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Chapter 1: Introduction

I: Research Scope

New York Times journalist Nicolas Kristof shed light on a staggering reality in his book *Half the Sky*, quoting “more girls were killed in the last 50 years, precisely because they were girls, than men killed in all the wars in the 20th century. More girls are killed in this routine gendercide in any one decade than people were slaughtered in all the genocides of the 20th century” (Kristof & Dunn 2009). Gender-based violence is a worldwide human rights issue. Forms of violence against women are often justified by culture, religion and tradition; making it acceptable in many societies. Studies show (Kulwicki 2002; Nasrullah 2009) that gender violence is most prevalent in Muslim countries but victims of gender violence transcend religion and extend towards other religious minorities –including Christians and Hindus- as well. This suggests that gender violence reflects cultural norms more than religion. One of the countries where matters of honor are taken extremely seriously is Pakistan. This is the country where I was raised and grew up in. Being half Pakistani and half Dutch, living in an environment where I witnessed women struggling at the hands of a patriarchal society that marginalized them felt both familiar and normal. It also evoked many questions. I wanted women to experience the same opportunities and freedoms I knew was possible in other parts of the world - including the Netherlands - but I also knew that the reality for women in Pakistan was complex and the position of women in society hindered them from experiencing the same liberties.

In my adulthood, the curiosity and confusion I carried as a child for a woman’s role in society developed into a keen interest in studying gender roles and gender-based violence as well as becoming an advocate for gender equality. The social phenomenon or form of gender-based violence this paper investigates is that of honor-related violence with a focus on the most common form of gender violence against women in Pakistan, domestic violence. Most cases of violent attacks against women in Pakistan are related to honor. Within Pakistani society, a family’s honor is carried by the women in the family. A woman’s reputation is paramount to the honor of the entire family. Because of this cultural norm, women experience immense pressure to behave in a way that is deemed honorable and acceptable within the society they live. Unfortunately, this is not always in the control of the women themselves as even mere speculation or a rumor can damage the woman’s reputation which jeopardizes her honor and that of her family as well as puts her at risk to violence. This reality not only puts women at imminent threat but it makes them vulnerable to manipulation and abuse because of their gender. In order to fully comprehend

how a woman's life could be at risk because of something as trivial as a rumor, one must first understand how deep the roots of honor run and trace how far the tentacles of gender violence have spread within Pakistani society.

The way this paper will do this is by addressing how gender violence against women is sustained and legitimized from within society and by highlighting how these traditions violate the human rights of these women it affects. Looking beyond the cliché representation of 'barbarianism'; this paper will explain how the combination of religion, tradition, culture, the Pakistani justice system and societal expectations and pressure both effects and influences the prevalence of gender violence. These four elements -namely culture, religion, Pakistani law and gender roles- represent the most common conclusions made by scholars to explain the prevalence of gender violence in Pakistan. This paper will argue that, although these help to explain how gender violence is sustained and legitimized within Pakistani society, it does not necessarily identify the root of the problem which lies in gender inequality itself. The belief that women are second rate and men are superior is embedded deep within the culture. Although aspects of religion, culture, Pakistani law and gender roles all contribute to the prevalence of gender violence, the latter is the most instrumental in facilitating and feeding the mentality of inequality between the sexes. The gender roles that have been constructed and solidified within Pakistani society encourage inequality, which has and continues to lead to gender discrimination. If history has taught us anything, it's that any form of discrimination based on differences can (and most likely will) lead to violence. This is no different in the case of gender discrimination in Pakistan. When it comes to honor, women in Pakistan face an imminent threat of violence based firstly on their gender and secondly on their (actual or fictitious) indecent behavior. The fact that women face violent attacks in response to indecent behavior shows that gender roles set in place within Pakistani society take away women's liberty as a free agent and impose a form of male dominated social control. As long as women in Pakistan are controlled by the patriarchal nature of the society in which they live, they will not be secure and will be under imminent threat. With a total population of 185 million, 48.6 percent of which are female, that's over 92 million women and girls at risk in Pakistan (World Bank 2014).

Understanding how violence against women is sustained and legitimized within society is the first step but it will not change the reality in which women in Pakistan live. The main purpose of this research is to investigate how women in Pakistan within their context can protect themselves and ensure greater security against violence. A relatively unchallenged debate states that women's economic empowerment and independence, for instance through micro-credit, can improve the position and security of women in developing countries. Poverty is a huge problem in these regions and financial strains can exasperate violence within families. Within most of these societies, men are the bread-winners while women are

expected to manage the household and raise the children. This means that most households live off of one income. If more women get jobs and contribute financially to the home, it is understandable how one could assume that employment would give women value and make them an asset as they help improve the livelihood of the family as a whole. Having her own income gives a woman agency, a sense of empowerment and independence in that she can potentially spend her own money and make more decisions for herself. There is an assumption that if women are valued as a financial asset (then) their position within the family can be improved which may result in less violence towards them. This is the very assumption this paper investigates; in the case of Pakistan, does economic independence of the woman really ensure greater safety against gender violence? It is possible that the strictly defined gender roles may complicate the relationship between women's employment and greater security as it may be perceived as challenging the role designed for men. In order to investigate whether this assumption can be applied towards the context of Pakistan, this research will identify the relationship between the two through an explorative and argumentative approach. The ontological stance used to understand the prevalence of violence against women in Pakistan is holism as this research seeks to understand gender violence not just on the individual level but on a collective level. The question is how is gender violence institutionalized within society and embedded deep within the culture and order in which society is structured? The epistemological stance is a combination of both understanding and explanation. The analytical framework used in order to do this is structuralism, with a focus on Michel Foucault's discourse analysis. The aim is to not only understand the meaning behind gender violence but to also understand how it is socially constructed as well as how it is justified and legitimized through discourse and social structure. This paper, however, is two-fold; while the first part focuses on understanding gender violence and explaining the high prevalence of it in Pakistan, the second part dives in deeper, taking a critical argumentative turn by exploring whether economic independence of the woman can, in fact, empower her and ensure greater safety from violence.

II: Methodology

This research is based on academic literature reviews and previous studies as well as original research gathered through conducting interviews with victims of gender violence and experienced staff working for local NGOs dealing with this issue on a daily basis. The interviews were taken in May 2015 in Lahore; capital city of the Punjab province and the second largest metropolitan area in the country with a population of 8.5 million (CIA, 2015). The women and local staff interviewed were predominantly Muslim but came from various socio-economic backgrounds ranging from low to high class as well as coming from different education levels and employment status.

Key Informant Interviews

A number of interviews were conducted with experienced staff from local NGO's and human rights activists who wanted to share their story and perspective. Four interviews were held with staff members from local NGOs in Lahore working with women who have experienced domestic abuse including the founder of Institute for Peace and Secular Studies, public figure and founder of Depilex Smile Again Foundation (reconstruct acid burn victims and support them in their reintegration into society) and two staff members from Women Worker's Helpline. All interviews were held in the respective participants' work space and talks were conducted in semi-structured face to face interviews. These interviewees had ample years of experience with women who continuously struggled or were victims of domestic abuse or violent attacks (ranging from physical domestic abuse on a daily basis to extreme cases of victims being set on fire). All participants were helpful in providing an endless amount of stories and trends in cases of domestic violence but, more importantly, they displayed a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of the high prevalence of violence against women in Pakistani society. All expressed feelings of sadness and defeat, describing it as a serious perpetuating disease plaguing their society but they were also driven by a passion and hope for a better future for women in Pakistan, sharing unique insights on their perception of the root causes as well as possible solutions to improve women's safety and position in society.

Focus-Group Discussions

A total of 21 local people who had experienced gender violence both personally and indirectly in their families and communities also contributed to the research by filling in questionnaires and sharing their stories and insights on domestic abuse and violence against women in their communities. During my time in Lahore, I took over a 2 hour period Counseling Class in FGA Bible College where I gave a lecture to a class of over 25 students about the reality of violence against women in Pakistan. I also showed them

Emmy and Academy Award (2012) winning documentary Saving Face which chronicles the lives of acid-attack burn survivors who attempt to bring their perpetrators to justice and move on with their lives. The movie was followed by a discussion where students shared their experiences of domestic violence against women in their families and communities. When posed the question as to how many people in the class had witnessed or heard of domestic abuse within their families and/or communities (either directly or indirectly), the majority of the class raised their hand. A lively and honest debate followed but, due to limited time, the discussion came to an abrupt end. Because of the positive feedback and enthusiastic participation received by the students, I added another element to my research and designed a questionnaire to hear more about the student's experiences and perceptions of violence against women in their society. 8 students filled out questionnaires in both English and Urdu. Participants ranged from the age of 17 to 35 with 6 females and 1 male all coming from a Christian, middle-low income background. The other 14 participants were volunteers from a local church in Lahore. This round of participants included housewives, nurses, teachers, students, professionals and young women who were unemployed. Their ages ranged from 16 to 59, coming from Christian, middle-low income backgrounds as well. The names of these participants will remain anonymous for security reasons. All the questionnaire participants came from Christian backgrounds because all but one of the face to face interviews was conducted with interviewees from Muslim high-low income backgrounds. The impromptu questionnaire allowed my study to cover a wider reach as a representation of a religious minority or different demographic was missing from the original research.

In-depth Interviews

Landing face to face interviews with victims of domestic abuse or violent attacks proved to be very difficult as these women fear it could possibly endanger them and put them at risk to more violence, not to mention that it is still considered taboo to openly discuss such matters in Pakistani society. I was able to conduct 3 semi-structured face to face interviews (whose names will not be disclosed) with women who had suffered severe acid and fire related burn injuries and were victims of gendered violent attacks. Two of the women were married (age 45 and unknown) and were attacked by their husbands. The other was unmarried (age 25) and attacked by her paternal aunt. All the women came from Muslim, middle-low income backgrounds. I gained access to these women through the Depilex Smile Again Foundation who supported all three of these women in reconstructing their deformities and equipping them with skills to help them reintegrate into society.

