



## Violence against Women: A case of Sindhi Press

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### Abstract

This study aims to identify the cases and nature of violence perpetrated against women to communicate information to the international community for creating a supportive environment and mobilizing social pressure to help end violence against women in Sindh. This analysis covers all cases reported for Sindh province, in major Sindhi Daily newspapers 'Kawish and Awami Awaz' in the year 2016. Findings show that out of the 858 cases reported most of the cases were of murders, 228 cases others included 199 abductions, 157 honour killings, 108 rapes and 166 suicides. The weapon mostly used (in 60-70% of the cases) was the rifle or gun, followed by axe. The findings also provide support for the policy/law-making and institutional mechanism so that a strict implementation could be made in Pakistan to end violence against women.

**Keyword:** *Women Violence, Hudood, Pakistan, Sindh, Rape and Zinna*

### Introduction

South Asia, the geographical location of Pakistan is considered as a strategic crossroads, bordering Iran, China, India and Afghanistan. Concerning relations with neighboring countries, India and Afghanistan possess bitter consequences towards domestic and foreign politics. The continuing controversy over ethnic, and imbalance of power in the region. Pakistan has a population of approximately 203 million {95% Muslims} tension could be seen at borders by countries, due to the religious, (Esposito, 2016. pp.363 & 369). The 2017 Census of Pakistan refers to a population of 47.89.4 million of Sindh province (Census

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Report, 2017) consisting of 29 districts in Sindh province ([www.sindh.gov.pk](http://www.sindh.gov.pk)). However, religious minorities of Hindus, Christians, Buddhists & Sikhs are also living in Sind Province are living with peace and harmony.

### **Literature Review**

Humans are victimized by violence inflicted by fellow humans regardless of gender; however, women are most vulnerable to violence. In a male-dominated(patriarchal?) society, violence against women becomes a predictable reality of their lives, which is perpetuated and supported by the family to the state level (Khawar & Shaheed, 1989).

Tahira S. Khan, in her well-researched book, mentions that “...the discrepancy in public and private life sphere in Pakistan has manifested in increased gender-based violence against women; one form of such violence is honor related...local and global market forces have shaped, reshaped and ‘de-shaped’ Pakistan social and political institutions...contradictory attitude of family towards male and female sexuality, and dual societal standards in judging male and female conduct are responsible for the persistence of honor-related violence...” (Khan, 2006).

In 1985 a report published on the Status of Women, during the regime of General Zia, President of Pakistan, concluded that ‘...women in Pakistan were treated as possessions rather than self-reliant, self-regulating humans. They are bought, sold, beaten, mutilated and even killed with impunity and social approval. They are dispossessed and disinherited despite legal safeguards and the vast majority are made to work for as long as 16 to 18 hours a day without payment’ the average rural woman

of Pakistan is born in near-slavery, leads a life of drudgery and dies invariably in oblivion' (Government of Pakistan, 1986).

From birth, the life of average Pakistani woman is characterized by her economic, cultural, social and political subordination. Gender discrimination is commonly seen in Pakistan and women are the high suffering segment of society (Khan, 2006).

In light of this history, it is evident that in Pakistan violence against women is prevailing in several forms. Form of violence includes but not restricted to mental, emotional and physical abuse. Hundreds of Rape cases are being reported in media daily. In 2015, a total of 706 cases were reported by the press, out of which 55% of victims were minors and more than half of these cases involved gang-rapes (Oxfam, 2014).

According to a report by Oxfam, 80 percent of the women in Pakistan experience violence within their homes. Despite the fact that many incidents of "honor killing' are not reported, in 2002, more than 450 Pakistani women or girls were killed by relatives in so-called 'honor killings', and at least as many were raped (Oxfam, 2014). Furthermore, lots of inhuman customary acts are also practiced like; marriage with Quran, bartering girls to settle disputes, and murder of women on the basis of honor called honor killing (Khan, 2006).

