

# MEN'S PERSONAL CONSCIOUSNESS ABOUT THE CONCEPTS OF GENDER, GENDER RELATIONS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN RURAL SINDH-PAKISTAN

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## Abstract

*This research study consists of a presentation of discussion and findings about concepts, ideas of gender, gender relations, gender power, and domestic violence, as well as men's understanding of the concept of gender, differences between women and men, and their views about gender positions and relations within the family, community, and society. From a methodological point of view, this study is qualitative, and it has employed (Non-probability) purposive sampling, where N=11 males have been recruited from rural taluka Mehar, district Dadu, Sindh. Respondents' ages range from 18 to 65 years old and both married and un-married were part of this study. This study adopted a phenomenological approach, where lived experiences of men about personal consciousness, concepts of gender, views about physical and biological differences between women and men, social constructions of gender, and social construction of reproductive roles are examined. Data were analyzed using software (NVIVO. 12). Narratives of respondents are given to authenticate the data. Men's responses about women acknowledge that gender relations and gender power are unequal in rural culture, which has created the gap of gender inequality that influences domestic violence. This needs to be addressed through social psychoanalysis and needs to be highlighted at an earlier stage of its impacts on society in general and for most women.*

**Keywords:** Gender Power, Concept of Gender, Gender Relations, Domestic violence, Sindh- Pakistan.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study connects the discourses that emerge from elements of the research questions and objectives of the study show how rural men of Sindh tend to accept and perceive the gender relations, and their personal consciousness about the concepts of gender, power, and domestic violence in rural Sindh Pakistan, particularly in the form of wife abuse or domestic violence. This acceptance and tolerance are interrelated with their ideas about masculinity, their patriarchal understanding of gender relations, marriage, and the family, and their experiences of domestic violence. Men's personal views, attitudes, and responses are further influenced by multidimensional factors. Thus, rural Sindhi men's narratives show how their thoughts and behaviours are influenced by the established norms and practices about gender relations in their families, communities, and society, to justify the domestic violence in rural Sindh, Pakistan. Since the setting of domestic violence is generally the matrimonial home and within a marriage context, it is important to understand the context of marriage in Pakistan. This also entails looking at the gender relations and norms within the situation of marriage and family relations.

Bhasin (2004) stated that due to the patriarchal ideology and hierarchal system in society, gender relations are unequal; women are discriminated against and subordinated in the society. Patriarchy is the social system of society in which men are considered superior to women and thus men have more power and control over the resources and in decision-making. The patriarchy has various forms and content, which are historically constructed, and these all have different contexts at different times. Hence, these ideologies of masculinity and patriarchy even have nothing with biology rather than the power, which are the social attitudes, beliefs, traits, and these are socially prescribed, learned, and taught.

Hanmer (2000) argues that sometimes men, without changing their behaviour continue to maintain their social superior position, to achieve desired goals and outcomes as well. In this study, many

respondents feel that religious and cultural prescriptions determine gender relations and differentiate gender roles in the family and society in Pakistan, even though the national law prohibits gender discrimination. Thus, in many cases, women's positions are restricted to performing roles in the family only. Bhattacharya (2014) argued that women as brides are considered a commodity in some tribal or rural areas of Pakistan provinces like Sindh, Baluchistan, and KPK [Khyber Pakhtun khaw]. Although forced marriages, either in Islam or in Pakistani law, are illegal, yet this type of marriage is performed by giving it customary interpretations and justifications. The practice of "*Haq Bakhsraen*" (women relinquishing their rights to marry) is also prohibited in Islam and by the law of Pakistan, yet this is performed.

During the year 2014, 1261 women were kidnapped for marriage in Sindh (Dawn, 2014). These women are only victimized on the basis of their gender. Forced marriages are rampant particularly in rural Sindh, where the rural men use the legality of marriage to overpower women in order to fulfil their sexual lust. Wasif (2013) reported that in 2013, for the first time ever, a household survey was conducted of 5,000 women in Pakistan by the Rutgers World Population Foundation. In this survey, it was found that more than 77% of marriages were settled under customary practices, for instance, *vanni or swara* (custom to settle disputes and murder) *sang chatty* (a girl is given to the aggrieved party to settle an enmity between two parties) and *watta satta* (exchange of brides between two families). This survey was conducted in the various districts of Sindh and Pakistan such as Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffargarh, Jacobabad, Kashmore, Jafferabad, and Naseerabad. The survey also showed that three-quarters of the women in the survey were victims of physical violence. Data found that 64% of women had experienced physical violence by their partners/husbands and faced injuries, and out of these, 63% did not obtain medical treatment for the injuries. In the survey, 66% of women were found to have suffered sexual violence.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Following are the research objectives of this study