Data Analysis

The two sets of interviews were audio recorded with permission from the interviewees which were later transcribed verbatim. The questionnaires that were answered in Urdu were translated into English by an (Urdu to English) translator and were used to identify trends and gain a better understanding of the perceptions and experiences of violence against women in the Christian community. One of the major obstacles faced during the literature review on this topic was the lack of previous research available from local Pakistani sources. It is possible that the taboo nature of this topic in Pakistani society, as mentioned previously, may have something to do with the limited handful amount of local studies conducted. The majority of violent cases against women are not reported and this makes it very difficult to get an accurate understanding of the full severity of the issue.

The data from the original research was used to gain more of an insider's perspective in indentifying themes related to violence against women, the context in which the abuse takes place as well as the role of the family and social and cultural norms. It must be noted that no general conclusions or assumptions can be made from the evidence gathered from this original research as it is anecdotal in nature. It has a limited scope since it is based on case material and personal accounts but it provides a voice from individuals living within Pakistani society and the context which is being researched. The personal experiences shared by Pakistani voices is significant in that it provides an insider's perspective and can be used to identify trends while giving a deeper, more comprehensive first-hand understanding of the cultural aspect of gender violence. It can reveal more insight on the relationship between the safety of a woman against gender violence and economic independence of the woman as well as indicating connections or areas where further research should be conducted in the future on a larger scale.

By speaking to women in Pakistan who have personally experienced gender violence, one can better access whether economic independence of the woman is a factor. Their voices are crucial in this narrative. By identifying shared characteristics or lack thereof, one can see whether employment of the woman makes a difference or not to the prevalence of gender violence. Both men and women who have indirectly experienced or witnessed gender violence within their families or communities can also shed light on whether economic independence is a factor in the prevalence of attacks as well as people who have worked with victims of abuse. It can be useful to reach out to employed women to see whether they still experience gender violence and whether their financial contribution ensured any greater security against abuse. It is easy to assume something if it logically makes sense in your reality, typically from a Western perspective. But the truth is the same model may not apply to a different cultural context. By identifying trends and shared characteristics -such as religion, social class, level of education and

employment- among victims of gender violence, one can truly come to a more realistic contextual conclusion on whether economic independence may influence security. The significance of identifying whether economic independence of the women can ensure greater security against violence is that it can determine whether programs and policies geared towards improving women's security in the developing world through employment can really have a sustainable impact or if it can possibly jeopardize their safety even more. In a speech addressed to the 66th General Assembly in September of 2011 Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated that "women hold up more than half the sky and represent much of the world's unrealized potential. They are the educators. They raise the children. They hold families together and increasingly drive economies. They are natural leaders. We need their full engagement ... in government, business and civil society". This couldn't hold more truth but this is an ideal that is the ultimate goal for women globally and specifically in countries such as Pakistan. In order to achieve this, it is important to understand the context in which you are trying to implement social change. When half of the country is in imminent danger towards violence, ensuring the safety of women in Pakistan must be a priority. This research aims to contribute to eventually finding sustainable solutions towards improving the security of women in Pakistan by identifying whether economic independence is one of them.

Chapter 2:

The Reality of Gender Violence in Pakistan

I. Forms of Gender Violence in Pakistan

In Pakistani society, domestic violence- particularly wife abuse- is an endemic and intractable social problem that must be addressed (Khan 2008:244). Women in Pakistan are under imminent threat to gender based violence. A local study conducted by Khan and Hussain (2008) on the perceptions and experiences of domestic violence in Pakistan, revealed that there appeared to be a consensus among locals that there was an alarming increase in violence against women with almost every second house reporting the same story (Khan 2008: 244). This particular study also found that women were often reluctant to speak openly about the abuse they were experiencing or to seek help for that matter as disclosure is seen as tarnishing the honor of the family (Khan 2008: 244). They went on to point out that many men, even those with a high level of education, perceived physical violence against women as culturally acceptable (Khan 2008: 244). When violence against women is considered culturally acceptable, it becomes drastically more difficult to keep women safe and argue against it. In fact, any form of retaliation could put the woman at even more risk as it would be received as violating male honor (Khan 2008: 244). Retaliation in this context does not just refer to a physical defense but even cases where women disagree with their husbands. One of the burn victims I spoke to (from the Depilex Smile Again Foundation, aged 45) suffers from severe facial disfigurement and scars. She shared the following with me;

My husband wanted to have a second wife and I told him I was against it...I asked him why. Why if he's already married me does he want to have another wife? I argued, I have 2 kids with you, why do you want another woman? My husband was the one who attacked me. He had a good job and was well educated but it didn't make a difference.

In this scenario, this woman was violently attacked because she verbalized that she did not want her husband to marry a second wife. This is a common reoccurring example where women are punished for expressing agency or sharing their opinions and desires. She is punished because she is not entitled to an opinion, particularly not one that goes against her "superior" husband. She went on to say that her husband beat her throughout their marriage but she never told anyone. After all she had put up with, she had had enough and couldn't tolerate another wife. She was hospitalized for months and remembered;

I kept asking my husband to bring my children to the hospital but he would say no because my appearance would frighten them. They will be scared of your horrible face,

he'd say. Even the doctors would tell him, bring the kids; you don't know how long she will live or if she will recover.

Her husband did not believe that he had done anything wrong. He felt no remorse or pity on her. In his perspective, she disobeyed and dishonored him by challenging and fighting his desire to marry a second wife. One of the participants from Khan's (2008) study mentioned above expressed her thoughts on male social control over women stating that;

This has become a *bemari* [illness] with some men. They [men] are always quick to think of their *izzat* [honour], what about a woman's *izzat*? Just like men hold their *izzat* dear, so do women. I do not understand why men's trust in their womenfolk is so...*kamzor* [fragile]... a woman has many types of responsibilities – both within the house and outdoors – many of which men don't know of or do not want to know of. Some of these responsibilities require women to go out or deal with other men. But men are so quick to label a woman's behaviour – it is sad, very sad. (Khan 2008: 244)

In the context of Pakistan, honor and violence are often related and intertwined. Most cases of violence against women can be related to honor in some way; whether a woman's behavior is perceived as dishonoring the family or dishonoring the role and expectations imposed on her.

One of the most extreme forms of gender violence in Pakistan is honor killing. Nasrullah (2009: 193) outlines the findings of a research study conducted by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) that aimed to collect data on honor killings of women in Pakistan in order to better measure the severity of it. Nasrullah explains that violence against women is not just a human rights issue but a public health concern as well. Because gender violence and honor killings are so common in Pakistan (and are an accepted part of society) the HRCP wanted to gather basic information about cases of honor killings in Pakistan in the hopes of ending the trend and getting help to victims of gender violence. The majority of cases are not documented or reported and the little knowledge available is often incomplete. The only information available about cases of honor killings in Pakistan is reported through the media and is yet to be systematically collected by any health agency. Having such access would give a better understanding of the extent to which honor violence is an issue in Pakistan and how prevalent it really is within society. Because it is considered acceptable, people do not feel the conviction to report it as a crime. The study conducted by the HRCP in Pakistan recorded 1957 cases of honor killing over a four year period. As high as 92% of the events occurred due to alleged extramarital relations and the rest were cases where women married by their own choice. The choice of method for the recorded events was primarily through the use of firearms but strangulation and the use of an axe was also common. Results of the study showed that

the majority of victims were married women and the perpetrators were most commonly husbands and secondly brothers.

Domestic violence, which is the form of gender violence focused on in this paper, is very common in Pakistan. To be more specific, a study conducted by the United Nations discovered that 50% of married women in Pakistan were physically abused by their husbands at home. Another study by the HRCP estimated as high as 65% prevalence of women domestically abused in Pakistan (Nastrullah 2009: 193). With such significant statistics, not only is it evident that violence against women is a severe issue within Pakistani society but it also shows that women are under imminent threat of abuse by their husbands and family members. It comes as no surprise that perpetrators of honor killings are usually husbands as domestic violence and abuse is so prevalent. Not only is this a public health concern and a human rights violation, it is also a legal issue in the sense that it is a crime that accounts for a large percentage of homicide cases in Pakistan. Pakistan's judicial system must recognize honor violence as a crime and take the responsibility to punish perpetrators as criminals. Chapter 4 will delve deeper into what Pakistani law has to say about gendered violence and how Pakistan's courts and police have handled cases of violence against women thus far.

II. Understanding Gender Violence

Before unraveling the complexities of how gender roles perpetuate violence and how gender violence is legitimized within society, which will be discussed in the next chapters, it must be clear and understood what gendered violence exactly is and what the purpose behind it is in the context of Pakistan. According to Cooney, honor related violence- which is mostly the case in Pakistan- can be conceptualized as “a crime, as gendered violence, as a violation of human rights” and “as a discursive formation” (2014: 407). He goes on to explain that this violence can be seen as a form of social control and a response to deviant behavior. More specifically, “it is a form of punishment” and “to the parties themselves, honor violence is inflicted by the family to punish wrongful conduct, actual or alleged, against the family (2014: 407).” The key words here are ‘actual’ or ‘alleged’. The very definition itself implies that accusations are often false and, in many cases, the condemned parties are violently punished or even killed without reason.

Common cases of gender violence in Pakistan such as honor related violence is “premeditated (killings are often planned at a family meeting), one-directional (female-on-male incidents are rare), and severe (even rape leaves a woman vulnerable to punishment)” (Cooney 2014: 409). In societies where

gendered violence is common, honor is a particularly tangible and real thing; it can be broken and, once it is tainted, it must be redeemed. Honor in these cases is associated with social status and expected social roles. Members of society are expected to uphold to a certain honor value system. A Pakistani scholar explains that “what we may think is a murder or a crime against the state, in the honor value system is not a crime at all. On the contrary, it is an act of punishing those who violate the honor code” (2014:407). What is happening here is that members of society are taking what they perceive as justice into their own hands when they see members of their community violating the honor code in place. It is not seen as a crime because it is justified as a form of punishment. Cooney goes on to explain that “typically associated with masculinity, challenges to honor require a violent response or risk of loss of social standing” (2014: 407). There are serious social consequences for actions that destroy one’s family honor and it could negatively impact a family’s social standing, specifically the male members of the family. For example, “a dishonored family may be excluded from community activities, bear the brunt of mockery and gossip, and experience difficulty finding marriage partners” (Cooney 2014: 409). In a sense, it is all about saving face and keeping your reputation and image intact. This can be applied to the high prevalence of domestic violence as well as it is often related to circumstances where the man’s honor and ego is threatened and he responds by asserting his male-dominance through violence. The man’s ego is connected to the woman’s behavior and how outsiders view him.