In the rural areas of Pakistan, society consists of patriarchal, tribal and feudal. Hence, it is observed as one of the contributing factors in violence against women.

Federal Minister for Postal Services, Senator Israrullah Zehri defended the barbaric and inhuman crime of burying

women alive as “traditional custom” because they wanted to marry on their wish. Mir Hazar Khan Bijarani, Minister for Education, headed a Jirga which decided to give as compensation five little girls (aged 2-5 years) to settle a feud between two warring tribes (The News International, 2008). “We have seen fight for human rights and civil liberties all our lives, but wonder what sort of human rights are being claimed by these girls in jeans” said a senator. (Bilour, 1999). The discrimination is not only seen in the society but the policies and rules also discriminated against women in Pakistan (HRCP, 2007).

The Hadood Ordinance, promulgated by General Zia in 1979, seeks to define and reinforce the notion of a “pure and chase” This law, religion, and patriarchy interconnected and drew their coercive power through the state. The result was a series of retrogressive laws designed to curb the rights of women (Khan, 2001).

With the passage of time causes of suicide and attempted suicide increased from 3422 in 2015 to 5348 in 2016 (including men and women) country-wide. A 46.5% increase was seen in a given period. The three key causes for these cases in 2015 were: 1) Admonishment 2) Domestic Problems, and 3) Unemployment. The method used was what is most readily available. It is also viewed that people from lower classes who predominantly commit suicide due to economic and social burdens by using pesticides.

‘Honor killings’ and domestic violence including maiming and harmful traditional practices continue in Pakistan (Jehangir & Jilani 1990).

**Objectives**

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To identify types of violence perpetuated against women in Sindh province of Pakistan.
2. To determine motives of violence against women
3. To know the relationship of accused with victim and type of weapon / method used to commit crime/violence
4. To explore methods used in attempting suicide by women and reasons behind it.
5. To determine the reasons/motives of honour killing

**Research Questions**

**RQ 1.** Which types of violence perpetuated against women in Sindh province of Pakistan?

**RQ 2.** What are motives of violence against women?

**RQ 3.** Which type of relationship of accused with victim?

**RQ 4.** What kind of type of weapon / method used to commit crime/violence?

**RQ 5.** Which methods used in attempting suicide by women and reasons behind it?

**RQ 6.** What are the reasons/motives behind honor killing?

**Methodology**

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives of the study, a methodological approach to the use of newspapers was decided. All cases of violence against women reported in the main Sindhi print media for 2016 were sorted out under different categories. Many of the cases of violence against women do not get registered at the police stations. But due to the strong reporting network of the newspapers in all the big and small cities of the province,

seldom a case is missed. To ensure that the data is comprehensive, complete, and reliable, two major Sindhi Daily were chosen.

Two daily newspapers were selected based on the largest circulation and read. Moreover, the credibility of the information, an active and extensive network of reporters in the area of study, was ensured. These newspapers are printed in the local language (Sindhi) of the Sindh province of Pakistan.

Details of selected newspapers are:

- Daily Kawish ([www.thekawish.com](http://www.thekawish.com)). It has a daily circulation of 1,00,000 hard printed copies.
- Daily Awami Awaz ([www.awamiawaz.com](http://www.awamiawaz.com)). It has the daily circulation of 50,000 hard printed copies.

The data was collected from the printed hard copies of both newspapers of their issues published from 1st January 2016 to 31st December 2016. To scrutinize the everyday hard print copies the newspapers and collate the data of the reported cases of violence against women, experienced editors/journalists were recruited who already had the relevant experience. They were trained by the researcher for a full-day hands-on workshop and filling the data on the designed tool for data collection. Thus, all the cases of violence against women reported in all issues of mentioned newspapers were sorted out and collated in that designed format for the purpose. The format was transliterated in the local language so that it could be filled out easily with the required data.