- To understand rural Pakistani men's perceptions about gender consciousness and relations.
- To explore rural Pakistani men's understanding, experiences, beliefs, and responses about concepts of gender.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do rural Sindhi men perceive gender consciousness and gender relations?
- How do rural Sindhi men understand experiences and responses about concepts of gender?

## LITERATURE REVIEW OF STUDY

### Marriage and Domestic Violence

Qayyum et al. (2012) find that in Sindh Pakistan, there are 77% of marriages that were contracted under customary practices, where women do not have any say or opportunity for consent to their marriages. For instance, 85% of the customary based marriages are in the form of *De Wath or Watta Satta* (exchange of brides between two families). This is when there is a marriage between a man and a woman, the family of the bride would require that a woman from the groom's family, usually the groom's sister, to be "given" to the bride's family to marry a man in that family as an exchange for the bride being "given" to the groom's family. Qayyum et al. (2012: 20-25) also find that there are high incidents of domestic violence amongst the "exchange" marriages in Sindh. Another customary practice, *pait lekhai* (pledging the foetus) also exists in the rural setting, where even before the birth of a baby, it is decided that if the baby is a girl, she will be promised to marry a certain person. When she is born and as she grows up, she will be prepared to marry the intended person and will not be allowed to marry any other person.

Hussain (1999) states that the marriage system in Pakistan is almost consanguine and during his study, it was revealed that almost 90% of marriages in Sindh are contracted between close relations. In addition, most of the consanguine marriages were associated with the belief that the religion of Islam supports having marriage with close relations. A most often quoted example is the marriage of Fatimah, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to Ali, her first cousin. However, it is often forgotten that the Prophet himself had contracted marriages with brides beyond his Qureshi family. The Pakistani rural communities also see economic or property matters as an important reason for arranging marriages between family members or for endogamous marriages (the practice of marrying within a specific class or ethnic group, social group and rejecting those from other groups as inappropriate for marriage and for other intimate personal relationships). These types of marriages are observed in order to keep family properties intact within the family and not to go to "outsiders". The dowry is also a related issue with consanguine marriage because such marriage exempts the bride from having to give dowry-related payments or gifts to the groom's family. The diverse cultures and languages of Pakistan also have influences on the pervasiveness of consanguine marriages. Many parents prefer their sons or daughters to be married to someone who has the same cultural and language backgrounds as themselves rather than having to establish and adjust to relationships with people with foreign cultures and languages. Thus, the selection of brides and grooms is still preferred by Pakistani parents. As a result of being forced to marry someone who is a stranger, despite being from the same culture and language backgrounds, conflict often occurs within the marriage and the patriarchal context of the relationship leads to domestic violence when the man is not happy with his bride. Shaikh (2016) studied couples who had degrees of blood relationship between them. He found that nearly 65% of women who were married in Pakistan had some sort of blood relationship with their husbands. More importantly, the findings of this study also suggest that those women

who have blood relationships with their husbands were more likely to report experiencing controlling behaviors and physical and emotional violence by their husbands, as compared to those who were without such relationships.

### **Religion and Domestic violence**

Abdul-Rauf (1972) states that since Islam is the religion of peace and tranquility, hence, the concept of marriage in Islam or in the Muslim community and society is based on a relationship that creates love, peace and tranquility, harmony, and affection. This also means that the religion believes that violence in a relationship is a conflicting phenomenon to the idea of marriage. The population of Pakistan and their marriage and family relationships, in general, are guided and regulated by the religion Islam either at the personal or community level. It is important to review the perspectives of Islam on marriage. In Islam, marriage is an important relationship and God emphasizes maintaining this relationship. The Holy Quran (24:32) provides:

“And marry those among you who are single . . . If they are needy, God will make them free from wanting out of His grace”.