Female responsibility for protecting the family’s honor and upholding the honor of the men is a way of protecting the group or communities’ patriarchal identity. It can be compared to group mentality. As long as members of the community act in a way deemed acceptable by the rest of the community they can be part of the group. However once that is violated, they are out and honor must be restored in order to be welcomed back in. There are actually traditional Pakistani illegal justice systems referred to as ‘jirgas’ and ‘panchayats’ that exist which will be discussed more extensively in Chapter 4. The gender roles and expectations of men and women are so rigidly constructed that if you act outside of that ideal, you are automatically outside of society. Gendered violence is understood as being committed by the group - the superior male influence - on an individual – the woman - and is a collective form of violence in that all aspects of society condone it. Although, in gendered violence “the group inflicting violence is not the community as such but the social unit on which the community is based – the family,” it is “typically perpetrated by an individual acting alone, though as an agent of a group” (Cooney, 2014: 410-11) . That group refers to Pakistani society. It is a form of punishment where a group is disciplining its own. The act of punishment is performative in nature in that it outwardly sends a message to the community that your family honor is redeemed.

Gendered and honor related acts of violence are most commonly associated with illicit or immoral behavior of women and are usually related to a woman's chastity, whether real or imagined. Chastity "requires women to present an asexual self in everyday life, to be virgins on the wedding night, and from then out, to have sex solely with their husbands" (Cooney 2014: 408). In Pakistan a woman's chastity is very significant and taken very seriously. A woman's reputation and sexual morality is so important that even "social intercourse between unrelated men and women is considered almost the same as sexual intercourse" (Akpinar 2003: 432). There have even been extreme cases where gendered violence was used to punish autonomy, for instance "a woman insisting on completing her education, abandoning an abusive husband, taking a job, or even dressing as she wishes" (Cooney 2014: 409). With examples like these it is evident that gendered violence is patriarchal in nature and can be described as a form of social control over women's behavior. These are not reasons most people in Western societies would perceive as punishable by death, let alone punishable at all. In such cases it is difficult to find the logic or justification for such violence. Merry gives a very concise analysis of gender violence explaining that it is "deeply embedded in systems of kinship, religion, warfare and nationalism [and] its prevention requires major social changes in communities, families and nations and relates to cultural understandings of gender and sexuality as well as . . . the institutions of marriage, community, and state legal regulations of marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody" (Merry 2006: 2). She goes on to outline the fact that a "major component of gender violence is the patriarchal social structure that limits women's economic, political, and human rights. As unequal power relations between men and women are socially constructed and 'historically justified'" (Merry 2006:23). One way in which gendered violence is legitimized and sustained within society is through the justification of culture and tradition. Women in societies such as Pakistan (where gendered violence is common), have clearly defined roles and are expected to behave in a certain way.

Chapter 3:

The Role of Men and Women within Society

I. Constructed Gender Roles

Within Pakistani society, there are clearly defined roles constructed for men and women. It is important to be aware of the fact that women's status in the country varies depending on the socio-economic background and cultural traditions and values (Zia 2011: 9). Having said that, there are a number of generalizations that can be made due to the strict patriarchal nature of Pakistani society; which is so deeply embedded within the culture, it affects all Pakistani women. In general, women are perceived as subordinate to men. From the moment a woman is born she is considered to be a burden on the family and her assets and value are measured in terms of her power to reproduce and be seen as an object of sexual satisfaction (Zia 2011: 9). Out of the 21 questionnaires filled by local Pakistani's which included their perceptions and experiences of gender violence, all but 1 answered "yes" when asked whether they had experienced or witnessed domestic violence either personally or indirectly within their families, social circles or communities. In fact, many expressed that it was "normal". Most of the participants of the questionnaire referred to unequal gender roles when trying to explain the high prevalence of domestic violence in Pakistan. The patriarchal mindset and structure of society appeared to be the main reason why Christian local Pakistani's believed domestic violence was such a widespread issue in their communities. In reference to Pakistani society, a 22 year old female student wrote;

Man is considered more important than a woman. Women are... inferior... (and) it is often said in our society, what man can do, woman cannot. She should stay in her limits. Beating a woman is very common ...Man...shows that he is the ruler...Man is free, he can take any decision. Woman has to be quiet. This society expects from man that he is the leader of the house and even if he makes any mistake he should be forgiven. If a woman does anything wrong, she is not forgiven. This is the society of Pakistan.

Almost all participants mentioned that men in Pakistani society like to "rule" over their women. The belief that women are inferior and less important than men was also pointed out numerous times. A young male student aged 22, explained;

In our society, man is given very high importance. In any family when a son is born there is a lot of celebration... Even in the family when he is raised, it is communicated to him

in many ways that he is more important than girls... even if he is disobedient... or fights all the time, society will still say 'doesn't matter he is a boy, he is a man'. But a woman is considered very low, inferior. Even in her own house within the family she is given less respect... Woman is watched very closely.

Women "are recognized primarily in their roles within the marriage and family as wives, mothers, daughters" and "their identity is derived from their family" (Zia 2012: 66). They do not have their own identity or agency and are generally not seen as individuals but, rather, a part of the family structure. In a sense, women are seen as a commodity, going from one man's house - her father's - to another's - her husband's - which results in the men in the family restricting the women (for instance on their mobility and behavior as to ensure they do not bring shame upon the family) (Zia 2011: 9). In Pakistan, the women in the family carry the honor of the men and of the entire family. Because of this, their behavior reflects on the whole family, which leads to male-dominated social control over the women. This concept of honor perpetuates the high prevalence of violence against women in Pakistan. Because marriage and family holds a great deal of importance, honoring these institutions is often considered more important than the individuals involved, more specifically, the women. It is more important for women to not shame their families or allow their marriages to fail due to the taboos imposed on divorced and un-married women (Zia 2012: 66). This mentality in itself puts women at risk to violence as the social and cultural restrictions on women discourage them from being able to escape abusive relationships. Apart from divorce not being socially acceptable, women also end up staying in abusive marriages for the sake of their children. A female student, aged 25 shared in her questionnaire;

My own sister received so much violence that she is no longer in the world today. She died from her injuries. There were always quarrels in her family; her husband would beat her everyday... It continued for 15 years and my sister would tolerate it just for her children because in our society it is said, children belong... to the father. My sister had 5 children... Some of her children are with me now. When I look at them, I think, what was the fault of my sister?

This young woman's sister stayed in a violent abusive marriage and tolerated daily beatings because she knew that if she fled, she would have to leave her children behind. In Muslim Family Law, the guardianship and custody of the child goes to the father and does not recognize the mother as an equal guardian (Zia 2012: 92). She went on to share the story of her other sister explaining;

I have another sister... married for 10 years. The first 2 years were peaceful but the rest were spent in fights. Her husband is an alcoholic. He beats his wife even till now... She

has 3 sons but her husband doesn't care. It makes no difference that she gave birth to sons. He says it is his right to beat her. She is his wife... After seeing these things, my question is, is there no home for a woman she can call her own?

How women are perceived and the gender roles imposed on them by society have significant effects on their safety and how they are treated. In the context of Pakistan, the "patriarchal values embedded in local tradition and culture" have predetermined "the social value of gender" which has created a divide in "the sexual division of labour – the woman in the reproductive and caregiver role in the house, and the man as the breadwinner" (Zia 2011: 10). This division secludes women to the private domain and creates an unequal balance where women depend solely on men. Although a large number of women do work, the majority of them do not get to reap the financial benefits from their work as it is not considered to be their own and is usually taken by the male member of the family or used to support the entire family (Zia 2011: 10). The jobs women have access to are mostly home based-work or in the agricultural sector. Home-based work is not considered to be part of the labour force and women often do not even get paid for the work they have done. Social restrictions set on women make it very challenging to achieve economic independence. The problem with this is, women are entirely financially dependent on men "which further infringes on their freedom of choice as they feel that without any financial support there are no options for them (Zia 2011: 10)". The latter, along with "the restrictions on women's mobility", "results in a total dependence on men (Zia 2011: 10)".

II. Do the Constructed Roles Encourage Violence Against Women?

The gender divide that has allocated women to the private space and men to the public space has negatively impacted women's agency, paid work, access to education and skills for the job market while simultaneously also enhancing women's vulnerability to different forms of violence, especially those pertaining to male or family honor (Zina 2012: 38). It also has a significant influence on the judicial system and law enforcement. Although women are secluded to the private sphere and are expected to get married, bear children and take care of the household, they do not hold any real power within that private domain. They do not have decision-making power. Even one of their primary expectations imposed on women, namely having children, is not in the power of women to decide. Because women don't have agency or the power to make decisions for themselves, they lack the power to decide how many children they want. The reality is, "discernible change in the patriarchal mindset and socio-cultural norms that reflect gender biases will have to take place before women can be sufficiently empowered to take decisions regarding family size and family planning" (Zia 2012: 72) and this applies to other aspects of

women's lives that are negatively affected by stereotypical gender roles, including their vulnerability to violence.

The pre-conceived Pakistani notions of gender roles position women subordinate to men which directly put women at risk to unequal treatment and discrimination based on their gender. This discrimination affects all aspects of women's lives but the most alarming and imminent threat women face is violence and abuse. There has been little effort made in changing mainstream perceptions of women including efforts to understand and be aware of ways in which stereotypes reinforce gender bias perceptions of women, undermining pro-women laws and policies as well as efforts to keep women safe from violence (Zia 2012: 38). The media, "including the state owned Pakistan Television (PTV) and Radio, has played an important role in highlighting and bringing women's issues to the forefront" but it has had little social impact because it is not backed by "a better understanding of and support for gender equality (Zia 2012: 39)". In the public domain, including the media which has a significant influence on public opinion, there have been little efforts made to change or modify stereotypical gender roles and there is a continued use of gender bias language and the reinforcement of women's subordinate status in society (Zia 2012: 39).

