

Acid Attacks against Women in Pakistan: A Literature Study

Master's Thesis in

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Developmental Psychology

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Abstract

Aim: The study aimed to investigate acid attacks against women in Pakistan. The study describes the historical, social, cultural, and political context in which this type of gender violence has developed and provides implications.

Method: A literature review was applied. This involved reviewing the literature, both qualitative and quantitative studies, case studies, and reports by governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Results: Every year, hundreds of acid attacks happen to women in Pakistan. The acid violence has deep roots in the country's history, social norms, and cultural practices. Briefly, in a male-dominated society, women seeking education or employment outside the home are often targeted with violence. Victims not only suffer from physical and psychological trauma, but they also face social stigma and exclusion.

Conclusions: Education campaigns targeting men and boys could raise awareness. Survivors require social, psychological, and financial assistance. Policymakers need to develop their technical competency on this issue.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Aim of the Study

The study aimed to examine acid attacks against women in Pakistan. The study focuses on the socio-cultural aspects that contribute to this issue. It seeks to provide an understanding of the historical, social, cultural, and political context in which this issue has developed and the implications of such attacks for women in Pakistan.

1.2 Background

Women in Pakistan have been subjugated as it is infused in this orthodox culture. The violation of women's rights has been a prevalent issue for a long time, and it has greatly affected the lives of women in the country. This paper aims to analyze women's rights violations in-depth, including issues, history, causes, and consequences. Also, this study will discuss practical policies along with evidential data on safeguarding women's rights and their freedom in the country.

Human rights abuse, especially violence, and abuse against women and girls are present in every nation across the globe. It impacts every demographic and age group within society. Women are subjected to different forms of violence, which include sexual abuse by strangers, family members, and officials of the state, domestic abuse such as spousal murder, being threatened, burned, beaten, and attacked with acid, custodial abuse, and torture, as well as ritual honor killings, every day around the world.

Pakistan's ranking of 145 out of 146 regarding political participation and economic opportunities for women showcases the gender disparity prevalent within the country (World Economic Forum, 2022) This gender inequality undermines women's standing within society, leaving them vulnerable to violence. The idea that men are superior to women is the driving force behind gender-specific violence. The United Nations has passed the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women which holds the statement that gender-based violence includes any action, whether public or private, that causes bodily, psychological, or sexual harm to women, or that involves threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty (OHCHR, 1993). The Asia Forum on Women, Law, and Development (APWLD, 2022) defines gender-based violence as any action concerning the use of force or intimidation with the intention of disseminating or advocating hierarchical gender oppression. Gender-based violence is a social structure that forcefully maintains and perpetuates women's oppressed status equated to men (APWLD, 2022).

A patriarchal social system expresses itself through gender-based violence. Pakeez (2015), in her study, identifies violence as a socially constructed structure formulated in the subservience of women by men. Also, men adopt violent actions to subjugate women to enforce their authority over women's individuality and freedom. The patriarchal system necessitates violence to keep women under their authority. Feminist analysts, thus, find the patriarchal social system as the primary cause for gender-based oppression and aggressive actions against women. In Pakistan, the patriarchal system directs and dictates women's conduct in society by subjugating them via socio-cultural norms.

Yousaf and Purkayastha (2016) state in their interview study that hundreds of acid attack incidents take place in Pakistan but are not recorded or reported to the police due to honor issues of the family. Sometimes the victim dies due to the severity of injuries or the unavailability of medical services. Acid attack is a heinous crime that leaves a destructive mark on the lives of victims as well as on their families. Yousaf and Purkayastha (2016) also mention that the rehabilitation centers are not properly equipped to help the surviving victims to move on in their lives since the poor judicial system of Pakistan makes it almost impossible for victims to get justice and penalize the criminal in severe ways (Wallace & Duke, 2016). It is the responsibility of the state to make proper laws against gender-based violence and it plays a significant role in implementing as well as delivering justice to victims.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the prevalence and patterns of acid attacks on women in different regions of Pakistan?
2. What are the socio-cultural factors that contribute to the occurrence of acid attacks on women?
3. How do survivors of acid attacks perceive and cope with the aftermath of the attacks?
4. What are the barriers to accessing justice and support for survivors of acid attacks, and how can they be addressed?