Other verses of the Holy Quran encourage marriage and prescribe the value of marriage, as follows:

“And He it is who has created man from water; then He has made for him blood relationship and marriage relationship. And thy Lord is ever Powerful” (Holy Qur'an, 25:54).

“He has created mates for you from yourselves that you might find quiet of mind in them, and He put between you love and compassion. Surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect” (Holy Qur'an, 30:21).

Islam also enjoins a caring and harmonious relationship of marriage with emphasis on the mutual responsibilities of maintaining the physical, psychological, and social well-being of the members of the

family, and for the members of the family to be the sources of joy to each other. In Islam, marriage is strongly suggested on religious, psychological, physiological, moral, and social grounds. The Qur'an reads:

"And surely, we sent Messengers before thee and appointed for them wives and children (Holy Qur'an 33:38) and "...those who say, "Our Lord, grant us in our wives and our offspring the joy of our eyes" (Holy Qur'an, 25:74).

Moreover, there are many traditions attributed to the Holy prophet about marriage: such as:

"Marriage is my recommended custom. Whoso-ever, turns away from my recommended custom is turning away from me. Get married so you multiply" (Abdul-Rauf,1972).

Islam gives specific roles and responsibilities to women and men. Men and women are the two basic pillars of the family. The Quran gives specific responsibilities to a man in terms of maintaining the family, but this does not mean that he is the owner of his wife; rather he would have to be just with his family in all spheres of life. In another place, Allah states in the Holy Quran (2:228) that:

"And women have rights similar to the rights of men in a just manner, and the men have a degree (of advantage) over them" (Holy Qur'an, 2:228).

The roles of men and women in Islam are overlapped with each other, where a man also has to be loving, and show his tenderness to his wife in the marriage relationship:

### **Prevalence of Domestic violence: An Analysis of Global Findings**

Currently, studies on domestic violence are conducted worldwide. This study reviews material on the prevalence of domestic violence written or documented in the English language only. It is relevant to

review the literature on the pervasiveness or prevalence of domestic violence worldwide since the turn of the millennium. In 1996, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1996) conducted a National Women's Safety Survey to measure the physical or sexual assault; attempt, threat, or both. It was done by conducting a household survey in which 3600 women were interviewed. The survey found 7.1% of women had experienced physical and sexual violence in the previous 12 months and most probably at home. In South Africa, there is a prevalence of between 25% to 50% of women facing domestic violence whereas, 52% of women in Nicaragua are a victim of domestic violence by their partner in a lifetime (Baleta, 1999; Ellsberg et al., 1999). Moreover, the factors and causes that contribute to domestic violence at large include basic belief systems (which undervalues the women), acceptance of violence by a partner, women's low status, and social, civil, or war conflicts causing domestic violence (Walker, 1999).

Walby and Allen (2004) cited the data of the British Crime Survey Report (2001) that 26% of men and 45% of women aged 16-59 have been assaulted in various types of domestic violence situations in Britain. It is clear from the mentioned figures that women are most vulnerable and greatly under attack. It is also analysed that from the second wave of feminism, (over 30 years ago) the most significant element of domestic violence by men over women has been the patriarchal need for men to maintain social relations in this regard. And most of the risk factors are gendered, in which gender inequality in social relations (family, work, and economic access) is pervasive.

A study was conducted by the World Health Organisation (2005) to measure the experiences of violence against women by asking direct questions to respondents with clearly worded questions. The report indicated that violence against women is more widespread in the world scenario than it was thought or suspected. The percentage of women who had ever suffered physical violence by a male partner ranged from 13% in Japan to 61% in provincial Peru. The highest

