

Global Lessons, Local Solutions - Integrating International Perspectives into Intimate Partner Violence in Pakistan

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Abstract

In Pakistan, intimate partner violence is an ugly truth that affects everyone, particularly women. The laws are there to prosecute the guilty and save the victims, but they just fail when implemented. The victims usually hush up the matter due to societal embarrassment, fear of retaliation, financial difficulties, or simply being unaware of the legal recourse. There are legal assistance, shelters, and NGOs that attempt to put things together, but these are scant and in patchy areas. The judicial proceedings are protracted and the requirements of proof are astronomical, so that a successful prosecution or protective measure is a roll of the dice. Strong traditions and rigid, old-fashioned patriarchal values simply allow violence to simmer. The government, of course, makes its attempts, with such measures as awareness campaigns and helplines, which, in most situations, barely push the change into motion, but in isolation, those measures seldom suffice. In many cases, a wide range of states actually does.

Keywords: Assistance Mechanisms, Awareness, Insight, International Perspectives, Prevention

Introduction

Intimate partner violence damages individuals anywhere (IvyPanda, 2022; Oh & Connolly, 2022; World Health Organization, 2022). And it is not simply a theoretical concept (Berg et al., 2022; Mukhalalati et al., 2020; Waitz, 2024) - it has affected women everywhere (Brown, 2022; Choi, 2022; Hobbs et al., 2024; Seggi, 2022), and in Pakistan, this problem is quite real, and only partially legally and through state projects, the government is trying to keep up with the suffering of many (Jafree, 2023; Kamal, 2025; Pakistan Gender News, 2025). Nationally, the prevalence of women who experience violence is quite significant, approximately 10 percent (Centre for Research and Security Studies, 2023). Some research indicates that, according to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics data, almost one-third of women say they have been physically injured by their partners, and approximately one-quarter allege mental cruelty (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2025). Being mistreated, which may result in death, serious injury, or long-term

disability, remains something that bothers communities in deep ways (Alexander, 2023; Carroll et al., 2023; Grills et al., 2022).

Violence does not have a single face (Bodino, 2022; Dolson, 2024; Korde & Raghavan, 2023). Of course, you can see physical harm (Crothers & Sabetta, 2022; Lim, 2022; Maharaj et al., 2022), but there are also sexual (Dreal et al., 2022; Flannery, 2022), economic (Levell, 2022; Thapar, 2022; Weiss et al., 2022), and psychological violence (Chan et al., 2023; Like, 2024; Schuster, 2022; Skoczylis & Andrews, 2022) that slowly, silently tears lives to pieces (Cities & Pilgrim, 2022; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). In Pakistan, there is a common cultural belief that states that women's woes are meant to remain confidential (Shahid, 2024). Repeated by the victims and even occasionally the law enforcers, this notion leaves many women unable to find a solution to their predicament, and legal assistance is usually beyond their reach (Berkeley University of California, 2022; Keys, 2022; Penn & Davenport, 2022).

Pakistan distinctively works its laws. In the Islamic Republic, decisions are made following debates within the legislative community and input rounds of the powerful Islamic institutions (Bhamani et al., 2023). A major actor, in this regard, is the Council of Islamic Ideology, a constitutional body established in 1973 (Wagha, 2024). They must make sure that the new laws do not contradict Islam, or, in other words, that everything is compatible with the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah (Khan, 2025).

Research Justification

In Pakistan, intimate partner violence is a huge, daily problem, but we do not yet fully understand the frequency of it or all of its variations and consequences. There is raw data, but it is scarce, and many are left wondering about the combination of economic, emotional, and physical violence that human beings endure. In the vast majority of situations, research can take a more in-depth look at how these laws are being enforced, identify the vulnerable spots of the legal frameworks, and reveal how the victims can have trouble locating the justice they are entitled to.

The way intimate partner violence is realized on the ground is also shaped by cultural beliefs, gender roles, and the general attitudes in everyday society. As in most cases, an immersion into the societal mechanisms may bring some unexpected differences between what is stated on paper and what is really going on in practice. Add to that, lots of victims encounter a web of obstacles in seeking help, such as social stigma, economic interdependency that is difficult to overcome, and the illusion of unavailability of support services. A deeper examination of those challenges, including both stories and statistics, can reveal not just the emotional and physical burden but also the ways in which the same system designed to keep them safe tends to fail.

Research Methodology

Numerous issues arise as a result of a large amount of scholarly literature ([Cardano, 2020](#); [Ravitch & Carl, 2020](#); Wadsworth, 2020). One is how to fully document and evaluate the status of knowledge on a specific aspect (Acharyya & Bhattacharya, 2019; [Devlin, 2020](#)). A systematic review method is an effective tool (Flick, 2020; Machado & Davim, 2020; Mukherjee, 2019) for accomplishing this.

