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## Effect of Domestic Violence on Women Psychology in Pakistan

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### Abstract

Domestic violence is one of many but extensively serious problems in our society. Domestic violence traditionally in Pakistan and considered a personal and normal occurrence. At the societal level, restricted mobility for women affects their education and work/job opportunities. Violence against women is very common in Pakistan. It has been observed that psychological effects of abuses are more severe than its physical effects. The incident of abuse to women's self-esteem and puts them at number of mental disorders like depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide, drug addiction, self-esteem emotional and behavioural problems.

Purposes of the study were: to highlight the problems of women by domestic violence, to find out effects of domestic violence on women psychology. Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful violation of human rights. Survey approach was used for collecting data. 100

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women were taken through random sampling by which 50 consisted on educated ladies and 50 were uneducated women. A closed type of questionnaire on five point Likert Scale was used for educated respondent. And interview schedule was considered appropriate for uneducated women. Data was analyzed by percentage.

It was concluded that the abused women who had more psychological symptoms and lower self-esteem than the women who were not abused. Domestic violence results in women's mental suffering, for which there needs a serious psychological medical treatment in Pakistan. It was suggested that there is still need of awareness for woman education as well as the rights of women. Government and non-Government organizations may take a great step by increasing facilities for woman education and opportunities for employment. Authorities can play a vital role for the application of rules for the prevention of domestic violence.

**Key Words:** domestic violence, mental disorder, Trauma. Violence effects, abuse

## **Introduction**

Women are often in great danger in the place where they should be safest: within their families. For many, 'home' is where they face a regime of terror and violence at the hands of somebody close to them – somebody they should be able to trust. Those victimized suffer physically and psychologically. They are unable to make their own decisions, voice their own opinions or protect themselves and their children for fear of further repercussions. Their human rights are denied and their lives are stolen from them by the ever-present threat of violence.

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." ([www.unesdoc.unesco.org](http://www.unesdoc.unesco.org))

This definition refers to the gender-based roots of violence, recognizing that "violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men." It broadens the definition of violence by including

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both the physical and psychological harm done towards women, and it includes acts in both private and public life. The Declaration defines violence against women as encompassing, but not limited to, three areas: violence occurring in the family, within the general community, and violence perpetrated or condoned by the State.

Domestic violence includes violence perpetrated by intimate partners and other family members, and manifested through:

**Physical abuse** such as slapping, beating, arm twisting, stabbing, strangling, burning, choking, kicking, threats with an object or weapon, and murder. It also includes traditional practices harmful to women such as female genital mutilation and wife inheritance (the practice of passing a widow, and her property, to her dead husband's brother).

**Sexual abuse** such as coerced sex through threats, intimidation or physical force, forcing unwanted sexual acts or forcing sex with others.

**Psychological abuse** which includes behaviour that is intended to intimidate and persecute, and takes the form of threats of abandonment or abuse, confinement to the home, surveillance, threats to take away custody of the children, destruction of objects, isolation, verbal aggression and constant humiliation.

**Economic abuse** includes acts such as the denial of funds, refusal to contribute financially, denial of food and basic needs, and controlling access to health care, employment, etc.

**Gender bias** that discriminates in terms of nutrition, education and access to health care amounts to a violation of women's rights.

According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* definition, domestic violence is: "the inflicting of physical injury by one family or household member on another; also: a repeated / habitual pattern of such behaviour."

These other forms of abuse have the potential to lead to mental illness, self-harm, and even attempts at suicide. The US Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) defines domestic violence as a "pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner". The definition adds that domestic violence "can happen to anyone regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender",

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and can take many forms, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional, economic, and psychological abuse. ([www.djoser.sex-treffit.info](http://www.djoser.sex-treffit.info)).

The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service in the United Kingdom in its "Domestic Violence Policy" uses domestic violence to refer to a range of violent and abusive behaviours, defining it as:

Patterns of behaviour characterised by the misuse of power and control by one person over another who are or have been in an intimate relationship. It can occur in mixed gender relationships and same gender relationships and has profound consequences for the lives of children, individuals, families and communities. It may be physical, sexual, emotional and/or psychological. The latter may include intimidation, harassment, damage to property, threats and financial abuses.

