

A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE FACTORS EFFECTING CRIME AGAINST WOMEN IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The paper is aimed to explore the sociological root causes of the crime against women in Pakistan. The study is based on research done with quantitative approach to data collection and analysis. The method of data collection was survey done with the help of a questionnaire. The data analysis identified following basic sociological root causes of the crime against women: 1) Patriarchy, 2) several socio-cultural practices, 3) unfavourable attitude of police, 4) customary of not reporting of crime to police, 5) insufficient laws, 6) lack of education among women and their less participation in political forums. It is observed that patriarchal structure of society through its two main features of male domination over women and women's exclusion from public sphere by segregating them in the private sphere of home makes the women vulnerable to become easy victims to crime. Several socio-cultural practices like child marriage, watta satta, wanni, walwar and swara are source to foster victimization and crime against them. Despite being faced with the crime committed against them, majority of the women avoid reporting the crime to law enforcing agencies due to fear of brining bad reputation to the family or facing exploitation in the hands of police. At the same time several laws were also considered to be insufficient to protect women in past for long. These laws were also considered having potential for victimization and crime against women in the country. It is recommended to improve the social structure and attitudes toward women in society through education and advocacy. The laws also need to be improved along with the trainings provided to law enforcing agencies for making them more gender sensitive while performing their duties.

Keywords: *Social factors, Women, Pakistan, Crime, patriarchal society*

1. Introduction

Women in Pakistan are experiencing a lower social and political status. This lower status ascribed to women also makes them easier victim to crime and victimizations. The roots of Pakistani women's lower status and the crime and violation they face can be traced in social, cultural, institutional, legal, and political structure of society. The social structure of the country is based on a "classic patriarchy" (Kandeyoti 1988). Where men dominate women in all aspect of life and women are ascribed with a lower and submissive position to men. This structure excludes women from public sphere and segregates them in the private sphere of home. Simultaneously, the cultural norms and practices are to favour men at the cost of women. Several cultural practices prevailing in society are harmful for women and their rights as human being. For instance, some of such practices deprive women of their fundamental right of the choice in marriage, mobility, and education.

This paper is focusing on the sociological roots of crimes and violation against women in Pakistan. It intends to explore people's perception regarding social structure, law and law enforcing agencies, social and cultural norms and practices, and the lack of education and political representation of women for their potential in crime against women in Pakistan. Accordingly, the paper is organized into five parts. Following this introduction, there is a literature review of relevant literature. Third part deals with the methodological aspects of this research study. Fourth part is presenting data and its analysis. It explains the each of the reason being persisting crime against women separately. Finally a brief nut shell conclusion is intended to sum up the finding s and future recommendations of the study.

2. Review of Literature

The crime and violence against women in Pakistan is a puzzling phenomenon. The available reports are showing a grim situation of the prevailing variety and intensity of crimes against women (Azhar 2012; Perveen 2013). Women are faced with several types of crime against women in the country (The Commission of inquiry for women 1997, 39). The variety of reported crimes against women in the literature includes both criminal offenses and the cultural practices resulting in victimization of women. For example, on the one hand, the reported statistics

show domestic violence, murder, kidnapping, rape, gang rape, and other crimes committed against women in the country (Azhar 2012; Perveen 2013). On the other hand, several cultural practices such as watta satta, wanni, swara, and child marriage are also seen as resulting in crime against women in the country. It is essential to explore the sociological factors or causes effecting for persistence of these crime against women.

The social structure of the social institutions in a society conditions it's overall functioning and the status of different groups of people living within it. The social structure of Pakistani society is based on patriarchy (Shaheed 1991, 135-158). In this patriarchal nature of society men are dominant over women in all aspects of social life (Johnson 1997, 5; Millett 1970, 25). Therefore, women in Pakistan are facing discrimination at all levels of the social life. This lower status of Pakistani women can be observed by reviewing their educational, political and economic status in the country.

The situation is not promising in terms of educational status of women in Pakistan. Pakistan's last census done in 1998 shows that Pakistani women's literacy ratio is 32% in contrast of men's literacy ratio as 54% (Population Census Organization 1998a: PCO hereafter). In the formal sector of education the condition is same as there are only 33% of the primary schools in the country are for girls (National Education Management Information System 2011). The school enrollment rate of girls is also low. In 1998 census, girls' school enrolment in the country is only 30% (PCO 1998a). Education is considered as the social capital for human development. But women in Pakistan are deprived or discriminated at large level in terms of education and awareness opportunities available to them. This lack of education is effecting women's victimization in the country.

