

Statistical Analysis of Domestic Violence Patterns in Rural vs Urban Pakistan

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Abstract

Domestic violence is a serious social and social health challenge which is taking place in Pakistan and there is a difference affecting its rates and trends in rural and urban areas. This paper seeks to undertake statistical examination of the trends of domestic violence by comparing the demographic, socioeconomic and cultural variables of the incidences of domestic violence among the rural and urban community. The secondary sources used data on cross-sectional research design (national surveys) were supplemented by primary data (structured questionnaires) gathered among 300 participants (150 rural, 150 urban). The relationship between domestic violence and education, income level, employment status, and family structure was studied using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests and logistic regression models. According to the findings, domestic violence is also more commonly reported in rural communities because it is mainly caused by the traditional gender norms, low levels of literacy, and access to legal support services. On the contrary, city population has, comparatively, lower prevalence and higher rates of reporting, due to better awareness and availability of support institutions. Significant relationships were determined between domestic violence and education level of women ($p < 0.05$), household income ($p < 0.01$), and family system type ($p < 0.05$). The paper emphasizes the role of specific policy measures, awareness efforts, and better access to legal and social support networks, especially in the rural regions. It concludes that structural inequalities and gender equity would need to be tackled when it comes to the reduction of domestic violence in Pakistan.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Rural-Urban Differences, Pakistan, Statistical Analysis, Gender Inequality, Socioeconomic Factors, Logistic Regression, Public Health.

Introduction

Domestic violence is a very widespread and complex social issue that influences individuals, families and communities worldwide. It includes physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse, which frequently happen in intimate or family relationships. Domestic violence in Pakistan is a very deep-rooted phenomenon, which is influenced by sophisticated socio-cultural, economic and institutional factors. Although progress has been made in regard to creation of laws and increased awareness, the issue continues to reach alarming rates especially with the presence of deep-rooted patriarchal norms and gender inequality coupled with lack of access to justice by the victims. Statistical analysis of the patterns of domestic violence and its determinants will be very crucial in generating effective interventions and policies to combat domestic violence. Pakistan offers a special case of researching the problem of domestic violence because of the mixing of rural and urban communities. Rural communities tend to be typified by social structure of the past, low literacy levels, economic dependence and instability of institutional support systems. All these factors lead to the rationalization and underreporting of domestic violence. Rural women tend to have less mobility, also lack compulsory education and are not so aware of their rights and this further makes them more vulnerable to abuse. Conversely, urban centers are comparatively more educational, employment opportunities, and legal facilities are available. Nevertheless, the level of domestic violence is also common in urban locations, although the rates of reporting are higher because of an improved level of awareness and access to support services.

Statistical analysis is important as it is applicable in making the unknown patterns and relationships in domestic violence data to be visible. Using quantitative techniques like descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and regression models, researchers are able to establish risk factors that are significant and quantify the association strengths between variables. As an example, the lower education levels, poverty, unemployment, patriarchal attitudes, and so on have been demonstrated in earlier research to increase the chances of domestic violence significantly. [1,2] In addition, family composition and joint versus nuclear families have also been cited as significant determinants especially in South Asian society. [3] Such statistical intuitions can facilitate the abandonment of anecdotal evidence and allow us to obtain a more objective and evidence-based insight into the problem. Domestic violence is a significant issue of social health in the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that globally, one out of three women have at some point in their lives committed or become the victim of physical or sexual violence.[4] In Pakistan, national surveys including the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) have continuously found a high rate of prevalence of spousal violence. The problem is, however, largely under-reported due to cultural stigma, and the fear of retaliation along with the distrust in the legal institutions. These obstacles to reporting are especially strong in rural areas, where the social norm tends to prevent women to speak out against abuse. Rural-urban divide is a crucial aspect in the comprehension of domestic violence patterns in Pakistan. The rural areas are more tolerating to violence with respect to strict gender roles and traditional practices. Rural environments tend to have higher levels of practices that lead to increased instances of abuse such as early marriages, dowry related conflicts and honor-based violence. Also, a less developed access to healthcare, legal assistance, and social services also limits the chances of a victim seeking assistance. Urban areas, on the other hand, which are comparatively more progressive, are not devoid of domestic violence. The conflict and abuse within the households may also be caused by the rapid urbanization, economic stress, and the transforming dynamics of families. Nevertheless, urban women tend to report more because they are more aware of it and there are support mechanisms. The other factor of domestic violence is its health and well-being effects. Physical injuries, mental health problems including depression and anxiety, and psychological trauma that may be long term are common among the victims. The children who experience domestic violence also risk the