(<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com>)

### **Physical Violence Effects**

Bruises, broken bones, head injuries, lacerations, and internal bleeding are some of the acute effects of a domestic violence incident that require medical attention and hospitalization. Some chronic health conditions that have been linked to victims of domestic violence are arthritis, irritable bowel syndrome, chronic pain, pelvic pain, ulcers, and migraines. Victims who are pregnant during a domestic violence relationship experience greater risk of miscarriage, pre-term labor, and injury to or death of the fetus.

### **Psychological Violence Effects**

Among victims who are still living with their perpetrators high amounts of stress, fear, and anxiety are commonly reported. Depression is also common, as victims are made to feel guilty for 'provoking' the abuse and are frequently subjected to intense criticism. It is reported that 60% of victims meet the diagnostic criteria for depression, either during or after termination of the relationship, and have a greatly increased risk of suicide. In addition to depression, victims of domestic violence also commonly experience long-term anxiety and panic, and are likely to meet the diagnostic criteria for Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Panic Disorder. The most

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commonly referenced psychological effect of domestic violence is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD (as experienced by victims) is characterized by flashbacks, intrusive images, exaggerated startle response, nightmares, and avoidance of triggers that are associated with the abuse. ( [www.tutorgig.info/ed/spousal-abuse](http://www.tutorgig.info/ed/spousal-abuse))

### **Financial Violence Effects**

Once victims leave their perpetrator, they can be stunned with the reality of the extent to which the abuse has taken away their autonomy. Due to economic abuse and isolation, the victim usually has very little money of their own and few people on whom they can rely when seeking help. This has been shown to be one of the greatest obstacles facing victims of DV, and the strongest factor that can discourage them from leaving their perpetrators.

In addition to lacking financial resources, victims of DV often lack specialized skills, education, and training that are necessary to find gainful employment, and also may have several children to support.

### **Long-term Violence Effects**

Domestic violence can trigger many different responses in victims, all of which are very relevant for any professional working with a victim. Major consequences of domestic violence victimization include psychological/mental health issues and chronic physical health problems. A victim's overwhelming lack of resources can lead to homelessness and poverty.

### **Trauma**

Due to the gravity and intensity of hearing victims' stories of abuse, professionals (police, counselors, therapists, advocates, medical professionals) are at risk themselves for secondary or vicarious trauma (VT), which causes the responder to experience trauma symptoms similar to the original victim after hearing about the victim's experiences with abuse. Research has demonstrated that professionals who experience vicarious trauma show signs of exaggerated startle response, hyper vigilance, nightmares, and intrusive thoughts although they have not

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experienced a trauma personally and do not qualify for a clinical diagnosis of PTSD. Researchers concluded that although clinicians have professional training and are equipped with the necessary clinical skills to assist victims of domestic violence, they may still be personally affected by the emotional impact of hearing about a victim's traumatic experiences.

Iliffe, et al. (2000) found that there are several common initial responses that are found in clinicians who work with victims: loss of confidence in their ability to help the client, taking personal responsibility for ensuring the client's safety, and remaining supportive of the client's autonomy if they make the decision to return to their perpetrator. It has also been shown that clinicians who work with a large number of victims may alter their former perceptions of the world, and begin to doubt the basic goodness of others. Iliffe et al. found that clinicians who work with victims tend to feel less secure in the world, become "acutely aware" of power and control issues both in society and in their own personal relationships, have difficulty trusting others, and experience an increased awareness of gender-based power differences in society.

## **Burnout**

Vicarious trauma can lead directly to burnout, which is defined as "emotional exhaustion resulting from excessive demands on energy, strength, and personal resources in the work setting". The physical warning signs of burnout include headaches, fatigue, lowered immune function, and irritability. A clinician experiencing burnout may begin to lose interest in the welfare of clients, be unable to empathize or feel compassion for clients, and may even begin to feel aversion toward the client. If the clinician experiencing burnout is working with victims of domestic violence, the clinician risks causing further great harm through re-victimization of the client.