In advertisements, women are also portrayed in their domestic roles as wives and mothers and are typically shown cooking or selling household items or casted as economically unproductive consumers used to promote fashion and luxurious lifestyles (Zia 2012: 40). These two images either reduce women to their role as a housewife or to a commodity, a spectacle and object of sexual desire. Whether blatant or subtle, these portrayals of women influence viewers' perceptions and understanding of women. Another important influence that shouldn't be underestimated is that of Soap opera and television plays which are among the most watched programs in the country (Zia 2012: 40). These shows generally thrive on and are driven by gender-based stereotypes and lean towards propagating traditional patriarchal values (Zia 2012: 40). The issue lies in the fact that "women are constantly shown at the mercy of men through physical violence, absence of agency and/or exclusion from decision-making resources" (Zia 2012: 40). Furthermore, these storylines typically rely on stereotypical gender roles and the justification of violence against women, portraying them as always guilty and as either wives who failed to win or keeps a man's love or as adulteresses and home-breakers (Zia 2012: 40). These images not only shed women in a negative light but they condone violence against women. This stereotypical projection of women in the public sphere is "a matter of serious concern as the establishment of and numerical strength of private television channels has considerably increased the medium's outreach in the dissemination of information and ideas" and has "enhanced its role in the making of public opinion" (Zia 2012: 39). The argument here is not to say that the media is to blame for constructing stereotypical gender roles or provoking violence

against women but the media does have an influence in justifying, normalizing and condoning violence against women. The media contributes to reproducing and feeding these damaging perceptions of women which put women at risk to violence because violence against them is openly displayed in the public sphere. It is a vicious circle where all aspects of life reinforce these defined gender roles whether looking within the family, culture, religion, labour force, education, judicial system or media. Women's agency is only acceptable if it is exercised in the interest of the family or husband but never in pursuit of their own personal interests (Zia 2012: 40). This approach and mentality "reinforces gendered sex roles including notions of male dominance and the perception of the woman's body as the terrain across which male battles are fought and male honour preserved" (Zia 2012: 40).

Chapter 4:

A Culture of Violence?

I: How Does Culture Legitimize Violence Against Women?

Pakistani society places a great deal of emphasis and importance on customs, culture and social traditions that often have outcomes which are biased against women and result in their mental and physical harm (Zia 2012: 44). These negatives outcomes are often referred to as “anti-women customary practices” which “consist of a range of violations of women’s rights” including “honour killings, child marriage, forced marriage” (Zia 2012: 44) and continued domestic/spousal physical abuse. When trying to understand the high prevalence of gendered violence in Pakistan, it is important to be aware of ‘jirgas’ and ‘panchayats’, which are “illegal dispute resolution mechanisms or parallel illegal systems which have been functioning in Pakistan before its independence” (Zia 2012: 41) in 1947. A number of other informal systems exist which dispense justice without any legal sanction or authority to do so, carried out by influential members of the community in accordance with their archaic interpretations of often anti-women customary laws (Zia 2012: 41). These illegal systems reflect Pakistani culture more than they reflect Pakistani law. Being strongly patriarchal in nature, these illegal systems often carry out inhumane and degrading punishments without a fair trial which deprives citizens, particularly women with the right to seek justice (Zia 2012: 41). The judicial system in itself is heavily compromised by these customary practices and law enforcement tends to be male biased. This will be discussed later in this chapter. These illegal systems are not sanctioned by the law and function without proper procedures, often lacking reliable evidence or support. They are concerned with preserving the status quo and the judges make their decisions based on traditional attitudes and customary practices that often oppose the law of the land, are against human rights and violate fundamental principles (Zia 2012: 41).

The punishments carried out within these illegal systems often contradict the law and use horrific punishments that effect only women, such as death of the victim in cases of rape and the exchange of girls as compensation among disputes that are often among men and have nothing to do with the women being used as leverage (Zia 2012: 42). These unregulated illegal systems often allow people to abuse the system to their benefit, using women to get what they want. One of the acid burn victims I interviewed from the Depelix Smile Again Foundation found herself in a similar situation when she was attacked and used as a tool in her paternal aunts’ scheme to gain power. Aged 25, she explained;

I was intentionally attacked by my aunt on my father's side with kerosene oil and burned alive. The reason my aunt did this was because she wanted to occupy our home at the time. She wanted my parents to separate and to take over the house.

She went on to explain further that her father was very close to his sister - her aunt - and he trusted her above everyone else. She believed that this close relationship allowed for her aunt to manipulate her way into their home by creating a strain on her parent's marriage by physically attacking her. There appears to have been some tension between her paternal aunt and her mother. This is not uncommon and often problems between in-laws lead to violence, affecting the women in the family the majority of the time. Understandably so, constant tensions and quarrels rose between her parents after she was attacked and eventually her mother left. With her mother's absence, her paternal aunt was able to take over her desired role as the lady of the house but her life would forever be scarred. She expressed that;

When people see me and burn victims in general they think the woman must have done something to deserve it. People will think it is our fault. That is why I chose to cover myself in public and save myself from their opinions.

Although she was simply used as a pawn in a family power struggle between her mother and her paternal aunt, she suffered the consequences and must live in shame, hiding from the judgement and ridicule from society.

The danger of these illegal systems is that they are known to be notoriously anti-women. Women are not involved in these systems and are never decision-makers or even rarely present at proceedings but women are, more often than not, recipients of punishments that are carried out (Zia 2012: 42). These systems contravene "Articles 4, 8, 9, 10, 10 (a), 14, 25, 34 and 37 of the Constitution of Pakistan which guarantee legal protection and the right to enjoy life, liberty and justice to all citizens of the country and to be treated in accordance with" (Zia 2012: 45) the law. These illegal systems and unlawful justice carried out in the name of customary practices is illegal both locally and internationally yet it continues to occur with little constraints. These illegal systems contribute to the high prevalence of violence against women in Pakistan.

II: The Impact of Religion and the Pakistani Judicial System

As has already been discussed, women's status in Pakistan is considered secondary to men. It has been established that women are expected to play the role of nurturer and mother, and are valued only by

their capability to reproduce. These “highly patriarchal views are steeped in the traditional culture of Pakistan” and were given massive “formal support during the presidency of General Zia ul Haq” (Zia 2011: 11) starting in 1977. This formal support came in the form of the Zina Hudood Ordinance laws. Pakistani scholar Asifa Quraishi writes extensively about the history and meaning behind the Zina Ordinance in her article, *Her Honor: An Islamic Critique of the Rape Laws of Pakistan from a Woman-Sensitive Perspective* (1997), giving an interesting insider’s perspective on how gender violence was legitimized through Pakistani law. Quraishi mainly focuses on the rape laws in Pakistan and not only critiques the law itself, but the implementation and misuse of the law. The rape laws under the Zina Ordinance are a perfect example of how the state perpetuates violence against women.

Under the infamous President Zia-ul- Haq in 1977, the Hudood ordinances were enacted in an effort to ‘Islamicize’ the country and aimed for Pakistani law to reflect Islamic law. Zina refers to extramarital sexual relations. As of 1979 the Zina Ordinance VII criminalized zina stating that: “A man and a woman are said to commit ‘zina’ if they willfully have sexual intercourse without being validly married to each other” (Quraishi 1997: 288). This law is still in place today and has led to a path of violence and destruction since its implementation. Although the law refers to both a man and a woman, it is uncommon for men to be punished for zina. The shame of zina falls more heavily on women and women are more likely to be punished, even as victims. That said, certain conditions may apply in accordance to the Zina Ordinance. For instance, zina is only punishable by law if committed by a sane, adult male with a woman whom he is not married and vice versa (Quraishi 1997: 289).

The rape laws underlined by the Zina Ordinance have faced a lot of criticism due to the harsh conditions of evidence and proof required to report a rape. The ‘zina-bil-jabr’ which translates to zina by force defines what constitutes sexual intercourse against the will or consent of either party involved as punishable by law. The Zina Ordinance has two forms of acceptable proof, the first being; “the accused makes before a Court of competent jurisdiction a confession of the commission of the offence” and secondly “at least four Muslim adult male witnesses, about whom the Court is satisfied, having regard to the requirements of tazkiyah al shuhood [credibility of witness] that they are truthful persons and abstain from major sins (kabair)” and are able to “give evidence as eyewitnesses of the act of penetration necessary to the offence” (Quraishi 1997: 290).

From a human rights perspective, it could be argued that Pakistani law does not protect women in cases of rape and sexual abuse and the necessity of four male eyewitnesses could be perceived as patriarchal and a form of male dominance. For instance, in the past where rape cases have failed to provide four male witnesses, the Pakistani legal system has assumed and concluded that the sexual

intercourse reported was consensual which has led victims of rape to be charged with zina, extramarital sexual intercourse (Quraishi 1997). There have been many incidents where women who reported rape were held in custody over extended periods of time charged for zina. This is troubling; not only for the fact that victims are treated as criminals but it has proven to be unsafe for women to be held under custody. Take for example, Shamina, a 21 year old mother of two, who reported being kidnapped and raped by 3 men in Karachi in July of 1992. Once the complaint had been lodged, Shamina was arrested and taken into custody. When her family was unable to pay the fee for her release, she was charged with zina. When she was held in custody for 6 days, Shamina reported that she was repeatedly raped by two policemen as well as a third unknown person.

Unfortunately, this story is not unique and many women in Pakistan have reported similar experiences with police officers. In cases where the perpetrators of rape are police officers, it is almost impossible to pursue a case against him. There are virtually no consequences for police officers which allow them to abuse and take advantage of their power. The police officers who are almost always male are empowered even more by their gender given the patriarchal society Pakistan has adopted. Quraishi emphasizes that “police action and inaction in rape cases in Pakistan have in fact been widely reported as instrumental elements to the injustice” (1997: 291). Although culture and tradition are significant influencing factors when it comes to the justification of gender violence against women, the Pakistani legal system and officers of the law do play a role and contribute to the legitimization of gender-based violence. She goes on to say that there is an abundant amount of evidence showing that police officers have deliberately chosen not to file charges against men that have been accused of rape. It is also not uncommon for the police to threaten rape victims to convert their rape charges into a zina offence. This is understood to be a strategy of the police to discourage women from officially reporting rape. Although more research would need to be done in order to fully understand why officers of the law would discourage women to report crimes of rape, it can be assumed that the influence of culture and tradition in relation to violence and attitudes towards women is deeply embedded within society and therefore overlaps into the realm of Pakistan’s legal system. At the end of the day, police officers are a product of their society; it is not therefore surprising that their behavior and attitude reflects that of the rest of society in which they live.