The situation was long not satisfactory in terms of women's political participation in Pakistan (Syed and Tabassum 2014; Syed, Tabassum, and Afzal 2013). They were marginally represented in the parliament for long time from the year 1947 to the year 2000 (Syed and Tabassum 2014; Syed, Tabassum, and Afzal 2013). It was only 7 women in the house of 217 parliamentarians in national assembly of Pakistan, 1 woman in the 483 members of the four provincial assemblies in the

country (Asian Development Bank 2000; Human Rights Watch 1999, 26; Amnesty International 1998, 2).

Women's status is also conditioned by the prevailing socio-cultural norms and practices. Jilani and Ahmed (2004) highlighted several such harmful practices that are either acceptable or less resisted in Pakistani society such as violence within the domestic sphere, killing in the name of honour, exchange of gifts in the name of dowry at the time of marriage, watta satta or exchange marriage, wanni, early or child marriages, forced marriages, and marriage with the holy book of Quran. Dowry called Jehez in urdu is one such practice (Saheed et al. 1998, viii). It is an exchange of gifts and property at the time of marriage in the name of dowry which is culturally accepted but frequently results in violence and crime against women. Despite being harmful, it is widely prevalent in Pakistan (Gulzar et al. 2012, 784).

Similarly, the exchange marriage done in the name of Watta Satta that is also culturally common and acceptable in Pakistan at larger scale results in violence and crime against women (Jilani and Ahmad 2004, 194). Wanni and swara are cultural practices commonly reported to be happening in tribal culture of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan are done to exchange women for settling disputes among men (Abbas and Riaz 2013).

The laws formulated in past, especially during the period of so-called islamization in the Zia regime in 1980s remained as a source of victimization for women for long period (Jilani and Ahmed 2004). Just to name a few are Hudood laws (especially the Zina Ordinance) and the law of evidence. During the last decade, after improvements in the ratio of women's representation in the parliament through enhanced gender quotas, some of these laws have been amended and improved to protect women from legal victimization in the country (Weiss 2012).

Pakistani women with this poor educational and social status ascribed within the patriarchal society face any crime against them do not report or are not allowed to report it to law enforcing agencies (Andersson et al. 2010). Why the crimes done to women in Pakistan are not usually reported to law enforcing agencies? The answer is that the women victims avoid reporting due to a fear of bad reputation

and dishonor, severing family relations, risk of loss of children, and divorce (Andersson et al. 2010, 8-10). Women also avoid reporting crime done to them because they fear of exploitation in the hands of police and other law enforcing agencies if they contact these institutions (Human Rights Watch 1999; Chadbourne 1999; Weaver 2007).

The above discussion sufficiently shows that the sociological root causes of the crime against women in Pakistani society lie in the social structure of overall society and its basic institutions. It is related to weaknesses of educational, political, and legal institutional structure in Pakistan. The collection of empirical evidence and the research in this regard is essential to improve the status of women in the country.

3. Research Methodology

This paper intends to explore the sociological roots of the persisting and continuing culture of violation and crime against women in Pakistani society. This study is designed with quantitative approach to data collection and analysis. The argument in the paper is built on empirical data collected. The method of data collection was survey conducted with the help of a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire consists of 27 items and the answer categories were formulated on five point Likert scale. The questionnaires were administered with the male and female respondents randomly selected from different field of life. The total number of respondents was 140 men and women. The collected data was statistically analysed and presented in the forms of graphs and tables here.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Sociological roots of crime against women in Pakistan

The data analysis, presented in Table 1, shows that majority of the respondents are agree that all of the above mentioned reasons are valid and responsible for long persistence of crime against and victimization of women in Pakistan. It is observed that the highest number of respondents (i.e. 95%) got agree that lack of education among Pakistani women is the basic reason behind persistence of crime against and victimization of women in the country. It is followed by the reason

that mostly cases of violence and crime against women are not being reported to law enforcing agencies (e.g. police) accepted by 91% of the respondents as one explaining women's continuous victimization in Pakistan. Patriarchy or male domination is considered by 83% of the participants as a reason for women's persisting victimization in the country. Unfavourable attitude of the police towards women victims was identified by 81% respondents as element responsible for persistence of women's victimization. Similarly, socio-cultural norms and practices are agreed by more than 80% of participants as a valid reason for women's victimization in Pakistan. Women's absence from or marginal representation in law making institutions (e.g. parliament) is attested by more than 74% respondents as resulting in women's disadvantage in Pakistani society. The last but not the least, almost 69% of the respondents got agreed that insufficient Pakistani laws are playing an important role in persistence of crime against women in the country.