The continual increase of research and the need to synthesize available content resulted in the formal establishment of the systematic review method in the late twentieth century (Higgins et al., 2011; Meerpohl et al., 2012). The systematic review method systematically assesses and compiles all pertinent empirical information to give a comprehensive interpretation of study findings (Hammond & Wellington, 2020; Kumar, 2019). Although the systematic review method is most often employed in the social sciences (Dawson, 2019; [Giri & Biswas, 2020](#)), it is also used in management sciences, law studies, life sciences, earth sciences, and physical sciences (Gilbody, 2005; Machado & Davim, 2020; O'Hagan, 2006; Pullin & Stewart, 2006).

The systematic review approach has many advantages (Kettunen & Makela, 2019; Moriarty, 2020). To begin, they provide a concise and comprehensive summary of the available data on a particular subject (Dawson, 2019; [Hennink et al., 2020](#)). Additionally, it assists in identifying research gaps in a field's existing understanding (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). They can draw attention to methodological issues in research projects, enhancing future work in the field ([Chilisa, 2019](#)). Finally, they may be used to identify clear answers based on current data and do not require further study (Hammond & Wellington, 2020). Conducting systematic reviews, particularly for new writers, has been demonstrated to be a valuable endeavor ([Giri & Biswas, 2020](#)). Authors get a deeper understanding of their topic area of interest, generate fresh research ideas, and build critical abilities for synthesizing current material ([Cardano, 2020](#); Machado & Davim, 2020).

This research was formed by a systematic review method. The research objectives are determined in this method, and an extensive literature review is done on the subject (Komba & Lwoga, 2020). The research findings are classified according to the subject's content (Hiver et al., 2021; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Classified information is included in the study by organizing it as headings (Gan et al., 2021; Pawson et al., 2005). The flow of the study is formed by evaluating classified information and titles (Page, 2021; Rahi, 2017). Thus, integrity is ensured by considering the researched subject with its contents (Egger et al., 2022; Victor, 2008). Consequently, this technique was selected, and the associated processes were observed. Reviewing the relevant literature resulted in accumulating data and information coded according to the study goals. The coded data were grouped by subject. After classifying and merging the subjects, they were ordered by degree of connection. The criteria for selection are listed.

1. **Relevance:** Researches that directly addressed the questions posed by this study are included.
2. **Quality:** Studies that meet a certain quality threshold (e.g., methodological rigor, bias risk) are included. Most of the research is from Scopus-indexed and Clarivate Analytics journals and reputed publishers.
3. **Recency:** Consideration of the publication date to ensure that the review reflects the most current evidence. Most of the studies are from the last three years.
4. **Language:** Only studies published in English are included.
5. **Data Completeness:** Previous studies must provide sufficient data on outcomes of interest for practical synthesis; this is also ensured in this research.

This study did not use primary data from human participants; therefore, no ethics clearance letter from the ethics committee was required.

Literature Review

A literature review possesses a variety of distinguishable traits and imperatives (Dubey & Kothari, 2022; Kara, 2022; Webb et al., 2021). The first need is for the reviewer to provide a thorough yet pragmatic assessment of the material under consideration (Gravetter & Forzano, 2021; Nassaji, 2015). By engaging with and criticizing previous research, the researcher must balance demonstrating criticality through inquisitive (Creswell & Creswell, 2022) and considered arguments about the assumptions (Singh, 2022), theories (Pajo, 2022), and methods used and simultaneously acknowledging the validity of the study's findings, insights, and strengths (Nichols & Edlund, 2023; Purssell & McCrae, 2020; Trochim & Donnelly, 2021).

Second, literature reviews should go beyond a descriptive recitation of previously published material and contain a thread – a train of thought – that gradually leads to the study subject for which the review is being done (Islam et al., 2022; Watkins, 2022). It involves finding gaps in the existing body of knowledge (Babbie, 2021; Gobo et al., 2022; Harris, 2019; Kenneavy et al., 2022). A third aspect, which receives less emphasis, is that evaluations continue throughout the length of a research project instead of the usual notion that they commence at the beginning and conclusion (Bell, 2022; Fink, 2019; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2021). The review will continue to evolve as the study proceeds, necessitating improvements and alterations (Cheek & Oby, 2023; Leavy, 2022). It is because empirical findings may drive the study in a different direction, requiring revisions to earlier arguments, and also because discoveries occur regularly, and the research must reflect and be as up-to-date as feasible (Cozby, 1997; Fox & Bayat, 2007; Hempel, 2019).