## **Cause**

There are many different theories as to the causes of domestic violence. These include psychological theories that consider personality traits and mental characteristics of the perpetrator, as well as social theories which consider external factors in the perpetrator's

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environment, such as family structure, stress, social learning. As with many phenomena regarding human experience, no single approach appears to cover all cases.

Whilst there are many theories regarding what causes one individual to act violently towards an intimate partner or family member there is also growing concern around apparent intergenerational cycles of domestic violence. In Australia, it has been identified that as many as 75% of all victims of domestic violence are children. Domestic violence services such as Sunnykids are beginning to focus their attention on children who have been exposed to domestic violence ([www.djoser.sex-treffit.info](http://www.djoser.sex-treffit.info)).

Responses that focus on children suggest that experiences throughout life influence an individuals' propensity to engage in family violence (either as a victim or as a perpetrator). Researchers supporting this theory suggest it is useful to think of three sources of domestic violence: childhood socialization, previous experiences in couple relationships during adolescence, and levels of strain in a person's current life. People who observe their parents abusing each other, or who were themselves abused may incorporate abuse into their behaviour within relationships that they establish as adults. (Kalmuss & Seltzer 1984)

## **Jealousy**

Many cases of domestic violence against women occur due to jealousy when the woman is either suspected of being unfaithful or is planning to leave the relationship. An evolutionary psychology explanation of such cases of domestic violence against women is that they represent male attempts to control female reproduction and ensure sexual exclusivity through violence or the threat of violence.

## **Resource theory**

Resource theory was suggested by William Goode (1971). Women who are most dependent on the spouse for economic well being (e.g. homemakers/housewives, women with handicaps, the unemployed), and are the primary caregiver to their children, fear the increased

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financial burden if they leave their marriage. Dependency means that they have fewer options and few resources to help them cope with or change their spouse's behavior.

Couples that share power equally experience lower incidence of conflict, and when conflict does arise, are less likely to resort to violence. If one spouse desires control and power in the relationship, the spouse may resort to abuse. This may include coercion and threats, intimidation, emotional abuse, economic abuse, isolation, making light of the situation and blaming the spouse, using children (threatening to take them away), and behaving as "master of the castle".

### **Social Stress**

Stress may be increased when a person is living in a family situation, with increased pressures. Social stresses, due to inadequate finances or other such problems in a family may further increase tensions. Violence is not always caused by stress, but may be one way that some people respond to stress. Families and couples in poverty may be more likely to experience domestic violence, due to increased stress and conflicts about finances and other aspects. Some speculate that poverty may hinder a man's ability to live up to his idea of "successful manhood", thus he fears losing honor and respect. Theory suggests that when he is unable to economically support his wife, and maintain control, he may turn to misogyny, substance abuse, and crime as ways to express masculinity.

### **Social Learning Theory**

People learn from observing and modeling after others' behavior. With positive reinforcement, the behavior continues. If one observes violent behavior, one is more likely to imitate it. If there are no negative consequences (e. g. victim accepts the violence, with submission), then the behavior will likely continue. Often, violence is transmitted from generation to generation in a cyclical manner.

### **Power and Control**

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A causalist view (medlibrary.org) of domestic violence is that “it is a strategy to gain or maintain power and control over the victim. This view is in alignment with Bancroft's "cost-benefit" theory that abuse rewards the perpetrator in ways other than, or in addition to, simply exercising power over his or her target(s). He cites evidence in support of his argument that, in most cases, abusers are quite capable of exercising control over them, but choose not to do so for various reasons. An alternative view is that abuse arises from powerlessness and externalizing/projecting this and attempting to exercise control of the victim. It is an attempt to 'gain or maintain power and control over the victim' but even in achieving this it cannot resolve the powerlessness driving it. Such behaviours have addictive aspects leading to a cycle of abuse or violence. Mutual cycles develop when each party attempts to resolve their own powerlessness in attempting to assert control.”(medlibrary.org)

### **Mental Illness**

Psychiatric disorders are sometimes associated with domestic violence, such as borderline personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, drug abuse, and alcoholism. It is estimated that at least one-third of all abusers have some type of mental illness.