Though honor related gender violence is most prevalent in Muslim countries, victims of such violence also come from other religions, including Christianity and Hinduism. This suggests that the tradition of gender violence transcends religion and is more reflective of culture rather than faith or belief system. Nevertheless, there is still an association between gender violence and Islam. It is therefore worth looking into the relationship between the two. The Zina Ordinance was passed in an effort to transform

Pakistani law in a direction that was more reflective of Islamic law. It is natural to question whether the Zina Ordinance truly embodies what it is taught in the Quran.

The Pakistani Zina Ordinance claims to harmonize with what is written in the Quran and Sunnah. Quraishi (1997) explains that the word zina appears many times in the Quran and goes on to explain the criminalization and appropriate form of punishment for illegal sexual relations. It says, “the adulteress and adulterer should be flogged a hundred lashes each, and no pity for them should deter you from the law of God if you believe in God and the Last Day; and punishment should be witnessed by a body of believers” (1997: 293). The nature of what is written suggests that the Quran is very critical and quite severe in the form of punishment when it comes to illicit sexual relations. It also confirms that zina is in fact considered a crime in Islamic law and therefore is punishable. Where the confusion lies is when the Quran states that, “those who defame chaste women and do not bring four witnesses should be punished with eighty lashes and their testimony should not be accepted afterwards, for they are profligates” (1997:294). From this verse it is very clear where the idea of four witnesses originated from and why it was incorporated into the Zina Ordinance. Quraishi, however, argues that this particular verse has been misunderstood and that the Zina Ordinance does not reflect what was truly meant by these verses. She explains that “The Quran contemplates a society in which one does not engage in publicizing other’s sexual indiscretions” (1997:297). Although such behavior is not acceptable and is frowned upon in Islam, it is not a matter of the public. The need for four witnesses was included in order to keep sexual indiscretions private and to only make it public when the indiscretion was so provocative that it was seen by at least four people. Quraishi argues that the need for four witnesses actually protects women from being subjugated to public ridicule and shame.

It is possible that this particular verse is reflective of the society and cultural context of the time. From this perspective one could assume that this verse took into consideration the fact that making sexual indiscretions public would put women’s lives in danger. She interprets that “Quranic principles honor privacy and dignity over the violation of law, except when a violation becomes a matter of public indecency” (1997: 297). Islamic scholars argue that this law was set in place in order to “prevent carrying out punishment for this offense” and “by limiting conviction to only...cases where four individuals actually saw sexual penetration take place, the crime will realistically only be punishable if the two parties are committing the act in public, in the nude” (1997: 296). Therefore this law is applicable and only a crime when it is a matter of public indecency and not private sexual conduct.

Although Quraishi’s interpretation may explain how this law protects men and women from public shame, when it comes to extramarital sexual affairs- however- it is more challenging to see how

this law protects victims of rape or cases where sexual intercourse was forced. In that sense, it is easy to see how the Zina Ordinance has been misused and has failed to bring justice when it comes to cases of rape. It does, however, suggest that Islam does not justify or support gender violence and that the prevalence of gender violence in Pakistan is more reflective of an outdated, poorly formulated law and is legitimized through social and cultural values of and attitudes towards women.

Muslim countries tend to be very male dominant and “the tendency of patriarchal societies, in fact, is to view a woman’s chastity as central to the honor of her family, especially the men in the family” (Quraishi, 1997:298). The idea that a family’s honor lies in the virtue of its female members has been referred to as a ‘cultural’ phenomenon that exists in many societies today including Pakistan. It is specifically common in Pakistan for family members and friends to grow unsupportive and reluctant to visit their women jailed for zina charges for long periods of time as it is considered a serious dishonor. Loved ones feel the judgment and pressure from their communities and must live with the social consequences of their tainted reputation in their everyday lives. It is possible that if outside pressure from society and public shaming did not exist, many women’s lives would be saved and women would not be under as much threat to gender-related attacks. As Cooney points out, in reality families are often reluctant, slow and unwilling to inflict the ultimate penalty or punishment of honor killing, in the most extreme example of gender violence. He explains that “discovery of an illicit affair does not necessarily lead to an immediate killing; the woman’s family may wait and see what transpires before deciding to execute her” (2014: 412). There are, for instance, cases where “family members may deny the infraction, refusing to recognize that it has occurred until the evidence becomes overwhelming or it becomes the subject of gossip” (Cooney 2014: 412). This suggests that, aside from cultural and traditional influence and the lack of legal protection, the prevalence of gender violence can also be explained by and associated with social status. Indeed, the protection and maintenance of one’s honor and reputation is paramount to their social status. It is so significant that victims of gender violence or women accused of extreme zina cases, specifically in cases of sexual violations are often encouraged to commit suicide as that is perceived and understood as the honorable and appropriate solution to the humiliation and shame it brings upon the family. The effects of such a tradition on society are that “this attitude lends itself easily to manipulation and the development of a tribal attitude where women’s bodies become tools for revenge by men against men” (1997: 299).

In the words of Sally Merry , “nowhere do issues of culture and rights seem more difficult than in the area of violence against women” and “while violence exists in a culture-free zone of inquiry and death, its meanings are deeply informed by social contexts”(2006: 24). She questions whether it is possible to find a space that respects both cultural differences as well as the protection of women against

violence as they often seem like opposite goals. She goes on to argue that “cultural beliefs and institutions often permit and encourage violence against women and protecting women requires substantial shifts in beliefs about gender as well as changes in the institutions that govern women’s lives such as marriage, divorce, education and work opportunities” as “reducing violence and rape demands changes in ideas and practices about sexuality, marriage and the family” (2006: 25). Because the tradition of gender violence is so deeply embedded within society, its eradication would require a transformation of mentality. One of the many problems of gender-based violence is that it is “embedded in cultural understandings of gender and sexuality as well as in the institutions of marriage, community, and state legal regulations of marriage, divorce, inheritance and child custody” (2006: 25). Consequently, “its location in family and personal relationships has shielded this domain of violence from state scrutiny for a long time and, at the same time, has naturalized the practice” (2006:25). This analysis is very applicable to the gender violence epidemic, so to say, in Pakistan. Violence against women has been accepted by both society and the state and, as a result, has legitimized and naturalized this tradition of violence. Merry observes that “arguments about preserving culture” have “become the basis for defending male control over women” (2006: 25). With cases and stories such as those reported by Shamina it is easy to identify how scholars could come to that conclusion and understanding. Pakistan’s legal system and track record of police officers’ behavior in relation to honor violence shows that the tradition does pave the way for the infliction of violence and abuse of power and control over women. Merry explains that “...culture has been used by individuals and institutions to support beliefs and practices that legitimize and perpetuate violence against women...” (2006: 28). This tendency is evident in the case of gender violence in Pakistan where culture is used “as a mode of legitimating claims to power and authority” (2006: 9).

The tradition of gender violence has been widely and publicly condemned by the Western international community. Those that cannot justify gender violence with culture or tradition cannot see violence against women in any other way other than a violation of human rights. All major international documents have condemned the use of cultural justifications concerning any forms of violence against women. For example, the “1993 Vienna Declaration stressed the importance of ‘the eradication of any conflicts which may arise between the rights of women and the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices, cultural prejudices and religious extremism” (Merry 2006: 26). Furthermore, the 1995 Platform for Action from the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women stated that “violence against women through the life cycle derives essentially from cultural patterns, in particular the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices and all acts of extremism linked to race, sex, language or religion that perpetuate the lower status accorded to women in the family, the workplace, the community and society” (Merry 2006:26). A good starting point for change would be for countries such

as Pakistan to take the advice of the General Recommendation 19 issued by the CEDAW Committee in 1992 that says “States should condemn violence against women and should not invoke any custom, tradition or religion or other consideration to avoid their obligation with respect to its elimination” (Merry 2006:26). Although what is required for the eradication of gender violence against women is a transformation of cultural mentality, changing and enforcement of the law is a practical step that can be controlled. As long as violence against women is accepted and legitimized by the state, there will be no hope for the reduction of gender violence cases in Pakistan

This paper agrees with Coomeraswamy and Kois (1999: 177) that structures perpetuating “violence against women are socially constructed and that such violence is a product of a historical process and is not essential or time bound in its manifestations” (Welchman 2005: 3). It is possible to reduce the high prevalence of gender violence in Pakistan but its approach must be multi-lateral, comprehensive and head on. It is clear that a narrow legal approach, “particularly one focusing on ‘state law’ and state legal systems, as a stand-alone strategy unaccompanied by broader and deeper initiatives and understandings, is unlikely to change practice” (Welchman 2005: 4) or effectively combat gender violence. What needs to be tackled is the layer beneath, the culture and gender roles that make society.

Chapter 5:

Does Economic Empowerment of the Woman Ensure Greater Safety?

I: How Does Poverty Influence the Prevalence of Domestic Violence?

Reflecting upon my own experiences and cases of violence against women I heard growing up in Pakistan, I can remember that the majority of the victims I heard about came from low to middle class income families. In some cases, lack of money and the stress and frustration it released within the family was a factor in violent attacks against women. The strain a lack of resources can put on the family in many circumstances, including that of one of my paternal aunts, can lead to increased domestic violence. Although it was rarely the only factor, it became evident that a relationship between poverty and violence against women existed and the nature of this relation ought to be further explored. One of the common themes that came up in the rounds of interviews and questionnaires was, again, poverty and shortage of money. During the interview with founder of local NGO Institute for Peace and Secular Studies, Saeeda Diep expressed that many of the women she encountered through her work that experienced domestic violence came from poorer, less educated backgrounds. She recounted that:

In the upper-middle class, if a woman is working and she is economically independent (then) she is more secure, there is less violence. Women who are very poor (and) who live in slums are more prone to domestic violence. Their husbands take drugs, they don't work and the women are the ones raising 10-12 children and working in 10- 15 homes all day long.

