourn 1999; Human Rights Watch 1999; Human Rights Watch n.d.; Jilani and Ahmed 2004; Marcus 1993; Weaver 2007).

7. If a small number of cases fortunately reported, the complicated and multiple legal system clashing with each other enhances the misery of victim while maximizing the chances of perpetrator to go unpunished. The delay and long processes to acquire justice from the legal courts is discouraging common people for consulting these institution for such crimes committed to them.
8. This hopelessness towards legal system in addition to the tribal and communal patriarchal control of the individual led them to consult the local tribal councils of elders e.g. *Jirga*. Therefore, the rare numbers of cases that come to the knowledge of society are mostly tackled by tribal *Jirgas*. In which the decisions mostly come serving the interests of the male party while further victimizing the women.
9. Women's less participation in the political and legislative institutions is one factor that keeps discriminatory practices persisting for long period of time. Pakistan's political history before the year 2000 shows a marginal representation of women in political forum (Shirkat Gah 2009; Zia and Bari 1999). This absence of women in legislative forums resulted in lack of their say while formulating laws. Therefore, the laws coming out of such institutions lack women's perspective. They usually appear to be less sensitive and victimizing towards women.
10. Besides above mentioned all the factors, majority of women in Pakistan are least aware about their rights and laws protecting these rights. It can be considered as one of the results of the lack of education and low literacy rate among women, even worse among rural women (Population Census Organization 1998a; 1998b). Although, these crimes happen all over the

society but as a result of this lack of awareness rural women suffer most.

The above mentioned factors are not intended as to give a comprehensive list of reasons fostering these crimes against women. They are simply counted here to give an idea that the male domination, cultural rituals and practices, lack of women's education and awareness, women's marginal participation in decision making institution within state apparatus, and the consequent lack of sensitivity and flaws in legal systems are the major causes to preserve women's lower status in society. It makes them vulnerable to evil social practices and crimes committed against them.

### **Rays of hope: Recent law amendments**

Recently increased women's participation in formal political institutions and the law amendments done during last decade are serving as a ray of hope in a historically dire situation (Weiss 2012). Women's increased participation and say in legislative processes has made it sensitive to women's perspective in formulating laws (Mirza and Wagha 2009). The recent law amendments have recognized some of these evil social practices as crime against women which were never considered so before (Weiss 2012). Repeated bills are appearing on legislative forums to protect women from these victimizing social practices and curbing crimes against women (Mirza and Wagha 2009). Several acts have also been passed from both the upper and lower houses to add some new aspect of women's protection in law and to amend some already available victimizing areas of laws (Weiss 2012).

For instance, the law on honor killing introduced in the year 2004 identified the practice of killing women in the name of family honor as a crime against women and specified punishment for it for the first time in the history of Pakistan. The protection of women Act introduced in the year 2006 amended long criticized and most victimizing Hudood Ordinances to reduce women's victimization in rape cases. Similarly, a set of the criminal law amendment act and women's protection act introduced in the year 2010 recognized sexual harassment as a crime and defined punishment and prevention measures for it. A new law was included in the year 2011 to define,



recognize and curb several anti-women social practices like exchange marriage, forced marriage, *wanni*, *sawara*, and marriage with Quran. The criminal law amendments were also introduced in the year 2011 to control the growing incidences of disfigurement or defacement of women by acid attacks. The domestic violence act of 2012, although initially applicable to the limited area of capital territory of Islamabad, was also another milestone in this regard. Despite all that positive progress still much is needed to be done in this regard. The failure to make a law against domestic violence despite passing a bill from parliament is a clear example of lack of political will to women's issues. Besides that the mere introduction of new laws is not sufficient to curb crime against women until their effective implementation is realized all over the country.

### Recommendations

In this section I would like to offer some suggestion to curb prevailing victimizing social practices and crime against women. The following measures are perceived as fundamental in order to move towards creating a more egalitarian society in Pakistan.

1. *Educating common people*: The measures to improve literacy rates and educational level among women are direly needed. But the matter of violence against women is not such a problem that can be solved merely by women's education. The men also need to be educated in a way to change their social attitudes, perceptions and use of socially assigned power in a more egalitarian way. Therefore, the legal and social awareness raising is equally needed among men and women.
2. *Educating political actors*: Besides educating commoners, the education, awareness and gender sensitization among political actors is also essential to create a political will and positive environment for pro-women legislation to come out of political forums.
3. *Creating political will*: Violence against women cannot be eliminated from society without a strong political will and

commitment to positively affect women's status in society. Civil society and state should promote ideologies and policies to promote a positive image and discourse for women's empowerment to guide political parties and individual political actors in this direction. The political parties should include women in their central executive committees and mainstream gender sensitive measures and legal reforms as the major part of their party manifestos and agendas.