### **Marital Conflict Disorder**

In these cases the emergency room or a legal authority often is the first to notify the clinician. Most importantly, marital violence "is a major risk factor for serious injury and even death and women in violent marriages are at much greater risk of being seriously injured or killed (National Advisory Council on Violence Against Women 2000)." The authors of this study add that "There is current considerable controversy over whether male-to-female marital violence is best regarded as a reflection of male psychopathology and control or whether there is an empirical base and clinical utility for conceptualizing these patterns as relational."

Recommendations for clinicians making a diagnosis of Marital Relational Disorder should include the assessment of actual or "potential" male violence as regularly as they assess

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the potential for suicide in depressed patients. Further, clinicians should not relax their vigilance after a battered wife leaves her husband, because some data suggest that the period immediately following a marital separation is the period of greatest risk for the women. Many men will stalk and batter their wives in an effort to get them to return or punish them for leaving. Initial assessments of the potential for violence in a marriage can be supplemented by standardized interviews and questionnaires, which have been reliable and valid aids in exploring marital violence more systematically. The risk of violence remains strong in a marriage in which it has been a feature in the past. Thus, treatment is essential here; the clinician cannot just wait and watch." The most urgent clinical priority is the protection of the wife because she is the one most frequently at risk, and clinicians must be aware that supporting assertiveness by a battered wife may lead to more beatings or even death.

### **Gender aspects of abuse**

Both men and women have been arrested and convicted of assaulting their partners in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships. The majority of these arrests have been men being arrested for assaulting women, though since the early-to-mid 1990s the number of women arrested has increased significantly, which is often attributed to the implementation of "Must Arrest" laws. However, the gender neutrality of the enforcement of domestic violence laws remains questionable. According to a 2004 survey in Canada, the percentages of males being physically or sexually victimized by their partners was 6 percent versus 7 percent for women.

### **Domestic Violence in Pakistan**

Domestic violence is prevalent in Pakistan in an alarming rate, in both rural areas as well as developed cities. Women are the sufferers and are subjected to physical, psychological and sexual abuse in their home by partners, in-laws and in some circumstances by their brothers and parents. In a study published in Lancet in 2002, an estimated 99% of housewives and 77% of working women in Pakistan are beaten by their husbands. HRCP's

Annual Report of 2004 presented the percentage of domestic violence in Pakistan as 65% (physical violence), and almost one third (30.4%) of sexual violence often leading to serious injuries, which required emergency medical attention. In 2005, the Domestic Violence in

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South Asia Fact Sheet brought forward that in Pakistan 32.8% respondents admitted to ever having slapped their wives and 77.1% admitted to ever engaging in a non-consensual sex with their wives. While domestic violence is prevalent across the country, the situation in Punjab is dire. The Aurat Foundation in its Annual Report of 2009 highlighted that of the 608 cases of domestic violence reported in the year, 271 occurred in Punjab, 134 in Sindh, 163 in the NWFP, 22 in Baluchistan and 18 in Islamabad. ([www.lead.org.pk](http://www.lead.org.pk))

There are many common precipitating factors which are responsible for domestic violence in Pakistan. Some example are: domestic violence against women due to daily conflicts, family-related problems, disagreements between women and men on any decision, choice preferences, conflicts of the two genders, etc. Besides this there are some distinguished factors which make women prone to domestic violence like women's low educational levels, imbalanced empowerment issues between males and females, least participations in political activities due to low empowerment, existing misconception about Islamic thoughts and traditional norms, lack of awareness about women rights, falsified beliefs, misuse of women in the name of honour justifying honour killing, low socioeconomic levels and poverty, existence of unjust traditional dowry system in the society, the common beliefs in the inherent superiority of males ignoring the women's autonomy, male dominant social structure and lack of support from the government.

It is apparent that integrated supportive services, legal intervention and redress need to be made available in situations of domestic violence. Support and help for women to rebuild and recover their lives after violence, need to be a part of the intervention strategy, including counselling, relocation, credit support and employment. In order to prevent women from domestic violence and provide them medical as well as judicial and legal support, new plans and interventional maps need to be made in the societies in collaboration with health team members, religious and societal leaders, NGOs, police department and people from other similar groups.