figure of 59% being reported in Ethiopia. Sexual violence was significantly less frequent than physical violence; sexual violence was more frequent in provincial Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and urban Thailand. The percentage of women who reported sexual abuse by partners varies from 6% in Japan and Serbia and Montenegro to 59% in Ethiopia, with the majority between 10% and 50%. The percentage of women physically forced into intercourse was from 4% in Serbia and Montenegro to 46% in provincial Bangladesh and Ethiopia. Nearly one-third of Ethiopian women were being physically forced by a partner to have sex against their consent in the 12 months prior to the study. Moreover, the emotional acts of violence in all countries were ranged between 20% and 75% of women who had experienced more than once acts like insults, demeaning, and intimidations in the last 12 months. Multiple factors were identified regarding domestic violence, which was the 'individual factors', such as women empowerment issue, their education, violence history, and somehow the social support matters. The other factor was the male 'partner's factor' in which male partners' status of employment, use of drugs, alcohol, and commutation level were measured. The third one was 'immediate social context', this included the inequality between men and women in terms of autonomy, finance, mobility, attitude, and gender roles. A study conducted by United Nations (2013) with 10,000 men across six countries in Asia and the Pacific shows that overall, approximately half of men reported using physical and/or sexual violence against a female partner, which ranged from 26% to 80% across the locations. The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) conducted a comprehensive household survey in 2017, which was achieved with more than 20,000 men in nine countries of Middle East and North Africa (MENA). It found that 20%-54% of men reported ever having used physical violence against a woman or a female partner (El Feki et al., 2017).

### **Domestic violence as a Socio-Cultural and Human Rights Issue**

Hanmer (2000) argues that there are cultural and religious barriers for women that control their subordinate roles, and which restrict their responses to violence. Culture and religion are sometimes used in communities to defend practices of gender inequality. Roy (2000) argues that the family is a training pitch for men to perpetrate violence, which eventually becomes the place where people or men have their first experience of violence, especially physical violence. Furthermore, abuse of wives or violence against wives is the issue of patriarchal society, laws, and practices related to this, which inherently and clearly permit men to perpetuate the violence against women to maintain their male dominance over women. Not only this, but patriarchal society maintains and promotes the culture of legal and economic conditions and dependency, which increase the violence against women in the family. Another related reason is the unequal distribution of power, gender roles, and division of labour, and low earnings for the female in terms of wages and other social and economic vulnerability, which left the women helpless and defenceless. Nayak et al. (2003) state that socio-cultural, historical, political, religious, and economic factors in a nation influence the people's attitudes about gender roles and violence against women. Sub-culture theories uphold that within the large, pluralistic societies, complex and subgroups use to learn and develop their norms and values through different associations that highlight and defend the use of physical force. In addition, that is regarded as a 'normative' of culture altogether (DeKeseredy, & Perry, 2006).

Bent-Goodley (2005) discussed that there is the important and significant role of culture, race, and ethnicity in assessing domestic violence. In many nations where there is a culture of silence on domestic violence. Police, for example, considers reports of domestic violence as "family affairs" which would be more appropriately dealt with privately amongst family or by village/ religious elders. Wallach et al. (2010) suggest that acculturation plays a vital role in domestic

violence in many cultures or in newly flourishing or emerging societies such as immigrants. This supports that culture has more influence on the attitude of men towards domestic violence. Aurat Foundation (2012) describes domestic violence in Pakistan as a very serious societal and human rights issue. The study by Aurat Foundation suggests that domestic violence exists in Pakistan with different intensities of seriousness in the multiple communities of Pakistan. Although multiple reasons and different forms of domestic violence were found during the study, the most important thing which is discovered if it is looked at through the gender lens is an issue of "structural inequality" at home, and in the family unit.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research design implies the plan for a study. The plan involves every step taken in conducting the study: data collection, analysis, selection of empirical materials, case studies, situations, persons, etc. It enables the researcher as well to answer the research's questions and to acquiring the required outcomes within the deadlines of time and resources available. Research design is a systematic plan of conducting the research and study which leads the researcher to a process of attaining knowledge by different methods. The entire methodology of the research study, approaches, types, required samplings and data collection tools, method of data collection, and data evaluation is largely employed in this regard (Flick, 2014). The definition of a research design is a plan in which data collection and analysis is conducted through a collection of substantiation which makes it possible to answer the research questions and anything he/she has developed for the research study. Therefore, the "design must cover all the indicators and aspects of the research from every minute of the details of the selection of data, collection of data; to the data techniques of analysis" (Ragin, 1994, pp. 191).

### **Sampling Design of Research Study**

The decision for a sampling in a qualitative research study is dissimilar from the quantitative study. Sampling decision in a qualitative study is usually conducted by the virtue of the need to study the people phenomena in a severe and thoughtful way. Hence, the quantity or representativeness of the sample is less significant than how rich is the data and the sample. For instance, (Creswell, 2006) states that 5 to 25 respondents are sufficient for data collection in a qualitative study, who in a real sense have experienced the phenomenon.