4. *Increased participation of women in political forums:* Women's absence or marginal presence in legislative forums can be one of the obstacles to inclusion of women's view point in law making. Their increased presence in political and legislative forums can help in expression of women's interest and view point in the debates done in these forums. The ultimate aim is to include women's voice and interest when making laws and social policies. It is necessary to take measures for enhance quota for women's reserved seats in all legislative forums and to mainstream women's equal participation in political parties, local councils, national and provincial assemblies and senate.
5. *Legal reforms:* Besides inclusion of women in formal politics and educating political actors for creating a strong political will to safe guard women's interest in law and social policy, comprehensive review of existing laws and major legal reforms are needed to make the law and legal system equally serving both genders. The new reforms for protecting women from violence are essential to curb anti-women social practices that harm women. Some of efforts done in last decades are praise worthy (Weiss 2012) but still specific laws are lacking to address the issues such as marital rapes (Shah, Nasreen, and Ali, 2010).
6. *Gender sensitization of judiciary and the law enforcing agencies:* Besides common people and political actors, the gender sensitization and consciousness rising among judiciary

and law enforcing agencies is also a measure that can help to lessen women's misery in reporting the crimes committed against them. It will also make their access and acquisition of justice from concerned institutions easy and frequent.

7. *Security of women victims*: State should establish mechanism for ensuring security of women victims who dare to report the crimes and anti women social practices done against them. Proper reporting mechanisms and security provided to women victims are essential measures to create a favorable environment that may help to encourage women to come forth and report such incidence.
8. *Rising awareness of rights and laws among women*: To make law is not sufficient. Its awareness among people to benefit from that and proper implementation are essential. In Pakistan, women (especially less educated rural women) are not aware of these laws and the protections and rights provided to them under these laws. There is a need to equip them with the knowledge of existing laws, the way to protect themselves from such crimes and their better and timely report to concerned institutions.
9. *Condemning the anti women social practices*: There is need to promote positive ideologies and condemn existing traditional and cultural practices that are harmful to women or other underprivileged groups in the country. The family, national educational system and media can be effective tools to promote these ideologies. The civil society organization should run awareness campaigns against harmful anti women social practices such as wanni, swara, dowry, honor killing, marriage with Quran, etc.
10. *Jirgahs or local decision making councils*: The local decision making councils variously named as *Jirgah* or *Panchayat* are strong influencing element within less educated especially rural societies. It is difficult to eliminate them or reduce their social

and political influence in Pakistan without increasing the educational level of people in these areas. Therefore, it is needed to formalized this type of informal political institutions and bring under the control of state operating mechanisms; such as local government to oversee and check the working and impact of these councils of different groups within the community.

### Conclusion

Women in Pakistan are ascribed a lower status than men. They suffer from several victimizing socio-cultural practices. These practices foster and give social acceptances to a variety of crimes against women. These crimes include honor killings, *watta satta*, *wanni*, *sawara*, *walwar*, dowry, exchange marriage, forced marriage, marriage with *Quran*, domestic violence, acid throwing, sexual harassment, rape, gang rape, kidnapping, murder etc. Pakistani law was also not sufficient to improve the situation in past. There were a number of discriminatory laws (e.g. hudood ordinances) that legitimized women's socio-legal victimization in the country. The paper identifies a number of reasons behind long retention of anti-women social practices and discriminatory laws. They include the patriarchal setup society from family to state, male domination, masculine ideologies interpreted into unfavorable socio-cultural practices, isolation of women in unencroachable private sphere of home, gender bias in law, judiciary and law enforcing agencies, discrepancy in reporting procedures of crime and long and confusing legal producing, and the prevailing *jirga* system. Women's lack of education along with their marginal representation in political and legislative decision making forums makes the situation worse.

The recent increase political participation of women and the consequent law amendments were identified and reviewed as harbingers of change. Pakistan has witnessed seven acts passed from the parliament to protect women from crimes like honor killings, sexual harassment, acid throwing, domestic violence along with safeguarding them from anti women social practices and victimization under zina ordinance. Despite these improvements, the paper recommends the need of more activism and efforts to protect women

from violence. The remedies identified include educating women, men and political actors to create a great political will and commitment all over the country for women's issues. Increased political participation of women, legal reforms, and gender sensitization of judiciary and law enforcing agencies is also need of time. The aim cannot be achieved without raising awareness among women regarding existing laws and condemning the existing harmful social practices. Finally, the non-state local decision making mechanisms like *jirgas* should also be brought under the control of government so that they should serve for the broader interest of all citizens irrespective of their gender.

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