In these scenarios, women are expected to fill their role as a mother and housewife but are also the sole breadwinners. In a sense, they are taking on the role that is expected of men. The point she was making is that the female adoption of the male role as the provider doesn't necessarily improve her position in society nor does it ensure her safety against violence. Although their husbands are unemployed and the wives are financially supporting the family, when they return home, the men often take the money their wives have earned and assert their dominance and superiority over the women through violence. Diep explained further that:

In the slums you will see all the men probably watching the children...taking drugs, sleeping and the wife is working in different places but when the wife comes with her salary the husband will demand it.

It is important to point out that in cultures like Pakistan “where there are strict norms of female seclusion, there is in fact a strong association between household poverty and women’s labour force participation” (Kabeer 2012:21). Women coming from poverty are more likely to enter the labour force because they have to in order to survive. In India, for example, “women from lower caste and tribal groups have ‘always’ worked” (Kabeer 2012:21). This suggests that women’s employment doesn’t necessarily mean women are less vulnerable to domestic violence because, if that were true, rates of domestic violence would be lower amongst poorer communities which we know is not the case. It could suggest a stronger correlation between domestic violence with poverty and a lack of resources but further research needs to be conducted to better understand this relationship. Furthermore, it could also suggest that the types of jobs these women have access to are not particularly empowering and that other jobs may have more of a social impact. Because domestic violence in Pakistan occurs across all socio-economic backgrounds, it is clear that the prevalence of violence is multifaceted and can be explained by a number of factors.

Although the women in the examples Diep referred to are economically independent and are even the sole financial providers, this doesn’t necessarily change the dynamic and gender relations between the husband and wife. The women in these circumstances are working out of necessity, not from a place of empowerment. The men are still superior to the women and can therefore assert their dominance through violence; taking the money they haven’t earned but believe they are entitled to because of their gender and position in society. She goes on to explain that:

We cannot put things in one box, in some places, women are working...and their husbands are dependent on the woman but even then they are victims of domestic violence. I have seen with my own eyes...I have seen there are thousand examples.

In my own experiences, although domestic violence seemed more prevalent in poorer to middle class income families, it was not uncommon in middle to high income circles either. Having attended an international secondary school in Lahore, my social circle was made up of the upper class to the richest family backgrounds in the country as those were the only local people that could afford such education. Although they came from financially well to-do, highly educated and often liberal thinking backgrounds, I still heard accounts of cases of domestic violence. This told me that although it was more prevalent in poorer income families, it also took place in high income families. This again suggests that socio-

economic background doesn't necessarily determine the prevalence of domestic violence as it occurs within all communities. Diep shared the same insight as she stated that

Few friends of mine, I will not name them, but they are professionals, they make a lot of money but their lives are being controlled by their in-laws and husbands. They are victims of domestic violence. Sometimes they get beaten. They are professors in universities.

Although she witnessed domestic violence more often in the poorer slums she worked in, the women in her own social circles that came from high income, upper class Lahori society also experienced domestic abuse. To emphasize her point, Diep remembered the late female Prime Minister- Benazir Bhutto- who was known to be beaten by her husband Asif Zardari. She had obtained the highest position and status possible and governed the whole country, yet within the confinement of her own home, she was- as a woman- inferior to her husband and was therefore subjugated and vulnerable to domestic violence.

As mentioned earlier, one of my aunts also experienced domestic violence at the hands of her husband. At the time, her husband was unemployed and they struggled financially to make ends meet. She explained that the financial strains on the family led her husband to physically express his frustration on her. My father suspected that the lack of money may be a factor but also believed that her husband's frustration came from the lack of desired financial support he expected from his wife's eldest brother and head of the family, my father himself. Being patriarchal in nature, Pakistani family culture is structured in a way that often the eldest male in the family is responsible for the entire extended family, particularly in situations where the extended family is in a crisis and needs external help. Because my father was the eldest male in the family, my aunt's husband may have expected full financial support. At the end of the day, this is all speculation and no outsider can give a real answer for this violence. But the significance of this story is that although poverty was a factor, there are other explanations that can be made given the cultural context. This implies that the relationship between poverty and the prevalence of domestic violence is not linear or absolute and can be explained by a number of factors.

One of the victims of a burn attack I interviewed through the Depilex Smile Again Foundation shared a similar story. She (age unknown, middle-aged) experienced a particularly severe attack from her husband and in-laws. She described her life as 'normal' before the incident occurred. She proceeded to tell me that throughout her marriage she was treated badly by her in-laws and husband and experienced regular physical and verbal abuse. She went on to share the events that led to her attack:

My husband was a driver at the time and he wanted to buy a new car. He asked me to go to my parents and get some money...But I told him my parents don't have a lot of money, they won't be able to give any. My husband (then)...threw acid in my face. I had 3 children at the time...After my husband threw acid on me, I began to cry out loud and...became senseless. Then my husband and in-laws tied me up around my neck, trapped me in the house and set the house on fire.

Fortunately, a number of factory workers nearby saw the fire and were able to rescue her in time. The interviewee was a housewife dependent on her husband's family and his income as a driver. When her husband wanted a new car to improve his business, he came knocking on his wife's door, demanding her to retrieve the money from her family. Although this violent attack could be explained by poverty or the desire for more resources, it could also be explained by male superiority and the assertion of his dominance over his wife. From her point of view, because she didn't deliver what her husband demanded, he retaliated by physically attacking her and trying to kill her. She viewed the attack as a senseless violent crime but described it as a form of punishment carried out by her husband and his family as a response to her perceived disobedience. This is again an example where poverty could be an influencing factor but the constructed gender roles and cultural expectations set in place are also a contributing element. Although the full extent and degree to which poverty or economic factors influence the prevalence of domestic violence is still unknown and under researched, it is evident that a correlation between the two exists. The approach many studies have taken in order to understand this link is through investigating the relation between employment and domestic violence. This link will be further discussed in the next half of this chapter.

II: Defining Economic Empowerment

Before one can explore the relationship between women's employment and the prevalence of domestic violence, it must be made clear what economic empowerment exactly is. In recent years, the definitions of women's empowerment have increasingly been dominated by the economic dimension which has become more visible within the international policy discourse (Kabeer 2012: 8). The Beijing Platform for Action brought to the forefront the need to promote economic independence including employment and equal access to productive resources, opportunities and public services for all women (Kabeer 2012:8). Even the Millenium Development Goals (MDG's) on gender equality and women's empowerment have implemented an increase in women's share of non-agricultural jobs as one of its indicators of what women's empowerment should encompass (Kabeer 2012:8). According to Pakistan's

Bureau of Statistics in a Labour Force Survey conducted in 2012-2013, agriculture is a major sector providing 45% of jobs. Within the sector, 75.7 % of the jobs are taken by women and only 34.5% by men. In fact, the agricultural sector has a larger amount of female employees than any other sector. As the MDG's suggest, it is possible that agricultural jobs do not necessarily empower women within their communities. The fact that most employed women in Pakistan work in the agricultural sector may explain why employment hasn't significantly empowered women or improved their safety and position in society. The types of jobs women in Pakistan have access to may not be the kinds of jobs that can empower them. It is possible that the key to women's empowerment and increased safety in contexts such as Pakistan may be related to better work and not just any type of job. Although it is not the topic of this paper, more research needs to be done on which types of jobs are more likely to empower women and improve their safety in the context of societies such as Pakistan where women's employment is complicated and could lead to many risks.

It is clear that the understanding of the term "women's empowerment" has, thus far, been increasingly dominated by the economic aspect. For example, the World Bank explicitly defines women's economic empowerment as follows; "Economic empowerment is about making markets work for women (at the policy level) and empowering women to compete in markets (at the agency level)" (World Bank 2006: 4). This definition is quite one dimensional in the sense that it equates empowerment directly with economic independence and entering the labor market. Given that in many societies, particularly traditional patriarchal societies like Pakistan, where employment is seen as gender specific to a man's role as the provider and breadwinner, it is alarming to see that a number of economic definitions of empowerment do not seem to take into consideration the possible risks and consequences for women gaining employment status. A publication released by the ICRW (International Center for Research on Women) gave a more comprehensive understanding of empowerment, stating that "economically empowering women is essential both to realize women's rights and to achieve broader development goals such as economic growth, poverty reduction, health, education and welfare" (Kabeer 2012:8). It went on to define a woman as being economically empowered "when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions" (Kabeer 2012:8). The key words to take away from this definition is power and ability. The positive effects of women's economic empowerment on development is not in question here; however, it is questionable whether women's economic empowerment with this definition is attainable in countries such as Pakistan without putting women's safety at risk. Before pushing and advocating for projects and policies that are geared towards women's economic independence and employment, it is crucial to understand the social implications that it will have in societies where women are secluded to the household and men are expected to go out and

work. The fact that the ICRW defines empowerment as the combination of both the ability and power to make and act on economic decisions shows that it takes into consideration the fact that, in some societies, said ability and power may not exist for women at this point in time. Cultural constraints may hinder women from accessing the labor market and may put them at risk of violence if they do. The OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality goes a little broader, defining women's economic empowerment as their "capacity to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth" (OECD 2011: 6). The significant contributions to this definition is the mentioning of value, respect and dignity in relation to women. It is important to emphasize that in patriarchal societies (where women are generally seen as inferior to men), women's empowerment can only be possible if women are valued and respected which I would argue can only really occur if women are seen as equals. SIDA (Swedish Development International Cooperation Agency) takes equality into consideration when it comes to women's economic empowerment, conceptualizing it as:

The process which increases women's real power over economic decisions that influence their lives and priorities in society. Women's economic empowerment can be achieved through equal access to and control over critical economic resources and opportunities, and the elimination of structural gender inequalities in the labour market (Tornqvist & Schmitz 2009:9).

In all the definitions mentioned so far, SIDA's is the first to mention structural gender inequalities in the labour market. These gender inequalities exist because they reflect the gender inequalities in society and the restrictions of the latter have spilled over into the economic sphere. If gender equality has not been achieved in society, then how can it exist in the labour market?