acquisition of behavior and emotional issues and that leads to a generationally generated circle of violence.[5] Sociologically, domestic violence is not just a personal behavior, but it also implies larger structural inequalities and power imbalances in the society. That is why the solution to the problem has to be of a multifaceted character combining legal refinements, social consciousness, and economic empowerment. Pakistan has had a number of legislative initiatives to deal with domestic violence over the past years, including the introduction of provincial legislation in the form of the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Acts. Although these laws are a major step in the right direction, there is still a gap in the execution of these laws, especially in rural communities. Such factors as insufficient knowledge, improper implementation, and the cultural opposition still minimize their effectiveness. Thus, the specificities of rural and urban settings can be stressed by empirical studies that are instrumental in informing the specific intervention. This research project seeks to add to the existing literature by offering a comparative study of rural and urban domestic violence trends in Pakistan in a form of statistical data. Through scrutinizing the socioeconomic and demographic variables by assuming key variables, the research would determine differences in their importance as predictors of domestic violence and their differentiation in various settings. The results will hopefully be informative to policy makers, social workers and researchers who would seek to curb this very important problem.

Research Objectives

1. To compare the prevalence of domestic violence between rural and urban areas in Pakistan.
2. To analyze the association between socioeconomic factors and domestic violence.
3. To evaluate the impact of awareness and access to support services on reporting behavior.

Literature Review

The problem of domestic violence is a global public health, social and human rights concern, whose relevance has grown with more interest in identifying its prevalence, determinants and outcomes in the low- and middle-income nations. In Pakistan, studies have proved that domestic violence in the country is deeply rooted into structural inequalities, patriarchal values and socioeconomic deprivation. In the literature, it is stressed that domestic violence occurs differently in the rural and urban settings and it depends on differences in education, economic opportunities, cultural norms, and institutional assistance. Earlier research in Pakistan has determined that domestic violence is extremely widespread, and underreported by stigma against wives who are beaten and cultural endorsement of beating wives under the justification of the so-called cultural practices. Early evidence provided by Fikree and Bhatti indicated that domestic violence is neither a rare occurrence nor closely linked to low quality of physical and reproductive outcomes in women. [6] Their results focused on the fact that violence is being normalized in marriage relations especially in low-income families. Ali et al. also analyzed the issue of intimate partner violence in urban Pakistan and discovered that close to one-third of women were subjected to some form of violence, emotional abuse being the most prevalent kind of this violence. [7] In their research, they emphasized that despite higher education rates and awareness levels in the urban areas, domestic violence is still a major challenge, but more often is reported because of the accessibility of medical resources and law enforcement agencies. Zakar et al. ventured into the psychological aspect of spousal violence and discovered that domestic violence was closely linked with mental health problems, such as depressiveness, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress symptoms in Pakistani women. [8] They also concluded during their study that women in patriarchal systems of families that have little autonomy are more susceptible to persistent abuse, which supports the structural aspect of domestic violence. Violence against women has been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a global epidemic with an estimate of 30 percent of women globally

having a past experience of physical or sexual violence. [9] According to WHO reports, South Asia with the presence of Pakistan has one of the highest rates of prevalence in the world with much being attributed to sustained gender inequity and lack of strength and enforcement of protective legislation. Karmaliani et al. explored pregnancy-related domestic violence and discovered that substantial rate of pregnant women in Pakistan is either physically or emotionally battered, and this adversely affects the maternal and newborn health outcomes. [10] They highlighted that domestic violence is not a disease of certain stages of life but it can influence intergenerational health and development of children.