Table 1: Sociological roots of cause of crime against women in Pakistan (percentages)

Sociological roots of crime against women	Strongly agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Patriarchy	44	39	5	9	3
Socio-Cultural practices	13	67	5	9	6
Unfavorable attitude of police	50	31	0	12	7
Not reporting the crime to police	45	46	9	0	0
Insufficient Pakistani laws	22	47	2	29	0
Women's absence political forums	21	53	9	15	2
Lack of education among women	58	37	0	5	0

Still a significant number of respondents disagreed that insufficient laws (29% respondents), unfavourable attitude of police (19%), women's absence from parliament (17%), cultural norms (15%), patriarchy or male domination (12%), women's segregation in the private sphere of home (10%), and lack of education among women (5%) are reasons for long persistence of victimization of women in

Pakistan. More than one fourth of the respondents do not consider that Pakistani laws are insufficient to protect women from crime committed against them. Also none of the participant had such a disagreement regarding the rarity of cases of violence against women being reported to police in the country.

Besides the agreement and disagreement, a minority of research subjects were found unaware regarding each of these reasons behind women's victimization. The number of participants who were unaware in respect of any one of the reasons mentioned above was between 0 to 9%. Highest number of people (i.e. 9%) is found unaware for the impact of women's segregation at home, not reporting of crimes against women to police and women's participation in law making on long persistence of crime against women in Pakistan. While none of the respondent showed their lack of knowledge for women's lack of education for its impact on persistence of crime against and victimization of women in the country.

The sociological roots of long persisting crime against women in Pakistani society as identified in the above section with the help of data analysis need further exploration. Therefore, the following sections will further explore and discuss in detail the each root cause of crime against women in Pakistan. patriarchal structure of Pakistani society, socio-cultural practices, the reasons that prevent a woman victim from disclosing and reporting the crime and abuse done to her to law enforcing agencies, the insufficient laws and other reasons of the crime against women will be discussed below in detail.

4.1.1. Patriarchal structure of society

The two basic features of the patriarchal societies are men's domination over women in all aspect of life and women's exclusion from public sphere and their segregation the private sphere of home. The data analysis presented in Table 2 shows a large majority of 82% respondents identify male domination over women as a source of persisting culture of crime and victimization against women in Pakistan. Women's segregation in the private sphere of home was also identified by 81% respondents as responsible for persistence of women's victimization.

Table 2: Patriarchal features of the social structure as root cause of crime against women in Pakistan (percentages)

Features of patriarchal society as roots of crime against women	Strongly agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagreed
Male domination over women	44	39	5	9	3
Women's segregation in private sphere of home	39	42	9	10	0

4.1.2. Socio-cultural norms and practices leading to crime against women

Another reason for long persistence of crime against women in Pakistan is identified as the prevailing socio-cultural norms and practices that result from a male dominated feudal and tribal culture. There are several socio-cultural practices leading to crimes against women in Pakistan. The child marriage or early marriage is one such practice that is in itself a crime and also leads to several other crimes committed against women in different parts of the country. The cultural practice of early marriage or child marriage also pave way for anti women social practices like Wanni, Sawara, Watta Satta, Walwar, etc.

The data analysis, presented in Table 3, shows that a large majority of the respondents got agree that socio-cultural norms and practices like child marriage or early marriage, watta satta, walwar, wanni and swara are causing crime against Pakistani women. The highest percentage of the participant (92%) got agreed that social norm and practice of watta satta (exchange marriage) has the potential to cause crime and violence against women in the country. Following this are the two anti women social practices of early marriage and Swara (exchanging women to settle dispute or as blood money) attested by 89% of the respondents as source of crime against women. The social practice of wanni is considered by 86% participants as the cause of long persisting crimes against women in Pakistan. Walwar is identified by 80% of the respondents as a social practice resulting in crime against women in the country. In short, all the above mentioned practices were considered by a large majority of respondents (more than 80% in each case) as causing crime against Pakistani women.

Table 3: Socio-cultural practices as root cause of crime against women in Pakistan (Percentages)

Socio-cultural practices	Strongly agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No response
Child marriage/Early marriage	34	55	2	9	0	0
Watta Satta	53	39	5	2	1	0
Walwar	52	28	11	4	0	5
Wanni	51	35	6	3	0	5
Sawara	62	27	4	0	0	7

A minority of respondents disagree that these socio-cultural practices are causing crime against women in Pakistan. For example, only 9% respondents considered child marriage as not causing crime against women. Similarly, Walwar is considered by 4% respondents, and Watta Satta and wanni by 3% as not a source of crime against women. Besides agreeing and disagreeing a minority of respondents either showed their lack of knowledge or avoid respond to these questions.