In an effort to conceptualize women's economic empowerment before analyzing its possible effects, all of the definitions included have agreed that agency, choice and decision-making is key to empowerment (Kabeer 2012:9). Although the World Bank and ICRW see empowerment purely in economic terms, the OECD and SIDA recognize the spill-over effects women's empowerment can have in other domains of their lives. (Kabeer 2012:10). A critical point Kabeer makes is that purely market-generated growth alone could not create the desired outcomes of women's empowerment- namely social recognition, dignity and transformative agency- and could, in fact, perpetuate inequality rather than mitigate it (2012:10). Market forces alone cannot dissolve "the durable inequalities in rules, norms, assets and choices that perpetuate the historically established disadvantages of certain social groups" (Kabeer 2012:10) (for instance, women). That refers to the high prevalence of domestic violence in Pakistan as

well. Market inequalities are manifestations of underlying inequalities of power within society and those that hold the power are in a position to protect their own privileges (Kabeer 2012:11). Kabeer goes on to point out that historically established inequalities in resources and opportunities persist into the present because they are reinforced by the actions of those who hold power within a society (2012:11).

According to a study conducted by the Pakistani Ministry of Finance in 2013, their economic survey revealed that 24.4% of the labour force in Pakistan was female while the other 81.7% comprised of men. With such statistics, it is evident that the labour market in Pakistan is heavily dominated by men, which is no surprise considering the male-dominated patriarchal nature of Pakistani society. Because the inequalities in a given labour market reflect the inequalities in that society, it would not make sense to tackle the former without tackling the latter first. Feminist economists have acknowledged that individuals and groups make choices and exercise agency within the limits imposed by the structural distribution of rules, norms, assets and identities between different groups in society (Kabeer 2012:13). This applies directly to the context of Pakistan as women access to employment is greatly hindered and challenged by cultural constraints and the roles imposed on females. Gender disadvantages found in the labour market are a product of “structures of constraint which operate over the life course of men and women from different social groups” (Kabeer 2012:13). These gender-specific constraints Kabeer is referring to relate to the norms, beliefs and values that define the dominant models of masculinity and femininity in different societies which allocate men and women different roles and responsibilities (with women’s role generally assigned a lower value in comparison to men) (2012:14). Countries like Pakistan- where men dominate the majority of the labour force- generally reflect the role of ‘bread winner’ falling on the responsibility of the male rather than the female (Kabeer 2012:14). Women, on the other hand, are expected to specialize in unpaid domestic work, caring for the family and the home as there are strong cultural restrictions on their mobility in the public domain (Kabeer 2012:14). In societies where women are generally confined to the home- a private space- the risks women may face in the work force- a public domain- must be thoroughly assessed before pushing women into the labour market. The cultural restrictions women face in the public domain is one of the major contributing factors as to why there are much lower rates of female labor force participation in the MENA region and South Asia, including Pakistan (Kabeer 2012:14).

III: The Social Implications of Employment

In 2008, the UNDP explained that women's economic empowerment could "be achieved by targeting initiatives to expanding women's economic opportunity; strengthen their legal status and rights; and ensure their voice, inclusion and participation in economic decision-making" (Kabeer 2012:9). This is an ideal and an important goal to have. However, initiatives designed to increase women's participation in the labour market must take the cultural context and environment into consideration as employment could potentially lead to more violence. Female scholars have raised their concerns with women's empowerment, which have been picked up by the gender and development agenda, and have drawn important attention to the unequal power relations which block women's capacity to participate in and help influence development processes (Kabeer 2012:6). Studies conducted in Bangladesh reported that women's economic employment had positive impacts on their lives, materially on a surface level but also in cognitive, relational and behavioral ways. This implies that in the context of Bangladesh, compared to those who were unemployed, women that obtained paid work experienced positive changes in their life that exceeded beyond the economic domain but also had positive social implications (Kabeer 2012:20). Their economic independence helped contribute to their overall empowerment and improved position within their families and society. These positive effects, however, depended on the nature of employment in question, as was suspected earlier. According to the study, a wide-range of informal work was less consistently positive in its social impact. For instance, "economic activity within the confines of family relations, particularly unpaid productive work in farm and family enterprises hold out the weakest transformative potential for women's lives" (Kabeer 2012:20). Studies have shown that employment can empower women and improve their position in society but the many inconsistencies in research so far make it impossible to assume a direct link at this point in time. In contexts such as Pakistan, where there are strict gender roles set in place, a lot of work must be done in changing mentalities before women's employment can produce the desired outcomes.

Since "employment plays a central role in shaping gender identities and gender relations, it has important implications for understanding women's risks of spousal violence" (Macmillan 1999: 947). Ross Macmillan and Rosemary Gartner treat employment as a symbolic, rather than simply socioeconomic resource (Macmillan 1999: 947). Given the multi-dimensional and complex relationship between poverty and domestic violence within the Pakistani context, it would be useful to adopt this perspective of the symbolic nature of employment, particularly in cultural contexts where there are rigid gender roles constructed by society. Understanding the symbolic meaning and implications of employment on gender roles and gender power dynamics can lead to a better assessment on whether employment of the woman can ensure greater physical security. Results of the research revealed that the

effect of a woman's employment on her risk of domestic violence from her husband is conditioned by the employment status of her partner (Macmillan 1999). What they imply is that in strict patriarchal societies with concrete gender roles such as Pakistan, if the woman is employed and the husband is not, this could put her at risk to more violence. In such cases, women become vulnerable to violence at the hands of their husbands in an attempt to assert his dominance and coercively control the woman (Macmillan, 1999). From this point of view, "the meaning of employment for one partner can only be understood in relation to the employment status of the other partner" (Macmillan 1999: 948). This perspective could explain why the women Diep spoke about still experienced domestic abuse from their husbands despite the fact that they were employed (because their husbands often were not).

It is important to note that, although many scholars agree that the employment status of wives and husbands are likely to affect the prevalence and risk of marital violence (Allen & Straus, 1980; Johnson, 1995), empirical research on this relationship is inconclusive (Macmillan, 1999). Employment, however, can provide much more than just economic resources. Macmillan and Gartner (1999) argue that employment has crucial symbolic importance for one's identity and mental health (Gecas 1989; Kohn & Schooler 1983) as well as physical consequences such as a woman's security. For instance, the latter can be related to employment being a critical means of constructing masculinity for men (Connell 1995; Thoits 1992). Because employment is a symbol of masculinity in Pakistan, women's employment could be perceived as emasculating, therefore threatening male superiority which could lead to outbursts of violence against women. Kalmuss and Straus (1990) point out that employed women are less dependent on their husbands, while unemployed women often lack the money and resources to escape violent or abusive relationships nor have the power to negotiate changes in their husband's behavior due to their dependency on him. This perspective suggests that women's employment could reduce domestic violence by increasing their economic independence, or at least provide them with the resources to be able to leave their husbands and support themselves. The problem with this understanding is that employment is only conceptualized as an indicator of access to economic resources and too little significance is accorded to the symbolic dimensions of employment (Macmillan 1999: 949). In fact, "employment as a symbolic resource may be equally if not more important for understanding its effects on marital relations including the risks of spousal violence" (Macmillan 1999: 949). This understanding is crucial in exploring the relation between employment and domestic violence in the context of Pakistan because employment in itself holds a lot of symbolic meaning.

An important point Macmillan makes is that "understanding the symbolic nature of employment and its effects on spousal violence begins with the view that marriages are exchange relationships governed by culturally defined principles of equity and status expectations" (1999: 949). Because

employment is expected from men in Pakistan, female employment will affect marital relations because it challenges the status quo and what is expected of women. Kessler and McRae found that women's employment itself- rather than income or employment status- had significant effects on husbands' mental health, the most detrimental effect being the loss of the husband's role as the sole breadwinner as well as their wives' economic independence (Macmillan 1999: 949). What's important to take away from this is that because notions of masculinity are strongly related to being a good provider and breadwinner, as well as the fact that masculinity is constructed in relation to femininity, patterns of employment such as female employment can threaten masculine identity and result in violence (Macmillan 1999: 949). What this means is that a woman's employment could actually increase her risk of violent abuse rather than make her safer, especially if her husband is unemployed because it "signified a challenge to the culturally prescribed norm of male dominance and female dependence" (Macmillan 1999: 949). Violence could be used as a means of reinstating and enforcing a man's authority over his wife (Hotaling & Sugarman 1990).

Agreeing with Macmillan's argument, in the case of Pakistan, women in the labour force are not less vulnerable to domestic violence. In Pakistan, employment has social implications and therefore has symbolic meaning. Further conclusions made by the Macmillan study stated that "the direct measures of socioeconomic resources, including personal and household income" were "of little consequence" and that domestic violence against women reflected "efforts to dominate and control women in marital relationships" (1999: 957). This finding confirms that the victimization of women has more to do with Pakistani culture, ideology and the structure of society. Therefore, economic independence of the woman cannot ensure greater safety against domestic violence in the context of Pakistan.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

According to the recent estimates made by international NGOs and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, domestic violence is one of the greatest threats to Pakistani women's security, health and well-being (Amnesty International, 2005; HRCP, 2006). Although Pakistan receives a lot of international attention related to terrorism, what often escapes media coverage is the risk Pakistani women face to various forms of violence on a daily basis. The severity of this issue ought to make violence against women an imminent threat to Pakistani security and should urgently be placed on the top of the security agenda. There has been very few research studies published from Pakistan on this alarming social epidemic despite its strikingly high prevalence (Fikree & Bhatti 1999; Shaikh 2000; Fikree 2005). Pakistan has yet to commission a national-level study to accurately determine the prevalence of domestic violence within the country (Khan 2008). Cases of violence against women continue to rise in recent years yet little effort has been made in implementing effective measures in place to put an end to it (Zia 2012: 95). This is a matter of grave concern.