### **Sampling Process**

There was a large universe from which I considered the selection of respondents. In this study, I choose two types of sampling techniques as the selection processes that are used at different levels. Thus, three types of respondents were recruited for the interview: the perpetrators, receivers, and observers. For that, purposive sampling (non-probability method) was used to select potential N=12 male respondents based on the inclusive and exclusive criteria. Purposive sampling method is also convenient considering the limitation of resources (time, financial resources, access to respondents) within which this study was completed. It has also been discussed in different works of literature that purposive sampling is ordinarily used for qualitative research compared to quantitative research that often uses probability sampling as discussed in the work of (Kuzel, 1992; Morse, 1986, 1989; Patton, 1990).

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Data Collection the data for this study is collected using semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with pre-planned key questions and interview guides with probing questions, which were applied during the inquiry of questions about domestic violence. To ensure that all key narratives are captured as data, the interviews were recorded with audio recording and transcribed. Additionally, field

notes and memos were also taken during the data collection and were analysed through NVIVO. 12, where from coding process to themes generation and analysing process has been discussed as under:

In the first stage, the researcher moves on to re-read the text, and the notes/codes, initial comments, or exploratory comments are taken from the original transcripts.

In the second phase, emergent themes that develop are taken within the exploratory comments to identify and recognise themes, which capture the best essential qualities of that interview. But not all the emergent themes were incorporated in this stage, rather, some may be discarded accordingly, depending on the scope and research questions of the study. However, for confirmation of emerging themes, the researcher went back to each transcription to re-evaluate the importance of the themes. The researcher frequently identifies themes within each section of the transcript and looks for possible/likely connections between the themes (Smith et al., 1999).

In the third stage, an attempt is made to provide an overall structure to the analysis by relating the identified themes into 'clusters' or concepts. At this stage, the aim is to arrive at a 'group of themes' and to identify 'super-ordinate categories' that suggest an ordered relationship between them (ibid).

In the fourth stage, a 'master' list or table of themes is developed. Furthermore, it is important to determine these themes in an ordered way or system which can identify the main structures and concerns which are identified by the research respondent. These are frequently produced in a table with evidence from the interviews, while using a quotation that, the analyst feels, best captures the essence of the person's thoughts, their emotions about the experience of the phenomenon being explored during the study (ibid).

In the following table demographic details of respondents who voluntarily took part in this study have been discussed in detail.

**Table No: 1. Demographic Details of Respondents**

R#	District Dadu	Pseudo Names	Age	Profession	Qualification	Income	M. Status
1	Taluka Mehar	Inam	35	Ngo worker	Master	25,000	Married
2	Taluka Mehar	Sher	60	Teacher	Master	800,000	Married
3	Taluka Mehar	Imran	23	Student	Intermediate	0	Married
4	Taluka Mehar	Lutuf	46	Astt: Professor	Master	80,000	Married
5	Taluka Mehar	Shafique	38	NGO worker	Master	50,000	Married
6	Taluka Mehar	Aslam	56	Govt: Servant	Master	22000	Married
7	Taluka Mehar	Saeed	20	Student	Under- graduate	30,000	Un- married
8	Taluka Mehar	Ikram	33	NGO worker	Master	50,000	Married
9	Taluka Mehar	Qurban	36	Un- employed	Intermediate	20000	Un- married
10	Taluka Mehar	Qalandar	65	Retired Prof	Master	50,000	Married
11	Taluka Mehar	Aamir	55	Lecturer	Master	60,000	Married

The respondents in this study are 11 males who live or come from the district Dadu and its taluka *Mehar* of Sindh, Pakistan. A summary of their demographic backgrounds is presented in the table. In the interest of confidentiality, their names are replaced with pseudonyms. The inclusion criteria age for the study were 18-65 years. The age of adulthood in Pakistan by law is 18-eighteen years old (Ghosh, 2014). Whereas the life-expectancy rate for men in Pakistan is 65.5 years (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 1998). In this study, the youngest man was 20 years old and the oldest was 65 years old. Most of the men were currently employed or self-employed with

sound income while three men had retired. One respondent was a student (undergraduate) with no reported income. Most of the respondents worked in the public sector. In this study, all respondents were Sindhi and Sindhi speaking (the language of Sindh) (Khatwani, 2016).