2. Method

The literature review approach reviews existing literature, both qualitative studies and quantitative research, case studies, and published governmental and non-governmental organization (NGO) reports to better understand the research problem. The use of the literature review method allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the issue under study. These study objectives are to understand the experiences of acid attack survivors, their families, and the community they live in, as well as the legal and medical professionals who work with them.

This study reviews several quantitative studies that have collected data through surveys, from acid attack survivors, their families, and community members. Also, several of these quantitative studies measure the prevalence and impact of acid attacks on survivors, as well as the social and economic consequences for the family and community. Moreover, some reviewed quantitative studies measure the knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of the community toward acid attacks.

The thesis also reviews studies based on qualitative data such as recorded and published interviews with acid attack survivors, their families, and community members. For instance, the semi-structured interview studies provide a greater elaboration on victims' experiences and provide insights into the social-cultural factors that are reasons for acid attacks. Moreover, these interview-based studies have also explored coping mechanisms and support networks available to survivors and their families.

Finally, this thesis also reviewed several case studies to provide a detailed analysis of individual cases of acid attacks. The analysis of these case studies will provide an awareness of the experiences of the survivors and their families, as well as the response of the legal and medical systems. In addition, the thesis has analyzed secondary data sources, such as news reports, academic literature, and legal documents related to acid attacks. This will provide a broader context for the study and help identify patterns and trends in the incidence and impact of acid attacks.

In a summary, an analysis of both quantitative and qualitative studies, a discussion of case studies, and reviewing related laws provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The findings will be presented in a narrative format and will include quotes from the interviews to provide a sense of the experiences of the survivors and their families.

3. Results

3.1 The History and Demography of Pakistan

To understand the problems of acid attacks against women in Pakistan, it is necessary to examine the historical and demographic context of the country. Pakistan has a diverse community and a huge population with multicultural communities existing together. These multi-cultural communities have a common patriarchal system of society where men are head of the household and the epicenter of power, whereas women are only considered as subjects of their power and honor.

The demographic structure in Pakistan is significantly overpowered by men. Ali and Gavino (2008), explored that in Southeast Asian societies men are sole breadwinners and traditionally given authority to take primary decisions without the consent of women, and women are projected to be obedient yet subservient to their male households. This gender hierarchy has been running down through generations (Ahmed & Ahmad, 2019). This generational hierarchy has adversely contributed to the promotion and continuation of violence against women be it physical violence, torture, or acid attacks.

The second demographic factor that empowers men over women in society is the economic insecurity and poverty factor that persists in our society. Pakistan is a developing country but has a high level of poverty and economic insecurity that engulfs the women of the country the most. Bhattacharya (2014) in his study analyzes the economic condition of women in Pakistan and calls out to the socio-cultural authorities to empower women for the betterment of the generation. He describes poverty to be a chief reason for women's oppression in society and poverty is utilized by men to discourage them from earning their bread and going out of the home. Society is not flexible for women and does not allow them equal grounds to grow in careers, in economic stability, and enjoy their freedom.

To limit women from achieving goals, the first yet cruel practice done to them is keeping them out of schools and ripping their right to education. This not only lowers their confidence but also ensures their suppression and subjugation of their men. (Bhattacharya, 2014) Lack of education and right to knowledge keeps women in darkness and strips their power and authority from them. Bhattacharya (2014) also explains this symbolic act of society with a grave example that attaining financial independence needs a good education. Once women are kept from school they will be tamed in a manner that is suitable for the men of society which ensure their superiority as well as hegemony over women.