In Pakistan, women are the main ones who suffer as a result of intimate partner violence (Khan, 2025). Under the Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, 2006, several provincial laws have been enacted, but their utilization remains ineffective (Pakistan Gender News, 2025; Shahid, 2024). Investigations have identified that the primary sources of conflicts between laws and practice are the deeply rooted patriarchal thoughts, institutional issues, and the lack of awareness among the victims and law implementers (Gul, 2025).

The greatest legal barrier is that legal procedures are complicated to understand and occur at a slow pace (Pakistan Today, 2023). The cases of intimate partner violence are problematic as the victims find it hard to provide sufficient evidence. What is more, it often occurs privately and is hardly ever reported by the individuals who observe it (Ali & Gavino, 2008; Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2024). In addition, many individuals are not able to pursue justice because of social pressure as well as the fear that nothing terrible would happen to them (Fikree & Bhatti, 1999; United Nations, 2024). Cultural norms make women ashamed of speaking up and aid violence the persistence (Pasha, 2024).

Police lacked full support and understanding of gender matters on the part of institutions, and police often declare intimate partner violence a personal matter, which shatters the investigations and their success in such instances (Bacha 2025). Although the shelters and NGOs are important, they do not have the required resources and are limited in

number and thus, they can only provide assistance to a limited number of areas (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2024).

Helplines and interviews are part of new government actions to face such concerns (Human Rights Watch, 2025). But many times, projects do not receive enough resources or fail to be done in the same way, so they do not continue to count (UN Women Pakistan, 2023; United Nations, 2024). To achieve meaningful progress, legal rules need to be updated, the public needs to know more, and authorities must be trained (Jafree, 2023; Kamal, 2025).

An Insight into Intimate Partner Violence in Pakistan

1. **Challenges:** Even though there are laws on the books meant to keep such violence in check, things rarely work out neatly in practice. Poor enforcement, corruption, a general lack of awareness, and restricted access to the courts all mix with a lingering social stigma that makes reporting violence hard, if not nearly impossible.
2. **Cultural and societal factors:** Old-fashioned ideas and a potent patriarchal mindset mix here. Many women feel they must keep quiet about mistreatment, largely because society, in most cases, frowns upon speaking out and doesn't want to stir up controversy. It's a kind of silent acceptance driven by tradition and the fear of being stigmatized.
3. **Efforts for prevention and awareness:** At the same time, there's a steady push to prevent this kind of violence and to spotlight women's rights and gender equality. You can see it in community programs, various educational projects, lively media campaigns, and persistent calls for policy changes—all working (in most cases) to build a more caring and supportive space for survivors. These efforts, repeating their message again and again, remind everyone that change, even if gradual, is undoubtedly on the horizon.
4. **Impact on victims:** Violence inflicts not just physical harm and deep emotional scars but also sets folks up for financial dependency and limits basic chances to learn or work. Young females caught in the crossfire, too, often end up carrying long-lasting burdens that affect their overall growth and well-being, even when it seems like the damage isn't visible at first glance.
5. **Legal framework:** The country has made an effort on the legal front by putting laws in place – think intimate partner violence acts and tweaks to the Pakistan Penal Code – intended to shield victims and bring wrongdoers to justice. In reality, though, pushing these laws into action can get pretty messy.
6. **Prevalence:** Intimate partner violence in Pakistan reaches across all walks of life—it touches women, girls, and, on occasion, even men, regardless of their background. Still, it's mostly the women who end up taking the most brutal hit, with many enduring not only physical blows but also emotional and psychological scars right where home was meant to be a haven.
7. **Role of the CJS:** Pakistan's criminal justice system is a key player in tackling intimate partner violence—it dives into cases, chases down wrongdoers, and works hard to secure justice for its victims. Yet, inherent obstacles – like lengthy court delays, a shortage of trained personnel, and deep-seated social biases – can, generally speaking, hamper its ability to respond as effectively as intended.
8. **Support services:** In Pakistan, both government groups and local organizations try to step in, offering shelters, legal help, counseling, and plans to help survivors rebuild their lives. Still, these lifelines often run low on resources and, in many cases, don't reach everyone who needs them.