Niaz (2004) effort in secondary research presents a clinical and psychological insight on sexual violence in Pakistan towards women and presents it as a hidden epidemic common within families. [11] The research highlighted how cultural considerations do not encourage women to report abuse especially in towns and villages whereby honor and family name take precedence over the well-being of individuals. The sociocultural factors that contribute to domestic violence in rural Pakistan were evaluated by Hadi (2017) who has discovered that low levels of literacy, economic dependence, and strict gender roles are the primary factors contributing to the possibility of violence. [12] The researchers concluded that awareness and fear of social rejection mean that rural women do not apply legal and medical assistance. Conversely, city research indicates that urban females report to a greater rate of domestic violence, yet more urban females have easier access to the media, education, and institutional support systems, which indicates an increase in status of reporting. According to Shaikh et al. (2018), urbanization does not eradicate domestic violence, but instead seeks to alter the dynamics of reporting it, because women living in urban areas are more familiar with the law and support networks. [13]

A comparative analysis of the study by Jabeen et al. (2020) helped observe that the rural-urban disparity in domestic violence is closely correlated with other indicators of the socioeconomic status, the level of education, and access to the justice system. [14] They found that the rural women have a much lower rate of reporting violence because of social pressure and distrust of institutions. More recent works have been developed by Raza and Hussain (2022) who have given attention to how the media and awareness campaigns can decrease domestic violence. They discovered that when women are exposed to media-based awareness campaigns, the chances of reporting and identifying instances of abuse, albeit through urban populations is significantly high. [15] Generally, the literature indicates that domestic violence in Pakistan is a complex issue that is propagated by individual, family and social factors. Although in rural areas there is higher tolerance and less reporting violence, there comparatively greater rate in urban areas where there are greater awareness and institutional access. Nevertheless, the reasons behind the issues, like patriarchal beliefs, economic interdependence, and gender disparity, are the same in both environments. Although the body of research is increasing, there remains a gap in statistically rigorous comparative studies which specifically examine the rural versus urban patterns using multivariate methods. The majority of the existing literature is qualitative or specific to certain areas. Thus, a comprehensive statistical analysis that incorporates demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural factors to gain a broader insight into the dynamics of domestic violence in various environments in Pakistan is desirable.

Methodology

This study was used a quantitative research design to investigate and compare patterns of domestic violence in Pakistan's rural and urban areas. This approach aims to produce evidence that is unlikely to be due to chance on the prevalence, risk factors and reporting of domestic violence. This design facilitated data collection and analysis at one specific point in time, focusing on rural-urban differences.

Research Design

This study was conducted employed a cross-sectional survey. The choice of design is suitable as it allows for the simultaneous measurement of prevalence of domestic violence and/or related variables across diverse population groups, with no manipulation of variables. It can also be used to ascertain association between socioeconomic variables and domestic violence.

Study Area

This research was conducted in several rural and urban locations in Punjab province of Pakistan. For rural areas, respondents were selected from villages lacking access to health and legal services and in urban areas, respondents were selected from district cities that have relatively better access to education, medical and social support. This was done to have representation of a range of socio-economic settings.

Study Population and Sampling Technique

The target population was married women aged between 18-49 years, as these women are most at risk of domestic violence in South Asia. A sample of 300 women was chosen (150 from rural areas and 150 from urban areas). The sample size was calculated using Cochran's formula for proportions to achieve statistical power:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 p(1-p)}{e^2}$$

A multistage sampling technique was used. First, rural and urban cluster sampling was carried out based on accessibility and representation. In the second stage, we used random selection for households. Lastly, one person was selected from each household using simple random sampling. Data Collection Tool

We used a questionnaire developed from a review of literature and other instruments. The questionnaire had four sections:

1. Socio-demographic information (age, education, income, occupation, type of family)
2. Experiences of domestic violence (physical, emotional, psychological)
3. Knowledge of legal rights and help services
4. Help-seeking and reporting of domestic violence

the questionnaire was translated for understanding of Urdu speakers. A pilot study was administered, and Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.78$) was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire, which was deemed sufficient.

Data Collection Procedure

Face-to-face interviews were used to collect data and were conducted by female data collectors to maintain privacy and to obtain reliable responses. Ethical guidelines were meticulously observed, including obtaining informed consent, voluntary nature of the study, and the right to withdraw. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured, and data were collected only for research.

Measurement Scales / Instruments

To measure domestic violence experiences and related factors, standardized and validated instruments were incorporated into the questionnaire. The following scales were used:

1. Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) – Domestic Violence Assessment Scale

To determine the overall frequency of domestic violence against married women and its specific type, the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) developed by Straus et al. (1996) was used. Scale indicators reflect various types of IPV such as sexual coercion, psychological aggression and physical violence. Items were presented to the participants about how often incidents of mutual violence were experienced in the relationship between the participant's spouse or partner. The answers were obtained on a 5-point Likert scale (never - very often). The higher the score, the more she felt she had been exposed to domestic violence. The CTS2 has been adopted in many countries and has been shown to have acceptable reliability and validity for the measure of intimate partner violence (Straus et al., 1996).