### **Discussion and Findings of Rural Men's Personal Consciousness about the Concept of Gender**

In this study, to understand how the respondents view the concept of gender, they were asked to describe the idea of a man or a woman. The initial description relates to the physical or biological attributes of a man or a woman.

### **Views of Men about Physical and Biological Differences Between Women and Men**

In order to understand how men react to the issue of domestic violence, it is important to understand their standpoints about gender and gender relations in society.

The identity of man and woman is defined in different perspectives and views, such as socio-cultural, biological, dressing, ornamental, and physical difference made and created by the society based on socio-cultural practices. In this study, respondents differentiated the biological and physical aspects of men and women through discussing the sexual organs and parts of the human body. In doing this, they considered mustaches to be signs of *murs manho* (real man) in rural culture and beards as a religious part for Muslims as "*Sunnah*" (a deed emulating the Prophet Muhammad is highly encouraged) for men from religious perspectives, not culturally part of society. Many of the respondents also differentiated men and women by the differences in their voices. Men's voices are considered thick and robust compared to women who have a thin voice. A summary of the rural Sindhi men's views about the biological difference between women and men is presented.

**Table No: 2. Respondents' Biological Descriptions  
about Male and Female**

<b>Description of a Men</b>	<b>Description of a Women</b>
Hard body	Soft body
Thick skin	Thin skin
Have penises	Have breasts and vaginas
Have Adam's apples	Do not have Adam's apples
Tall	Short
Have moustaches and/ or beards	Do not have moustaches and/or beards
Have thick/ hard/ robust voices	Have thin, soft voices and have screaming/ screeching and/ or charming voices.

The respondents narrated the social differences made by the society that men generally identify having a specific sexual organ, the penis, as an important description of being a man. Other recurrent physical attributes that are mentioned are having facial and bodily hair and hard or thick skin.

"Men are also supposed to be tall and strong. There are some biological and physical differences between men and women like a man has a different sexual organ (penis), and a female has a different one (vagina). A female has her chest upright on her front part of her body and a man has smooth body. A man has an Adam's apple, and a woman does not. These are the basic differences between a man and a woman". (Lutuf, 46 years old, married).

### **Social Constructions of Gender**

The men were also asked to describe traits and characteristics that are normally associated with women and men. Their views represent society's construction of gender. Respondents' construction of non-biological traits and characteristics of men and women have been

discussed in table 03.

**Table No: 3. Respondents' Construction of Non-Biological traits/Characteristics of Men and Women.**

<b>Description of Men</b>	<b>Description of Women</b>
Strong/tough	Weak
Aggressive	Emotional
Bold/brave	Coward/Shy
Powerful	Delicate
Warrior	Meek/humble/ scared/timid
Macho	Coquetry/Charming/attractive/beautiful
He speaks clearly and slowly	She speaks unclear, soft and speaks fast
He wears cap/turban to cover his head	She wears <i>Rava</i> (a sheet of cloth) to cover her head
He wears cotton <i>Shalwar Qamees</i> (open shirt and trousers).	She wears silk or velvet <i>Shalwar Qamees</i> , (little tight shirt and trousers).
He wears silver ring on the finger	She wears gold jewellery like rings finger gold ring, <i>Naath</i> , (Nose Ring) and <i>tikka</i> (jewellery on the head), bangles and anklet
Men take first step with their right foot during walking	women take first step with their left foot during walking

The men generally gave contrasting and opposite description of the traits and characteristics of women and men. In giving the descriptions there is a tendency for them to put negative attributes when describing women. For example, one respondent said:

"... [a woman's] voice is charming, beautiful and attractive. Above all, a man speaks slowly and meaningful. Whereas, a woman speaks

fast and screams, and her voice is not convincing, at all". (Ikram, 34 years old, married).

When he said that a woman's voice is charming, beautiful, and attractive, this may have been said to indicate how a woman's voice is often used to attract the opposite sex. The respondent appears to speak about men's voices with pride and positivity while talking about women's in a less favorable way. In the interviews, many of the respondents also discussed the norms of behaviour and dressing in their society. Women normally portray shyness and nervousness (this is her social and cultural characteristic) in public by hiding their face behind their *Rava* or *dupatta* (a piece of cloth used by females for covering the heads in Muslim society and rural cultures of Sindh) even while smiling. This is sometimes seen as charming and attractive to men. Men, on the other hand, are direct and bold in talking, behaving, and dealing with everyday affairs.