Assistance Mechanisms for Victims of Intimate Partner Violence in Pakistan

1. **Counseling and therapy:** Survivors of intimate partner violence can get help in ways that aren't always laid out in neat categories. One-on-one or group sessions give people a chance to work through emotional scars, slowly rebuild confidence, and learn new ways to cope. Even kids who have seen or experienced violence might sometimes get this counseling support.
2. **Crisis hotlines:** There are also crisis hotlines that jump in when things get overwhelming. A call might connect you with someone who quietly listens, helps you figure out safety plans, explains your legal options, and points you toward other supports—all in a very confidential manner.
3. **Legal aid and advocacy:** Legal assistance isn't far behind in offering help. Some groups work to ease the burden when survivors need things like protection orders, divorce assistance, or help to sort out custody battles. Generally speaking, a legal advocate will guide you through filing complaints, arranging restraining orders, and even standing up for you in court.
4. **Medical Support:** Helping survivors of intimate partner violence deal with both visible wounds and unseen emotional scars is a vital role for hospitals and healthcare workers. Generally speaking, clinics and hospitals don't just run routine checkups and treat injuries—they also supply emergency contraception and often steer patients toward more niche support like forensic evaluations and counseling, covering both immediate care and longer-term healing.

5. **Shelters and safe houses:** And then some shelters provide a temporary haven when escaping violence becomes urgent. These places offer not only a secure spot to sleep but also essentials like food, clothing, and a little bit of support while survivors and their children work out what comes next.

Insights from International Perspectives for Pakistan

Community engagement is key, and looking at initiatives in Pakistan alongside others really sheds light on innovative ways to get people involved, support survivors, and raise awareness. Things like peer support groups (Burton, 2022; Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy, 2022; United Nations, 2022; Wales Violence Prevention Unit, 2022), faith-based programs (Drew, 2022; Gamas, 2022; Ullman et al., 2022), and youth advocacy (Ginneken & Wooldredge, 2024; King, 2022) are working well. It makes you wonder if these could be adapted to fit local needs and make a real difference (Bosworth & Hoyle, 2022; Edubirdie, 2022; Godfrey et al., 2022; United Nations, 2023).

Now, cultural context also matters a whole lot (Gunther & Pfeifer, 2022; Kondrat & Connolly, 2022; Linning et al., 2022). When you understand the cultural norms, beliefs, and customs about intimate partner violence in other parts of the world, you can then contextualize the issue within broader social and cultural frameworks (Hofmans & Bos, 2022; Loveless, 2022; Study.com, 2022c). It's interesting to see the differences and similarities in how people view gender roles, family, and even just asking for help (Mears & Stafford, 2022; Online MSW Programs, 2022). All this is crucial for creating approaches that resonate with people (Martin, 2023; Pankowiak et al., 2022; Study.com, 2022a).

The government's role is vital, too (Dolson, 2024; Ginneken & Wooldredge, 2024; Milroy et al., 2022; Segrave & Vasil, 2024). Comparing how governments are responding to intimate partner violence – things like funding, services, and how they're coordinating efforts – helps us understand what works on a bigger scale (Alexander, 2023; Like, 2024; Simplilearn, 2022). Seeing how others are integrating their policies, working together across different sectors, and using their resources is what can guide our efforts to build stronger systems and provide better support (Hobbs et al., 2024; StudyCorgi, 2022). Analyzing the country's intimate partner violence laws and policies alongside those of other nations helps identify their advantages and disadvantages as well as necessary changes (Skalli & Eltantawy, 2023; Waitz, 2024). One way to help victims of crime, ensure those responsible are punished, and protect survivors is by looking at practices that work globally (Carroll et al., 2023; Chan et al., 2023; Study.com, 2022b).

Prevention and Awareness Regarding Intimate Partner Violence

1. **Local grassroots initiatives:** Community outreach programs help people see and touch the actual problems, i.e., intimate partner violence and gender fairness in the given case. Most community projects organize free but educational events that can take unpredictable turns: one day you can watch a practical workshop in a community center, and the next day an interactive street performance in a local school.
2. **Mass media campaigns:** Mass media campaigns attempt to drive home the point on how widespread intimate partner violence may be and what its long-term consequences may hold. You'll often see print advertisements intermingled with live radio spots, television advertisements, and even energetic community gatherings -the message reiterated in various ways to put to shame any remaining cultural beliefs that might somehow abet such violence without intending to do so.
3. **Religious and cultural sensitization:** Community leaders and religious leaders influence the way their communities feel and behave, sometimes in very small everyday gestures that are not easily noticed. Sensitization programs occasionally bring together imams, elders, and other community leaders in a combination of discussions and practical sessions in an attempt to promote concepts of gender equity, respect, and non-violence, ideas that are still closely connected to culture and religion.
4. **Education at school:** The role of schools is also important, as young people are taught in school how to deal with relationships and conflicts. Numerous education programs currently combine crucial teachings about consent, respect, and empathy with feasible advice about intervening when needed, a sort of bystander intervention to stop intimate partner violence. The curriculum is not usually presented in a rigid, one-size-fits-all manner; in most cases, it seems more like a spontaneously flowing discussion, complete with certain redundancies and informal elements that help the material stick in the real-world environment.
5. **Training for professionals:** Officers, medical personnel, teachers, and legal advocates receive trainings that vary between identifying the slightest hints of violence and acquiring trauma-sensitive care and referral systems. By and large, the technical knowledge contained in these training programs is combined with a no-nonsense attitude, and a certain degree of style variations are permitted with one goal in mind, namely to ensure that when an incident happens, assistance is never too far away.