It is found that women victims do not report crime committed against them to law enforcing agencies due to either fear of brining bad reputation and dishonour to the family or for avoiding further exploitation by lengthy legal procedures and police. Child marriage or early marriage, watta satta, wanni, swara, and walwar are accepted by a large majority of respondents as long preserved socio-cultural norms and practices that result in crime against women in Pakistan.

4.1.3. Causes of not reporting crime against women to law enforcing agencies

The two main reasons behind women's victimization in Pakistani society appeared from the above data analysis and discussion were lack of education among women and not reporting the cases of violence against women to law enforcing agencies (i.e. police). More than 90% of research participant attested these two reasons working behind women's persisting victimization in Pakistan.

The lack of education among women is a common and well studied phenomenon in Pakistan. The data analysis further explored the second reason that why women do not prefer to report the cases of crimes committed against them to law enforcing agencies. The two reasons for women's preference to avoid reporting violence and crime against them to police are explored here. The two reasons for which women victims do not report crime against them are: 1) due to bringing bad reputation and dishonour to their family and 2) due to lengthy legal procedure and exploitation by police.

Table 4: Reasons behind not reporting the cases of crime and violence against women to law enforcing agencies (Percentages)

Reasons for not reporting crime by women victim	Strongly Agree	Agree	Do not Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Due to fear of bringing bad reputation and dishonor to family.	60	38	2	0	0
Due to lengthy legal procedure and exploitation by police	51	47	2	0	0

The data analysis, as presented in Table 4, shows that more than 98% of respondents agree that women do not report crimes committed against them because of fear to bring bad reputation to their families or to be further victimized by the lengthy legal procedures and exploitation by police. None of the respondents disagreed with these two reasons as valid hindrances in the way of victim women's contact and report of the incident to police. Only a marginal number of respondents showed their lack of knowledge or avoid responding to the question.

4.1.4. Insufficient laws as root cause of crime against women

The insufficient laws have been serving as the root cause of the crime against women for long time in Pakistan. The data analysis presented in Table 5 also shows respondents' views regarding certain laws as insufficient thus fostering violation and crime against women in Pakistan.

Table 5: Insufficient laws as root cause of crime against women (Percentages)

Insufficient Laws	Strongly agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No response
Hudood Ordinance	29	32	20	15	2	2
Zina Ordinance	34	43	12	9	0	2

It is observed that majority of the respondents (i.e. 61%) agree that Hudood ordinance were long serving as a source to victimize women. Similarly, a large majority (i.e. 77%) also considers Zina Ordinance as a law that foster crime against women and long served as a source to victimized women.

5. Conclusion

This paper aimed to explore the sociological root causes of persisting crime against women in Pakistan. The study is designed with quantitative approach to data collection and analysis. The primary data was collected from the respondents through a survey done with the help of a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The data analysis shows that patriarchal social structure, a number of prevailing socio-cultural practices, unfavourable attitude of law enforcing agencies towards women victim, a customary of not reporting the crime done against women to law enforcing agencies, insufficient Pakistani laws, Lack of education among women and their absence from political forums are some of the major sociological factors facilitating persisting crime against women in Pakistan.

The data analysis also shows that there are several reasons for long persistence of crime against women in Pakistan. It is observed that the patriarchal structure of Pakistani society with its two main features of male domination of women and

women's segregation in the private sphere of home are considered by a large majority of respondents as facilitating features for persisting crimes against women in Pakistan. The data analysis also shows a number of prevailing socio cultural practices as potentially causing crime against women in the country. The practices discussed include child marriage, watta Satta, Walwar, Wanni, and Swara.

The two most important of the reasons are lack of education and awareness among Pakistani women and the customary to not report the crime committed against women to law enforcing agencies for the provision of punishment to perpetrator and the justice to women victim. The crime committed against women are not reported to these agencies for the sake of saving reputation within society and to avoid the lengthy and complex procedures followed by these law enforcing agencies. It is also observed that some of the laws in past are also serving to facilitate the crime and victimization of women in Pakistan.

The paper recommends that the sociological roots of the crime against women in Pakistan are multidimensional and complex. The problem can be solved to improve the protection of women in the country by extending more education and political participation to women. The social structure within family and the society needs to be improved. The attitudes towards gender can be improved through awareness raising and advocacy. Besides that the existing harmful socio-cultural practices should be condemned at level of the society from family to the institutional and state level. The laws should be improved to curb crimes in the society. The law enforcing agencies should be trained to adopt gender sensitive attitudes and processes while providing protection and justice to the people.

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