( <http://www.lead.org.pk>)

The table below reflects the comparative data on violence against women in the last four years with percentages of increase or decrease in their incidence.

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Number of Cases of VAW in Pakistan during January to December 2009 to January to December 2010						
Categories of Crime	Year 2008	Year 2009	Year 2010	Year 2011	Grand Total	Percentage increase/decrease in VAW cases between 2010-2011
Abduction/Kidnapping	1,784	1,987	2236	2089	8096	-6.57%
Murder	1,422	1,384	1436	1575	5817	9.68%
Domestic Violence	281	608	486	610	1985	25.51%
Suicide	599	683	633	758	2673	19.75%
Honor Killing	475	604	557	705	2341	26.57%
Rape/Gang Rape	778	928	928	827	3461	-10.88%
Sexual Assault	172	274	74	110	630	48.65%
Acid Throwing	29	53	32	44	158	37.5%
Burning	61	50	38	29	178	-23.68%
Miscellaneous	1,970	1,977	1580	1792	7319	13.42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,571</b>	<b>8,548</b>	<b>8000</b>	<b>8539</b>	<b>32658</b>	<b>6.74%</b>

Source: <http://www.af.org.pk/PDF/VAW%20Reports%20AND%20PR/PR/Press%20Release%202011%20%20English.pdf>

#### Number of FIR s registered Province-wise

FIR Status	No. of FIR registered province wise					Total	% of the total
	Punjab	Sindh	KP	Baluchistan	ICT		
<b>Registered</b>	5290	636	495	193	131	6745	78.99
<b>Not Registered</b>	193	605	100	-	13	911	10.67
<b>No. Information</b>	705	75	99	-	4	883	10.34
<b>Total</b>	<b>6188</b>	<b>1316</b>	<b>694</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>8539</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: : <http://www.af.org.pk/PDF/VAW%20Reports%20AND%20PR/PR/Press%20Release%202011%20%20English.pdf>

#### Objectives

Objectives of the study were:

- 1- To highlight the problems of women by domestic violence,
- 2- To find out effects of domestic violence on women psychology

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## Methodology

It was a descriptive research so survey approach was used for collecting data.

## Population and Sample

Population was taken from district Mandi Bahauddin and district DG Khan. 100 women were taken through random sampling by which 50 consisted on educated ladies and 50 were uneducated women.

## Research Tool and Analysis of Data

A closed type of questionnaire on five point Likert Scale was used for educated respondent. And interview schedule was considered appropriate for uneducated women. Data was analysed by percentage.

**Table:**

Statements		SA	A	UC	DA	SDA
		5	4	3	2	1
1	Domestic violence against women is the most shameful violence of human rights	21%	34%	19%	13%	13%
2	There is equality of rights for men and women in Pakistani society	21%	25%	24%	22%	8%
3	Women of Pakistani society know about their rights in society.	12%	22%	21%	32%	13%
4	Social taboos and traditional law are always use against the women.	22%	37%	12%	28%	12%
5	Pakistani law protects women against domestic violence	11%	12%	39%	19%	19%
6	Societal values and norms protects women rights against domestic violence	17%	21%	22%	23%	17%
7	Victim of domestic violence bears intimidations and threats.	25%	26%	15%	23%	11%
8	Victim of domestic violence bears harassment	25%	28%	17%	15%	15%

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9	Women suffer damage of property.	25%	27%	16%	17%	15%
10	Women become victim of financial abuse.	26%	20%	18%	17%	19%
11	Domestic violence effects on the physical health of women	24%	23%	17%	18%	18%
12	Domestic violence effects on the psychological health of women	32%	26%	14%	13%	15%
13	Victim of domestic violence lives under high depression and anxiety	27%	21%	19%	17%	16%
14	Victim of domestic violence have lower confidence then women who are not abused	31%	21%	25%	14%	09%
15	Victim of domestic violence have lower self- esteem confidence then women who are not abused	25%	24%	19%	17%	15%
16	Victim of domestic violence feels danger in family and home	26%	27%	24%	13%	10%