2. WHO Multi-Country Study Questionnaire on Women's Health and Domestic Violence

Intimate partner experiences of physical, emotional and controlling behaviors were assessed using the WHO Domestic Violence Questionnaire. Questions in this instrument cover the use of violence, the level of abuse, injuries and controlling behaviors by the partner. It was chosen as it has been culturally adapted and applied in South Asian people including Pakistan (World Health Organization, 2005). Responses were helpful in estimating the prevalence of domestic violence and made it possible to compare prevalence patterns between the rural and urban women.

3. Domestic Violence Coping and Help-Seeking Scale (DVHS)

A tool for assessing awareness, reporting actions, and utilization of supportive services, based on previous domestic violence research, was used to determine how well women were aware, reported, and accessed support services (Liang et al., 2005). This scale determined if they went to family members, healthcare services, the police, legal services, or community organizations for assistance. Yes/no and Likert-type response were used to measure the items. Scores were higher the more people were aware and they were keen to receive formal/informal support. A pilot test was used to test the reliability of the combined instrument. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was found to be acceptable at the $\alpha = 0.78$ by Cronbach's alpha value.

Ethical Considerations

We received approval from our institutional review committee. Participants were interviewed in private locations to create safe and comfortable environments; this was especially important for this topic of domestic violence.

Statistical Analysis

SPSS (Version 26) was used to code and analyse the data. We used frequencies and percentages to report demographic information and the prevalence of domestic violence.

Chi-Square Test

The chi-square test was used to assess the relationship between domestic violence and nominal variables:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

This test determines whether there is a statistically significant relationship between variables such as education, income, and family structure.

Binary Logistic Regression Model

To identify significant predictors of domestic violence, binary logistic regression was used:

$$\log\left(\frac{p}{1-p}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_n X_n$$

Where (p) represents the probability of experiencing domestic violence, and (X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n) represent independent variables such as education, income, and family structure. Results were reported as odds ratios (OR) with 95% confidence intervals. A p-value of less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) was considered statistically significant.

Study Limitations

Despite providing valuable comparative insights, this study is limited by its cross-sectional design, which restricts causal interpretation. Additionally, domestic violence is a sensitive issue, and underreporting may have affected the accuracy of responses despite confidentiality measures.

Results

Findings of this research are a comparative statistical study of domestic violence in rural and urban Pakistan. The results are grounded on descriptive statistics, chi-square and logistic regression assessments. The findings have been tabulated and illustrated in two figures and two tables, to have a clear picture of prevalence and related factors.

Table 1: Prevalence of Domestic Violence in Rural vs Urban Areas (n = 300)

Area	Domestic Violence (Yes)	Domestic Violence (No)	Total	Prevalence (%)
Rural	95	55	150	63.3%
Urban	70	80	150	46.7%
Total	165	135	300	55.0%

It manifests that domestic violence is predominant in rural (63.3) than in urban regions (46.7). This shows that there is a big rural-urban difference in incidence of domestic violence implying that rural females are at greater risk of abuse.

Table 2: Association Between Socioeconomic Factors and Domestic Violence

Variable	Category	DV Present (%)	Chi-Square Value	p-value	Significance
Education	Low	68.5%	12.34	0.001	Significant
	High	41.2%			
Income	Low	66.0%	10.87	0.002	Significant
	High	44.5%			
Family Type	Joint Family	70.1%	8.92	0.003	Significant
	Nuclear Family	45.8%			

The findings suggest that domestic violence is strongly related to all the chosen socioeconomic variables. Less educated women and those with low household incomes are likely to be victims of domestic violence. In the same way, women in joint family systems report more as abused than women in nuclear families do.