"She has a coquetry nature (hiding her face, smiling, covering her face with a piece of cloth or by her *Rava/dupatta*), fingering in the middle of teeth and that nature of a woman is much charming and attractive for males. Whereas, a man is direct in talking, behaving, and in everything. She is shy in talking, but man is bold in dealing with everyday affairs" (Aamir, 55 years old, married).

The men also shared their views about how women and men should walk. In their society, a woman should walk by putting forward the left foot first before the right one. Men, on the other hand, must first take a right step then the left step. Women must also walk slowly but men should walk fast.

Qurban informed that during pregnancy, even the walking steps of a woman are changed, from which the cultural and social knowing people identify that whether this woman has a male baby or female baby in her womb. When a pregnant woman takes her first step to walk with the right foot, it is predicted that she is pregnant with a boy, but if she does so with the left foot, she is pregnant with a girl.

This cultural method of determining the sex of a baby in the womb is not so frequently used now but it still exists in some communities of rural areas. According to Qurban:

"Normally women take the left step first to walk in daily routine life, and the male takes the first right step to start walking. Nevertheless, the woman changes her manner of walking during pregnancy and if she has a male baby in her womb, she takes the first right step to walk." (Qurban, 36 years old, married).

Men and women in Sindh generally observe the religious and cultural requirements for dressing. In this matter, the prescribed dressing for men and women are distinct. The covering of the head is a clear difference in the requirement for women and men. Women are expected to cover their heads based on religious requirements. Whereas many men in Sindh wear caps or head covering, this is not considered a religious requirement, according to the respondents.

"The man wears a cap, turban, or any other piece of cloth to cover his head, wears the *Shalwar Qamees* (open shirt and trousers worn in Pakistan by males), and wears shoes or flip flops. Whereas a woman wears the *Rawal Chaddar /dupatta* [a long sheet of cloth to cover her head] and a different cultural dress to cover her body" (Aslam, 56 years old, married).

The respondents believe that while men can wear jewelry (such as a ring), they should avoid wearing gold. In terms of clothes, men should also avoid wearing silk. This is considered a religious prescription. Women do not have restrictions as far as wearing gold and silk is concerned.

"Man wears only wristwatch and finger ring in ornaments (silver) but try not to wear gold and silk. This is considered as un-Islamic and women's fashion. [In the religion of Islam], the gold, silk, and makeup are *haram* (sinful) for men. A woman wears different ornaments like necklace, ear and nose rings, bangles, anklet (worn on the ankles on

any side), and head ring *tikka* (a piece of Southern jewellery, worn on the head)" (Inam, 35 years old; Married).

### **Findings and Discussions on Social Constructions of the Reproductive Roles**

Respondents narrated that in the reproductive process "a man's role is like a seed and a woman's is like *Zameen* (farm or field)" (Ikram, 34 years, married). This indicates that women give birth to babies, but men have a superior role in it, because he sows seeds in the field, and fields without seed will not be fertile. Men have a superiority complex in this regard and consider themselves superior that they sow the seed and women get pregnant from it. Many of the respondents were smiling and mocking when they talked about this, probably since they were making references to their private parts (the penises). The respondents used agricultural references and described the penis as the main source for "fertilization" where it produces "seeds". Whereas the women's private part was considered the "*zameen*" or farm/ field and secondary in importance because it passively receives the seed. Thus, they indicated that men are superior because of their role in making the women fertile and pregnant.

"Man has a penis and a woman having breasts and a vagina, a clear difference of biology. Apart from that, "*Mard nasal wadhae tho*" ["man causes the increment of the generation"]. Man is like a seed and fertilizer; he is the only cause of the increase in the generation" (Shafique 38 years old; Married).

This respondent supported the idea that both sexes have different sexual and biological organs, but the man's organ is the only cause of fertilization and producing children. Thus, men are seen as social and cultural symbols of pride and honor in society. Women, on the other hand, have the function of a child-producing machine.

## **Discussion on Men's Views about Gender Relations**

Gender relations refer to the socio-economic relationships between males and females at different levels, like family, community, society, and at the workplace.