Five major types of violence i.e. Murder, Kidnapping, Rape, Honour Killing and Suicide were identified. The cases of violence against women for the above five categories were filled

in related columns of format. The data thus collected was encoded and analyzed on SPSS and MS Office. Moreover, for reliability & validity purposes, the data was also validated. Besides, research made efforts to verify the data with information and records from a credible NGO, Aurat (Women) Foundation, Pakistan for the same period, i.e. the year 2016.

### **Operational Definitions**

#### ***Murder:***

Murder is the unlawful and malicious or premeditated killing of one human being by another; also any killing done while committing some other felony, as rape or robbery (Siegel, 2010). 'Intentional homicide (the taking of another person's life), without legal justification or provocation' (Khan, 2001)

#### ***Kidnapping***

Kidnapping is the crime of seizing, confining, abducting, or carrying away a person by force or fraud, often to subject him or her to involuntary servitude, in an attempt to demand a ransom, or in furtherance of another crime (Siegel, 2010).

Encyclopaedia Americana defines kidnapping as the crime of 'stealing a person' and carrying him away. Sometimes the ransom demanded is not money but political extortion, to draw attention to a cause or to demand the release of political or other prisoners (Encyclopaedia Americana).

#### ***Honor Killings***

'Honour Killing' means 'killing to reclaim honour' (Lippmann, McConville, & Yerushalmi, 1988). These killings result from the perception that defense of honor justifies killing a person whose behaviour dishonours their clan or family (Human Rights Watch, 2001). In some parts of Pakistan it is also called Karo Kari (literally:

blackened man, blackened women). Pakistan is one of the countries where the incidents of honor killings are among the highest in the contemporary world (Jafri, 2008).

### ***Rape***

Rape is any form of sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, and oral) or other sexual contact forced by one person upon another using physical force, threat, deception, or, coercion (Blair, 2007). Rape is form of violence rather than sex (Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1983).

Adultery is a violation of the marital contract and one of the major sins in Islam.

Qur'anic verses regarding adultery include (Ali 1938):

“The woman and the man. Guilty of fornication.  
Flog each of them. With a hundred stripes” (Quran 24:2)

"Do not go near to adultery. Surely it is a shameful deed and evil, opening roads (to other evils)" (Quran 17:32)

"Say, 'Verily, my Lord has prohibited the shameful deeds, be it open or secret, sins and trespasses against the truth and reason'" (Quran 7:33)

"Women impure are for men impure, and men impure are for women impure and women of purity are for men of purity, and men of purity are for women of purity." (Quran 24:26)

“Though strict Muslim Law prescribes severe punishments for extramarital sex, by both men and women” (Sumar & Nadvi,1988; Jabbar 2011)



*Suicide*

Suicide is taking away one's life due to any reason. Suicide is often called the by-product of depression. Before any person commits suicide, he or she actually attempts it. Moreover, suicidal ideas precede the suicidal act. Once the person decides for attempting suicide, he or she also thinks and chooses the method or way of doing it. The method of suicide depends upon the circumstances, intentions, availability of the things required for suicide and the severity of the emotional status of the person.

**Results and Findings**

The total number of 858 cases of violence against women was selected in different categories from 1st January 2016 to 31st December 2016 in the Sindh province of Pakistan. Table 1 and Figure 1 show the summarized information. As we can see the percentage of cases of murder is the highest (26.6%) among the reported cases, followed by kidnapping (23.2%), Suicide (19.3%), Honour Killing (18.3%), and Rape (12.6%) respectively. The detailed findings for these different categories are discussed below separately.

**Table 1 Categories of the violence during 2016**

<b>Category of the crime</b>	<b>Number of cases</b>
Murder	228
Kidnapping	199
Rape	108
Honour Killing	157
Suicide	166
<b>Total</b>	<b>858</b>

***Murder***

There were 228 cases of murder in the 26 districts of the Sindh province were reported in the print media. This category of the crime committed against women has the highest percentage i.e. 27%. The data were further analyzed for the three important variables: i.e. motives behind the murder, the relationship of aggressor with the victim, and weapon/methods used in the crime. Table 2 elaborates on this. It is evident from the table that the highest percentage of the murder (22%) was due to domestic conflict, followed by old enmity/vengeance, sudden anger, and promised marriages. By promised marriages is meant that when girls are born, their parents promise verbally that they will give their girl in marriage to the son of other relatives. But when the kids become an adult and reach the age of marriage, and if due to one reason or other, the verbal promise has done years before is not fulfilled, the dispute erupts which may lead to violence, if not solved amicably.