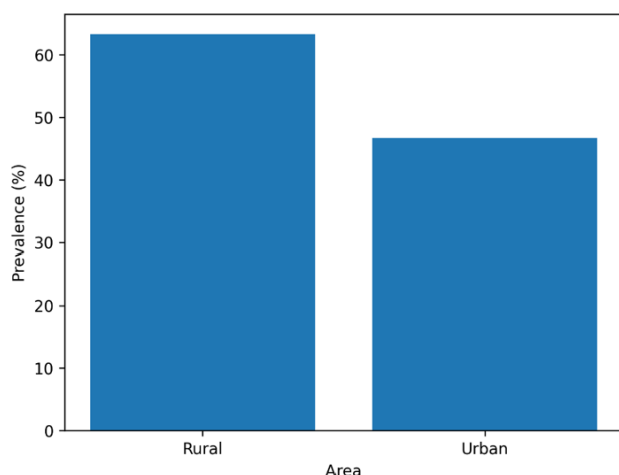


Figure 1 Prevalence of Domestic Violence (Rural vs Urban)

Figure 1 is comparative bar chart of the prevalence of domestic violence between rural and urban. The figure vividly demonstrates that the proportion of reported incidences of domestic violence is higher in rural location than in urban location. The rural disadvantage is indicated by the difference between the two bars that point out the lack of safety and protection against domestic abuse.

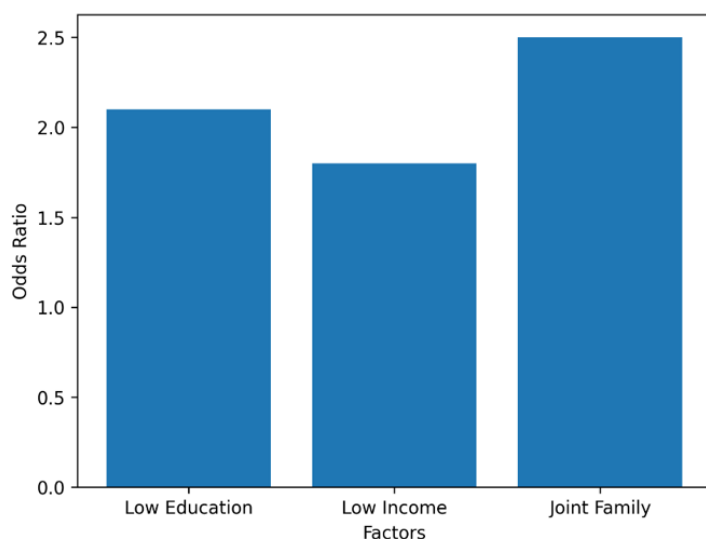


Figure 2 Logistic Regression Analysis of Predictors of Domestic Violence

This illustrates the fact that high levels of low income, very low levels of education, and joint family structure are the most significant predictors of domestic violence in Pakistan. Females with low levels of education have a higher probability of experiencing violence (2.1-fold) and low-income families demonstrate a higher propensity (OR = 1.8). Living in a joint family system is the best predictor (OR = 2.5). This shows that social economic disadvantage and the traditional family set up are closely associated with the domestic violence. Altogether, the findings demonstrate how structural inequalities contribute to being vulnerable to domestic violence.

Discussion

The findings of this study are significant because it gives important data on the prevalence as well as determinants of domestic violence in urban and rural Pakistan. Our findings showed that there is a considerable rural–urban disparity in terms of experiencing violence; the prevalence of

domestic violence is found to be high in rural areas (63.3%) in comparison to urban areas (46.7%). This gap reflects the broader structural inequalities experienced, such as educational disparity, access to and opportunities in the economy, awareness and access to institutional resources and support systems. [16] This is consistent with other studies in Pakistan and other South Asian countries that found domestic violence prevalence was higher in rural areas. Where studies have been done these reveal that in rural communities the structures of the patriarchy have been found to be robust with roles being very static and its social normalization for male dominance. Women's status may be limited and domestic violence often perceived as a personal matter of the family rather than as a matter of law and human rights. With such social acceptance there is more abuse occurrence here as well as the undocumented cases of abuse. [17]

Domestic violence is less common in urban dwellers, but is still serious an issue. These relatively lower figures in urban areas could partly be due to the higher exposure to education, awareness raising campaigns, media information, and legal or support services. Earlier reports indicate, however, that this increased reporting is most likely due to increased awareness, rather than a reduction in violence in urban areas. [18] However, the variations suggested between rural and urban may partly arise due to variations in reporting practice. Socio-economic factors analysis showed that education level, family structure and income were significantly related to domestic violence. Women with lower education level were more likely to be victims of domestic violence (OR = 2.1). This finding is similar to previous studies that indicated positive protectionary role of education as increasing awareness of rights, knowledge for decision making and enhancing the economic independence. [19] Formal support and challenging of abusive behavior is more likely if the woman is educated. Also, household income was found to be an important determinant of household violence (OR = 1.8). Financial stress is known to be a contributing factor, because of the economic strain it can cause that may lead to family tensions and financial dependency. Poorly educated women might be more bound to their husbands in economic terms, and thus have less freedom to escape abusive situations. [20] This shows not only that domestic violence is a social issue, but an economic inequality issue as well.