"Men and women have the same roles, but women have lesser participation because our society is mixed of religion, culture, and law. In religion due to purdah (the veil), some communities or society does not let their women go outside, and culturally, women are bound to do household work only. However, the law allows women to perform all types of work" (Imran, 23 years old, Unmarried).

The following respondent was of the view that women's role is to do household chores and men will be breadwinners in this rural setup. Only those women who have access to resources and education and having a political background can perform their roles in the family, society, at a national level, and in socio-economic activities also. Otherwise, a woman's role is not changeable, and she should primarily remain within the confines of her home. A man is the breadwinner and he has all authority in terms of resources and finance.

"A woman must perform household work only and a man will go outside for work, he will earn and participate in all socio-economic activities. She is bound to be within the four walls of the house. Women of this society have less access to resources, social activities, and education. These are the most fundamental rights of women. Only women who have a political legacy or high education and political background can participate in political or social activities. [Smile] otherwise women only have a role at home to take care of children, family, and husband... her life is over, that is it" (Saeed, 20 years old, unmarried).

Other respondents also agree that women in rural Sindhi society are treated unfavourably and have lower status in society.

"Women have less status as compared to men in the societal matters, like politics, trade or else matters related to decision making at family and society" (Sher 60 years old, married). According to Qurban:

"It will take at least a century still to get equal gender relations of male and female in the rural setting of these areas. Still, she is not given her due rights according to law, and she is not allowed to work or mingle with men (except their own, like in agriculture), because of its cultural honour" (Qurban, 36 years old, married).

## CONCLUSION

This study has dealt with men's personal consciousness about the concept of gender, views about physical and biological differences between women and men, and social constructions of gender, social constructions of the reproductive roles. Though, men's views about gender relations, gender roles at homes, at the workplace, and all about women's position in the public sphere in Pakistan, yet her mobility and visibility in society, gender division of labor, her acceptable role outside the home such as in agricultural work are thoroughly analyzed in view of narratives of respondents. Women have less status as compared to men in societal matters, like politics, trade, or other matters related to decision making at family and society. In this study, respondents differentiated the biological and physical aspects of men and women through discussing the sexual organs and parts of the human body. In doing this, they considered mustaches to be signs of *murs manho* (real man) in rural culture and beards as a religious part for Muslims as "Sunnah" (a deed emulating the Prophet Muhammad is highly encouraged) for men from religious perspectives, not culturally part of society.

The views and beliefs of men about leadership and decision making in rural Sindh are discussed. Nevertheless, men's views about gender relations are very conservative, different, and traditional as well. This was also painstaking that it will take a long time still to get the equal gender relations of male and female. Data obtained from narrations

of respondents also dealt with men's personal consciousness about the concept of gender, views about physical and biological differences between women and men, and social constructions of gender like [a woman's] voice is charming, beautiful, and attractive. Men are also supposed to be tall and strong and a man has a different sexual organ (penis), and a female has a different one (vagina). A female has her chest upright on her front part of her body and a man has smooth body. Men have an [Adam's apple] while women do not have. Basic biological differences between a man and a woman are told by the respondents in narration forms in gender differentiating by the rural indigenous people. Such as a man speaks slowly and meaningfully and a woman speaks fast, screams, and her voice is not convincing at all. Social constructions of the reproductive roles, for instance, man thinks that he has a penis and a woman having breasts and a vagina, a clear difference of biology. indicates that, "*Mard nasal wadhae tho*" ["man causes the increment of generation"]. Man is like a seed and fertilizer; he is the only cause of the increase in the generation. However, men's views about gender relations, gender roles at homes and the workplace, and all about women's position in the public sphere in Pakistan, her mobility and visibility in society, gender division of labor, her acceptable role outside the home such as in agricultural work and gender division of labor at the workplace are thoroughly analyzed in view of narratives of respondents. Moreover, the views and beliefs of men about leadership and decision making, in rural Sindh are discussed perfectly. However, men's views about gender relations are very conservative and different where women in rural settings have less status as compared to men in societal matters, like politics, trade, and other decision making at family and society. From the narratives of respondents, it is very clear that this will take at least a century still to get the equal gender relations of male and female in rural setting of these areas. Until she is not given her due rights according to law, it was also painstakingly clear that it will take a long time still to get the equal gender relations of male and female

(like marriage and so on), which directly or indirectly influence domestic violence in general.

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