Discussion

This issue has a lot of sides, including the legislation, social attitudes, governmental behavior, testimonies of victims, and the issues of managing this frequently occurring problem. Pakistan has made a lot of progress in developing legislation to combat intimate partner violence. Thus, the victims are able to receive protection orders, restraining orders, and legal assistance against the offenders. However, the enforcement of such laws remains a problem due to a lack of resources, a lack of training on the law enforcement side, and an unjust social attitude that predisposes to gender-based violence.

Cultural and societal factors contribute to sustaining intimate partner violence in Pakistan. Due to traditional gender roles and patriarchy, as well as the acceptance of violence against women, violence is normal. Some of the efforts to transform these deeply rooted perceptions and practices involve putting forward efforts towards gender equality, putting to shame the use of stereotypes, and supporting women and marginalized groups to excel.

Conclusion

Addressing intimate partner violence in Pakistan can be achieved through legislation, enforcement of the law, services to assist victims, assisting the community, and attitudinal transformation on gender and violence. Although laws and information that are available to the people have advanced, implementing these laws is still difficult. As such, a good number of survivors are not just assisted. Rather, the bad quality of enforcement, resource insufficiency, and cultural barriers do not allow these responses to be effective. The law enforcement agencies are supposed to assist in responding to intimate partner violence, and they should receive additional training and equipment, and also collaborate with others to respond to the cases more effectively.

Recommendations

1. Ensure similar usage of laws in all provinces and regions across Pakistan.
2. Enhance the penalties for individuals who engage in intimate partner violence so as to deter the repetition of the crime.
3. Revising the current laws must ensure that the victims of intimate partner violence are shielded against any harm, that they are given emergency protection when required, and that the definition of violence is broadened.
4. Assist judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officers in enhancing their competence in handling cases of intimate partner violence effectively.
5. Specialize certain desks in the police and the court system to act on cases of intimate partner violence right away.
6. Handle cases promptly to administer fair outcomes and minimize the likelihood that victims may be victimized once more.
7. Ensure that shelters, crisis centers, and hotlines for victims of intimate partner violence are more accessible in rural locations.
8. Provide medical, legal, and psychological assistance to any victim of intimate partner violence.
9. Ensure that low-income people and women belonging to minority groups and other communities can use the support services.
10. In order to present a comprehensive answer to the problem of intimate partner violence, collaborate between government agencies, law enforcement, the court system, civil society organizations, and other countries.

Research Limitations

Victims are not likely to volunteer information on intimate partner violence to authorities because some of them may be ashamed, fear punishment, or respect the cultural rules. Therefore, obtaining sincere and comprehensive statistics may be occasionally difficult, meaning that the outcomes of the research are not always going to be just. Survivors of intimate partner violence, individuals employed within the legal system, and law enforcement-related individuals are sometimes hard to reach due to privacy, personal safety, and policy barriers. We can come up with a deeper and broader approach to the research when we start incorporating other perspectives and experiences.

Research Implications

Research facts can be used to inform policy, law, and rule changes regarding intimate partner violence in Pakistan. By relying on extensive evidence, policymakers can enhance laws, raise victim support, and respond to crimes through the criminal justice system. Through research on intimate partner violence, research can identify that law enforcement agencies and other communities have gaps in their capabilities of handling similar cases. To remedy these inadequacies, special programs and training may provide the professionals with the necessary expertise to handle the issue of intimate partner violence.

Future Research Directions

Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the dynamics of intimate partner violence incidence, patterns, and even terminations over time. After a long period of data collection and review, it may be possible to demonstrate trends, crucial risk factors, information, and the effectiveness of the measures being taken to prevent intimate partner violence. The next question to consider is the following: How are laws, policies, and interventions related to intimate partner violence implemented and functional across regions, provinces, and urban/rural locations in Pakistan? What practices are effective and need encouragement to bridge any gaps and gender inequities can be seen by looking at the differences in laws, and how organizations respond to social factors.

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