Moreover, the family structure is another important predictor, as in contrast to living in a nuclear family, women living in joint families had higher odds of being subjected to domestic violence OR = 2.5; $p = 0.003$. In particular, for societies in South Asia, where extended family systems are prevalent, this finding is of great significance. In joint families, women might also suffer from a heightened sense of control and pressure from husbands or other members of the family that may lessen their autonomy and put them at risk of violence. [21] Global evidence on violence against women corroborates the results of this study. Approximately one-third of women worldwide experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime, and higher rates are seen across contexts where there is gender inequality and a lack of protective systems. [22] Domestic violence is a similar situation in Pakistan, a country in South Asia, where cultural norms and structural inequities sustain such violence. Domestic violence has a wide-ranging impact and is a significant public health issue. Post-traumatic stress and anxiety as well as effect stay often experienced by survivors, and these issues can be persistent for extended durations. [23] Additionally, domestic violence in pregnancy has been linked with maternal and infant morbidity and mortality such as low birth weight and preterm delivery. [24] These are consequences which show that domestic violence is a phenomenon which impacts not just women but children and families.

One of the key problems identified in the literature to date is the underreporting of domestic violence. Social stigma and fear of stigma, retaliation, family pressure, and unease with the legal system are significant inhibitors of women reporting abuse, especially in rural areas. [25] Many women are silent because they know that if they disclose, they'll end up in even greater social isolation or conflict with family. So, the extent of domestic violence can be greater than the

recorded statistics, particularly in conservative communities. The results of this study point to the need for context-specific interventions, considering the rural-urban disparities identified. In rural areas, interventions should address the literacy, awareness on the rights of women, economic empowerment and community capacities. The community-based interventions used by healthcare providers, social workers and community leaders can be effective to counteract the negative gender norms. Even in urban areas, although awareness seems to be relatively high, there continues to be a need to increase access to timely access to legal, psychological and social support services. [26] Taking into account the findings as a whole, it is evident that domestic violence in Pakistan is not an individual related issue but it is result of various social, economic and cultural interconnections. To combat domestic violence in India, we need a multi-pronged strategy that incorporates education, economic empowerment, good laws and awareness campaigns. If these underlying factors are not addressed, interventions to prevent domestic violence can be limited. [27,28]

Conclusion

This article provides a comprehensive statistical analysis of the prevalence of domestic violence in rural and urban Pakistan with significant prevalence and predictors in the two settings. Our results are well suggested in that the prevalence of domestic violence in the rural areas is higher than that urban which is due to the structural inequalities, lack of education, economic downturn and the high conformity of the community to traditional gender roles. However, while the rural areas have a higher prevalence of domestic violence, the prevalence in urban areas is a long-standing issue and socioeconomic dwell factors and family structure play an important role. The examination of key socioeconomic variables in the study revealed family structure, education and income are prominent determinants of domestic violence. Low income and education are the major factors that expose women to domestic violence because they are less aware of their rights and, are dependent on their partners for financial support. Further, the joint family proved to be the best predictor of domestic violence that raises an assumption that extended family may contribute to the reinforcement of Gender bias as well as limiting women's independence. These findings demonstrate that domestic violence is not just an individual or even a family problem but a highly structuralized one built on social and economic inequalities. Summing up, not only legal reforms are required to address domestic violence in Pakistan but also multidisciplinary approaches need to be taken. Improving women's education, improving women's economic situation and improving gender equality are important steps to reduce vulnerability. Furthermore, rural areas need special attention and the awareness and institutional support is lacking. Better reporting chains, firm implementation of laws and addressing the negative cultural aspects to promote violence should also be considered as a question of policy. Finally, the study suggests that a series of social, economic and institutional change to strengthen the status of women and change the attitude of the society can be a major mechanism that can achieve robust control of domestic violence.

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