**Table 2 Motives /reasons behind the murder**

<b>Sr.</b>	<b>Motives</b>	<b>Cases</b>
1	Domestic conflict	50
2	Old enmity/vengeance	34
3	Sudden anger	25
4	Promised marriages	21
5	Accidental	6
6	Land dispute	6
7	Robbery	5
8	Matrimonial dispute	5
9	Monetary dispute	2
10	Free will marriage	2
11	Want of son child	2
12	No information	70
	<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>

The Figure 3 and 4 show that the 77% of the aggressors is the husband of the victim, followed by the relatives (28%). The weapon most used is the rifle or gun (59%) followed by ax (15%) and strangulation (13%). It may be noted that rifle or gun are normally kept in the rural areas not only for the purpose of safety due to insecure law and order situation but also as a symbol of dignity and power.

**Table 3 Relationship of Aggressor with Victim**

	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Brother</b>	19
<b>Father</b>	13
<b>Husband</b>	77
<b>Relatives</b>	64
<b>Son</b>	4
<b>Unknown</b>	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>

**Table 4 Weapon Used in Crime**

	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Ax</b>	29
<b>Knife</b>	18
<b>Rifle/Gun</b>	134
<b>Stick</b>	10
<b>Strangulation</b>	34
<b>Unknown</b>	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>

***Kidnapping***

Out of the total cases of 199, 196 were committed in rural areas, whereas only 3 were from urban areas. Table 3 shows the details.

The large numbers of cases committed in rural areas portray the patriarchal system where kidnapping is largely due to matrimonial and land disputes peculiar to rural society.

**Table 5 Motives/reasons behind the kidnapping**

<b>Sr.</b>	<b>Motives</b>	<b>Cases</b>
1	Promised marriages	51
2	Old enmity	30
3	Tribal feud	26
4	Revenge	20
5	To force for marriage	6
6	Land dispute	3
7	No information	63
Total		199

### **Rape**

A total of 108 women/girls were raped during the year 2016. All of them, except one, were from rural areas. Table 4 depicts the reasons, motives and the socio-demographic background of the victims. There is a separate description that clearly shows the incidents of rape solely for the attainment of sexual lust by the aggressor. But in some cases, although sexual lust is embodied in it, the act was committed to taking revenge or the victims were vulnerable to this odious act because they were very poor, orphans, or physically handicapped. There were some instances of incest and pedophile as well. Findings show that most victims of rape were the poor and orphan (28.7%).

Table 6 Motives/reasons behind rape

Sr.	Reasons/Motives	Cases
1	Being poor/Orphan	31
2	Sexual lust	21
3	Revenge	12
4	Incest	10
5	Paedophile	9
6	Handicap	5
7	Land dispute	2
8	No information	18
Total		108

***Honor Killing***

The 'honor killing' is a murder, but we have placed and analyzed it under a separate category to highlight it for the killing of a woman/girl under the specific pretext i.e. when the aggressor suspects or finds that the victim has extra/premarital relations with another man. It is based on 'as reported and printed' in the media, and as claimed by the aggressor.

Table 7 shows that it is overwhelmingly husbands (59%) who killed their wives. The women were also killed, in the name of honor by brothers (19%) and relatives (15%). Table 8 shows here, as also in the cases of the category of murder, the weapon used frequently is rifle/gun, followed by ax and strangulation respectively. The entire victims of honor killing were from rural areas.