The first half of this paper sought to understand and explain the high prevalence of gender violence in Pakistan by addressing how violence against women is sustained and legitimized from within society. Macmillan's research demonstrated "the need to incorporate dimensions of both interpersonal relationships and social structure into explanations of spousal violence against women" (Macmillan 1999: 957). This research did just that and looked at interpersonal relationships, namely, family dynamics and constructed gender roles as well as the social structure of Pakistan including religion, culture and the patriarchal nature of society. It highlighted how the combination of religion, tradition, culture, the justice system, customary practices and unequal gender roles perpetuate and justify violence against women. Lori Heise identified a range of structural, societal and individual level issues that maintain violence against women relating to four key factors which are cultural, economic, legal and political (Heise 1994). Heise's ecological framework has been used to better understand domestic violence and has been adopted in many follow-up research studies on this topic (Krug 2002; Garcia- Moreno 2005). Her framework is comprised of four components or interlocking circles with the "individual" as the innermost circle extending outwards to the "relationships", the "community" and the "society" (Khan 2008: 240). Heise conceptualizes domestic violence as a product or interaction of these four factors at different levels of society (Khan 2008: 240).

Figure 2: An Integrated Ecological Model of Domestic Violence (Source: Heise 1998)

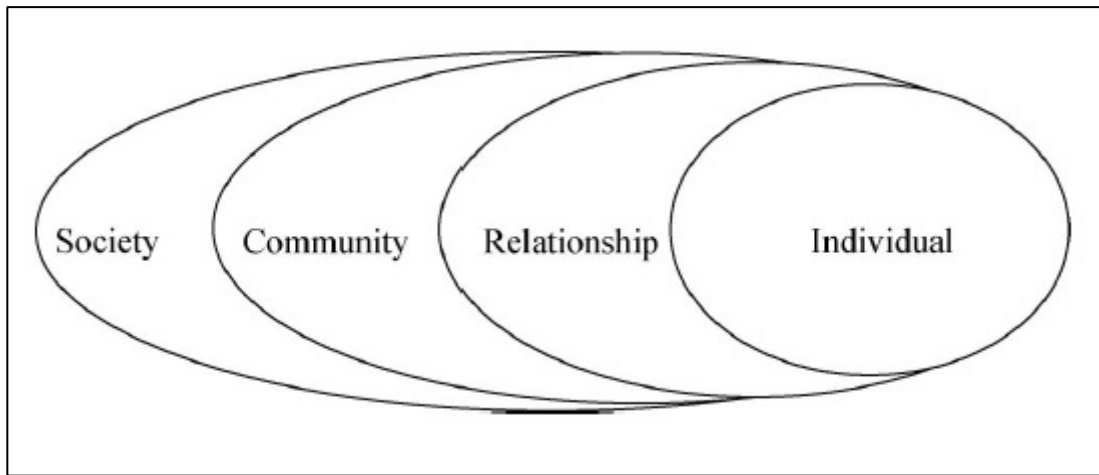


Figure 2 illustrates Heise’s model, where the innermost circle signifies the personal history each “individual” brings to the “relationship” that interacts with the context in which violence occurs (the relationship) (Khan 2008:240). The “community” represents the formal and informal institutions and structures in which relationships are embedded and lastly, the society makes up the outermost circle which refers to the economic and social environment including cultural norms (Khan 2008: 240). This paper took a very similar perspective as Heise’s ecological framework in understanding domestic violence in Pakistan. The four components this paper used in explaining the high prevalence of gender violence in Pakistan was primarily culture, religion, Pakistani law and unequal gender roles. All four of these indicators can be applied to Heise’s model and used to explain how domestic violence occurs within different levels and aspects of society, extending towards the “individual”, “the relationship”, the “community” and the “society” (Heise 1994).

The results of a number of studies conducted across South Asia (Fernandez 1997; Miller 1999; Ahmed-Ghosh 2004) suggest that violence against women is most commonly associated with hierarchical and inequitable gender relations (Khan 2008: 240). This paper agrees that unequal gender roles and the patriarchal structure of society have a significant impact on maintaining and perpetuating violence against women. Because it is a mentality that must be changed, this research suggests that outside factors such as level of education, socio-economic status or employment will not have major or sustainable effects in women’s empowerment or safety against gender violence. The media is an influential platform that can have a significant positive impact on changing perceptions of women’s roles and understanding of violence against women in Pakistan. Given the media’s power to inform, educate and create awareness, “it is imperative that serious thought is given to the substance and message” of the media, “including

basic ground rules regarding the way in which women are represented” (Zia 2012: 40) in the public sphere. This may have a positive effect on how women are perceived in the private domain, within their families and communities. The Pakistani government needs to take a strong position on highlighting violence against women as an issue of public concern and ensure the media take responsibility for how women are represented and treated (Zia 2012: 39). Furthermore, efforts should be made to implement gender sensitization workshops for both policy makers and media practitioners (Zia 2012: 39) as well as within educational institutions starting from a young age.

The Government has made efforts to highlight the issue of domestic violence through the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill which was unanimously passed in the National Assembly in 2009. This Government backed support unfortunately faded by the time the law reached the Senate and the bill was allowed to lapse (Zia 2012: 99). This displayed that the Government showed little interest in implementing such an important piece of legislation and failed to prioritize women’s safety against domestic violence. The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) criticized the domestic violence bill expressing that the law was discriminatory towards men and that it would lead to the police trampling the sanctity of the home and overstepping into the private sphere of the family (Zia 2012: 99). This reaction shows how strong the patriarchal mentality is and how far its power reaches. The reality is, until unequal, stereotypical gender roles in Pakistani society are challenged, “examined and interrogated, women will remain limited by their socially perceived roles as child bearers and nurturers that denies their human potential and maintains their vulnerability to different forms of violence in both private and public spheres” (Zia 2012: 38). Although positive laws may come forward, the implementation of these laws and the patriarchal mindset of society remain the biggest hurdles in overcoming violence against women in Pakistan (Zia 2012: 99).

There are a number of studies in South Asia that have shown positive social impacts on women’s lives through employment but it has also in some cases resulted in more violence towards women and put them at more risk in both the public sphere, the workforce and the private sphere, within the family (Kabeer 2012: 53). This paper suggests that in the case of Pakistan, employment and economic independence of the woman does not ensure greater security against gender violence or domestic physical abuse. Although men are generally the breadwinners, a large number of women in Pakistan do work but there is insufficient evidence showing that employment can empower women as victims of domestic violence and gender related attacks include women that work. Often women that have paid work end up having to give their earnings to their husbands as they lack the power and agency to decide what to do with their money. In other cases, female employment has perpetuated more violence as it can be perceived as challenging the honor and ego of the man. Female employment has known to alter the

dynamics within a marriage for the worse, particularly if the man is unemployed (Macmillan 1999). In scenarios where a job were to possibly lead to a sense of new found female empowerment and independence, it is more likely that the job would be taken away from her - under the orders of her male family members or husband - before it can have any lasting positive effect on her position and safety within society. Victims of domestic violence include a whole range of demographics and do not come from particular religious or socio-economic backgrounds. In fact, victims of gender violence in Pakistan include all ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

Social and community norms deeply influence how individuals and their families perceive and understand domestic violence. Studies have shown that women are often ambivalent towards domestic violence as they experience discrimination and inequality from birth (Fikree & Pasha 2004) and “see older women around them internalizing their subservient position and becoming silent victims of oppression and violence, which is commended as a virtue by their family and society”(Khan 2008: 249). Given that women are a product of their society and have never experienced anything else, it is not surprising that “many accept violence as part of the social and cultural norms relations to gender relations” (Khan 2008: 249). Many female participants that filled out questionnaires suggested that in order to tackle gender violence, women should be made aware of their rights as well as stand up for themselves and speak against such violence. Kabeer made a similar suggestion in the case of female employment, explaining that “the organizational capacity of working women... may be the missing ingredient that can help to transform women’s access to paid work in to an economic pathway to empowerment and citizenship (2012: 54). Although the number of women seeking employment is on the rise, they still face considerable discrimination due to social restrictions and the practical difficulties of holding down a job (Zia 2012: 66). This reality will not change if gender roles and the traditional patriarchal mindset are not challenged. The Senior Project Coordinator of Women Worker’s Help Line, Raja Shoaib stressed during his interview the importance of education in combating the high prevalence of gender violence. He explained that in order to eradicate such violence you would need to redefine Pakistani society. Reflecting on his own education, Raja expressed that women were never presented as leaders or heroes in school curriculums or stories. Women were not represented as empowered or strong and were typically displayed in stereotypical gender roles, most commonly teachers, nurses or mothers. In fact women did not express individual identity or agency at all. This, he believed, negatively influenced the way young boys perceived women in their adulthood as well as how young girls saw themselves. He expressed concern over the safety and lack of quality education in Pakistan, recalling many incidents in his educational career where students were often “slapped” or “struck” by their teachers. If children experience violence within their homes and communities as well as in school from an early age, they will

grow up within an environment and society that normalizes violence and perpetuates violence against women. As was mentioned by Raja and many participants who filled in questionnaires, there seems to be a consensus that, “we can end this from our society by educating and disciplining our children, especially the boys” (female participant, nurse, aged 53). The root cause of the high prevalence of gender violence is the discriminatory perception and patriarchal mindset of a woman’s value and expected role, embedded deep within the culture, history and fabrication of Pakistan society. As long as women are perceived and treated as inferior to men, the high prevalence of violence against women in Pakistan will not change.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire about Gender Violence

1. Person's Info:
 - a. Date of Birth : _____
 - b. Home Town : _____
 - c. Sex : _____
 - d. Level of education: _____
 - e. Occupation: _____

2. Experiences of Gender Violence
 - a. How would you describe the different roles of men and women in Pakistani society? What is expected of them and how are they each expected to behave?

 - b. Have you witnessed/experienced cases of gender violence (domestic and/or honor related- please specify) within your family, circle of friends, community, neighborhood etc? If so, can you give examples?

 - c. In your experience, how prevalent is gender violence within the Christian community?

 - d. In your opinion, what is the root cause of the high prevalence of gender violence within Pakistani society? What factors influence the high occurrence of violence?

 - e. In your opinion, would economic independence of the woman protect her against violence or would it encourage it more?

 - f. How would you tackle/fight this issue of gender violence? In what ways would you counter violence against women?