5-SA: strongly agreed, 4-A : agreed, 3- UC: uncertain, 2- DA: disagreed, 1- SDA: strongly disagreed

## FINDINGS

- 1- Majority of respondents are agreed that Domestic violence against women is the most shameful violence of human rights. 55% respondents agreed and 26 % respondents are disagreed the statement.
- 2- “There is equality of rights for men and women in Pakistani society” , 46% respondents are agreed and 30% respondents disagreed this statement.
- 3- 45% respondents disagreed that Women of Pakistani society know about their rights in society, and only 34% agreed.
- 4- Majority of respondents are agreed that Social taboos and traditional law are always use against the women. 59% agreed and 40% disagreed.

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- 5- "Pakistani law protects women against domestic violence". There is mix type of opinions are found in the response of this statement. 39% respondents are uncertain, 38% disagreed and 23% are agreed with this statement.
- 6- 40% respondents are disagreed that social values and norms protect women rights against domestic violence however 38% are agreed.
- 7- Majority of respondents are agreed that Victim of domestic violence bears intimidations and threats. 51% respondents are agreed and 34% are disagreed.
- 8- Maximum respondents are agreed that Victim of domestic violence bears harassment. 53% are agreed and 30% are disagreed the statement.
- 9- Many of respondents are agreed that Women suffer damage of property. 52% are agreed and 32% are disagreed.
- 10- 46% are agreed and 38% are sidagreed with the statement, "Women become victim of financial abuse".
- 11- 47% are agreed and 36% are disagreed that Domestic violence effects on the physical health of women
- 12- Majority of respondents agreed that Domestic violence effects on the psychological health of women. 58% are agreed and 28% are disagreed with this statement.
- 13- 48% respondents are agreed and 33% respondents are disagreed with the statement, "Victim of domestic violence lives under high depression and anxiety"
- 14- Many of the respondents are agreed that Victim of domestic violence have lower confidence then women who are not abused and 23% respondents are disagreed .
- 15- 49% respondents are agreed that Victim of domestic violence have lower self- esteem confidence then women who are not abused. But 32% are disagreed.



16- “Victim of domestic violence feels danger in family and home” in the response of this statement we found only 33% respondents are agreed , 23% respondents are disagreed and 24% are uncertain.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Violence against women is a serious violation of women’s human rights. It is concluded in this paper that

1-Domestic Violence against women is the most shameful violence of human rights.

2- There is not equality of rights for men and women in Pakistani society.

3- Women of Pakistani society are not aware of their rights in society.

4- Social taboos and traditional law are always use against the women.

5- It is uncertain that Pakistani law really can protect women against domestic violence

6- There is no significant difference of opinion that societal values and norms protects

Women’s rights against domestic violence

7- Victim of domestic violence bears intimidations , threats and harassment.

8- Women suffer damage of property.

9- Women become victim of financial abuse.

10- Domestic violence effects on the physical health and psychological health of women.

11- Victim of domestic violence lives under high depression and anxiety and have lower confidence and self- esteem confidence than other women.

12- Victim of domestic violence feels danger in family and home

13- Most of the respondents are agreed Victim of domestic violence lives under high depression and anxiety



- 14- Majority of the respondents are agreed Victim of domestic violence have lower confidence then women who are not abused
- 15- Majority of the respondents are agreed Victim of domestic violence have lower self-esteem confidence then women who are not abused
- 16- Most of the respondents are agreed Victim of domestic violence feels danger in family and home

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1- There is still need of awareness for woman education as well as the rights of women.
- 2- Government and non-Government organizations may take a great step by increasing facilities for woman education and opportunities for employment.
- 3- Authorities can play a vital role for the application of rules for the prevention of domestic violence
- 4- Government should develop mechanism for strict implementation of human rights in the country.
- 5- People of Pakistan may be educated against the domestic violence in the society.
- 6- Government may develop much better strategies and law for the protection of women.
- 7- NGOs and other welfare committees may launch the public sport programs.
- 8- People should be educated to utilize their potential in productive activities.

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