Another big factor that has kept women captive of social norms is religious fundamentalism. Pakistan is an Islamic country and religious fundamentalism has been an inclination toward the enhancement of modernity in the West (Haroon, Iftikhar, Kim, Volk, & Enright, 2021). This fundamentalism has led to orthodox yet conservative interpretations of Islam regarding gender roles. Not only gender roles are justified using Quranic verses, but some fanatic scholars also try to justify the violence against women through Islamic teachings. In their study, Haroon et al. (2021) observed that the demographic and the sociocultural structure of Pakistan made such an amalgam of orthodontically that limited the women in name of honor and dignity. This led to the initiation of such cultural practices that are unacceptable under any condition, e.g., honor killing, marriage with the Quran not sharing the father's property with sisters, dowry death, forced marriages, or selling of bride. Also, to take revenge on a woman or her family through the heinous act of acid throwing or acid attack is included in the list (Gulrez, 2016).

3.2 Women's Rights in Pakistan Today

For decades, the issue of safeguarding basic women's rights has been a point of contention in Pakistan. Despite constitutional guarantees, women in Pakistan are still facing significant obstacles when it comes to accessing their fundamental rights (Bhattachariya, 2020). Today women's rights in Pakistan are facing the following issues which include the legal framework, social attitudes, and obstacles that women are still encountering.

Pakistan's legal framework is aimed at safeguarding women's rights. The Constitution of Pakistan of 1973 offers equivalent rights to all citizens of the country, including women (Bhattachariya, 2020). It prohibits gender-based discrimination and necessitates state action to ensure that women participate fully in all aspects of national life. Various laws also protect women's rights in the country, such as the Protection of Women Act 2006, which outlaws domestic violence against women, and the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Bill, which prohibits throwing acid or similar attacks (Ali & Gavino, 2008).

Notwithstanding these legal protections, women in Pakistan still face discrimination and violence. Social attitudes toward women, particularly in rural areas, remain deeply patriarchal (Naylor & Ali, 2013). Women's engagement in the labor force is poor, and they are often confined to low-paying, low-skilled jobs. Access to education is also limited for many women, with only 47% of adult women being literate. Forced marriages, honor killings, and acid attacks are still common in several parts of the country (Bhattachariya, 2020). The obstacles that women in Pakistan face are compounded by inadequate implementation and enforcement of laws aimed at protecting their rights. Corruption, a

weak justice system, and a lack of political will have all contributed as a great hindrance to the advancement as well as improvement of women's rights in Pakistan (Bhattacharya, 2014).

Despite these challenges, in recent years some promising developments have been recorded. Women's rights organizations and civil society groups have been advocating for women's rights and have been successful in achieving legislative changes. Women's representation in politics has also increased, with the establishment of reserved seats for women in local and national assemblies (Qaisrani, Liaquat, Elishma, & Khokhar, 2016).

Women's rights in Pakistan are a multifaceted and complex issue. While the legal framework is in place to protect women's rights, social attitudes and cultural practices remain significant impediments. The challenges of implementing and enforcing laws aimed at safeguarding women's rights further complicate the issue (Butt & Mirza, 2019). Nevertheless, the active engagement of civil society groups and the increasing representation of women in politics offer hope for the future of the rights of women in Pakistan. The government and society at large must keep prioritizing and taking action to improve women's rights in Pakistan (Butt & Mirza, 2019).

Pakistan has made progress in the legislation of women's rights, but there is still a significant gap in achieving gender equality. This section will provide an overview of the status of women's rights in Pakistan, including the legal framework, policies, and practices that have been put in place to address gender inequality (Haroon et al., 2021).

3.3 Feminism and Feminist Theories

The feminist movement has a long and complex history that began in the late 19th century, as women sought to combat gender-based violence and achieve greater equality in society (Muneer, 2017). Feminist theory emerged to understand and address the structural and systemic factors that contribute to gender inequality, with a focus on the marginalization and hardship that women face in global politics. A detailed analysis of feminist theory, its objectives, and its impact on society, including an exploration of key concepts such as intersectionality, political representation, and patriarchy will be undertaken.

3.3.1 Objectives of Feminist Theory

The central objectives of feminist theory are to shed light on, comprehend, and address discrimination, and to reassure the field to acknowledge the significance of gendered politics. Feminist theory aims to challenge the social, economic, and political structures that perpetuate gender-based discrimination and to promote greater gender equity. One of the main goals of feminist

theory is to examine the advantages of certain masculine characters and methods of understanding and to explore the relationships between masculinity, men, femininity, and women. (Hadi, 2017).