**Table 7 Relationship of Aggressor with Victim**

	Frequency
<b>Son</b>	5
<b>Father</b>	7
<b>Relatives</b>	23
<b>Brother</b>	30
<b>Husband</b>	92
<b>Total</b>	157

**Table 8 Weapon Used in the Crime**

	Frequency
<b>Rifle/Gun</b>	88
<b>Ax</b>	38
<b>Strangulation</b>	16
<b>Knife</b>	11
<b>Stick</b>	4
<b>Total</b>	157

***Suicide***

A total of 166 women committed suicide. All the victims were from rural areas. Figure 6 & 7 shows the details for the method chosen for suicide and the reported reason for committing suicide. The major reason found was domestic conflicts. It may be recalled here that in the cases of murders, the highest percentage of cases was also due to this same reason. The other reasons included violence by husbands (15%), and poverty (9%). The most common method used (71%) was pesticides. This may be due to the easy availability of pesticides at home throughout the year because of its use in the lands for crop cultivation. The two other common

ways of committing suicide were found to be hanging and jumping in the canal or well.

**Table 9 Reasons Behind the act of Committing Suicide**

	Frequency
<b>Domestic Disputes</b>	115
<b>Violence by Husband</b>	25
<b>Poverty</b>	15
<b>Forcing to Marry</b>	3
<b>No Information</b>	8
<b>Total</b>	166

**Table 10: Methods/ways Used for the act of Suicide**

	Frequency
<b>Pesticides</b>	118
<b>Hanging</b>	18
<b>Jump into canal/well</b>	15
<b>Burn herself</b>	10
<b>Shoot herself</b>	5
<b>Total</b>	166

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study found that violence against women is not only a phenomenon particular to Pakistan. It has been affecting women world over, especially in underdeveloped countries. It is a central human right issue which is an indicator of inequality and discrimination as well as stigmatization. The analysis and the results of this study portray a horrifying scenario and state of affairs for the women in Sindh, Pakistan.

The statistics show that about 60-70% of the aggression was done by husbands, followed by relatives, brothers and

fathers. Likewise, the weapon mostly used (in 60-70% of the cases) was the rifle or gun, followed by an ax. It must be remembered here that rifle or gun is the weapon frequently available in rural areas along with the ax. It is considered a symbol of dignity, power, and prestige to possess a gun or rifle. Men prefer to carry it when they travel from one village to another or on occasions of celebrations or any other cultural event. Also, is the fact that it is kept for safety purposes. Moreover, there are not only licensed weapons, but unlicensed weapons are also kept wide by the people. The ax was the most common item available at home.

The overwhelming use of pesticides while committing suicide was because being primarily an agricultural society, the rural people have the pesticides available at their homes throughout the year. They use different types of pesticides, in liquid and granules form, for different crops cultivated in their lands. Hence, the easy availability of the source was the main reason for this method of suicide.

As mentioned by Sohail Akbar Warraich, a leading expert on law, "Successive administrations have so far only paid lip service to the issue...an attempt to introduce a resolution condemning 'honor crimes' in the Senate could not even be heard...although President General Musharaf stated his unequivocal commitment he took no concrete steps during his years of 'absolute power'..." (Warraich, 2005).

The main purpose of this study was to identify the cases and nature of violence perpetrated against women to communicate information to the international community for creating a supportive environment and mobilizing social pressure



to help end violence against women. The findings also provide support for the policymaking and institutional mechanism to end violence against women.

**Limitation and Recommendations**

This study conducted a content analysis of two daily newspapers for a period of one year. Due to financial limitations, the study could not be expanded. A study comprising over a period of three years can show more details, especially the trends over some period. Also, to verify the causes and motives behind the violence against women needed to travel widely in the province, which again needed time and monetary sources.

It is recommended that the same study would be conducted covering a period of a few years to analyze the trend of this violence against women. Further comprehensive research should be carried out that should pursue causes and consequences deeply regarding these incidents of violence; whether any legal report was lodged with police or not; whether the aggressor was arrested and proceedings carried out by the court of law or not; whether the reason or motive stated by the aggressor or as reported in the media was a real one?

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