Feminist theory is grounded in the idea of masculine bias, which refers to the pervasive cultural norms and beliefs that prioritize male perspectives and experiences over those of women (Amir-ud-Din, Fatima, & Aziz, 2018). Feminist theorists argue that this bias has historically led to the marginalization of women in all areas of society, including politics, economics, and social life. By challenging these biases, feminist theory aims to produce a more socially just and impartial society for all individuals, irrespective of their gender identity (Amir-ud-Din, Fatima, & Aziz, 2018).

3.3.2 Impact of Feminist Theory on Society

The feminist movement and its associated theories have had a profound impact on society, particularly in terms of raising awareness about issues of gender inequality and the unequal treatment of women. Feminist theory has focused on a range of different forms of inequality, including social, economic, and political inequalities, and aims to address them through research, education, and activism (Haroon et al., 2021).

One of the key contributions of feminist theory has been the development of the intersectionality framework (Butt & Mirza, 2019). This framework emphasizes the multiple and intersecting identities that shape a person's experiences of oppression and privilege, including factors such as race, class, sexuality, and disability. By recognizing how these identities intersect with gender to shape one's experiences, feminist theory has been able to develop more nuanced and comprehensive approaches to understanding and addressing inequality (Von, 2013).

Another significant impact of feminist theory has been its focus on gender-based discrimination in international politics (Von, 2013). Women are often underrepresented in political decision-making and face significant barriers to accessing leadership positions. Feminist theory has called for changes to these structures, including affirmative action policies, quota systems, and reforms to electoral systems, to ensure greater gender balance in politics. By advocating for greater gender representation in political decision-making, feminist theory aims to create more equitable and just political systems that better reflect the needs and interests of all individuals (Von, 2013).

Patriarchy is another key concept in feminist theory and refers to a social system in which men hold primary power and authority (Hadi, 2017). Patriarchy is seen as a root cause of gender-based discrimination and violence, and feminist theory critiques patriarchal norms and structures for their negative impacts on both men and women. This includes challenging traditional gender roles and expectations that limit men's emotional expression and involvement in caregiving, as well as promoting men's engagement in feminist movements as allies (Hadi, 2017). By challenging

patriarchal structures, feminist theory aims to create more equitable and just social systems that prioritize the needs and experiences of all individuals, regardless of their gender identity (Hadi, 2017).

The feminist theory offers a critical lens for understanding and addressing gender inequalities and promoting gender equity. By highlighting the structural and systemic factors that contribute to gender-based discrimination, the feminist theory provides a roadmap for social change and gender justice. The feminist theory emphasizes the importance of intersectionality, the need for political representation, and the challenge of patriarchy (Hadi, 2017).

3.4 Historical Background on Women's Rights and Movements in Pakistan

Pakistan has implemented numerous laws to safeguard women and provide them with protection since its independence. While there has been a consistent issue of policy implementation, the country has taken various steps to promote gender equality and women's rights. This section outlines the various acts that Pakistan has adopted to protect women and promote their welfare, in chronological order (Pakeeza, 2015).

The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance (MFLO) of 1961 was the first major legislative act concerning the welfare of women in Pakistan. This ordinance aimed to provide a legal framework for Muslim family law and facilitate the resolution of family disputes. It focused on regulating marriage, divorce, and maintenance for Muslim women, providing a legal basis for women's rights in these areas (Pakeeza, 2015).

In 1964, the West Pakistan Family Courts Act was enacted, which established family courts to hear and decide cases related to family disputes. This act aimed to provide women with easy access to justice in family disputes, recognizing the need for specialized family courts to address family disputes fairly and speedily.

The Dowry and Bridal Gifts Restriction Act of 1976 was a significant milestone in the defense of the rights of rural women (Bhattacharya, 2014). It aimed to eliminate the practice of dowry, which had become a social evil in Pakistan. This act aimed to prevent the exploitation of women by their families, who often demanded significant sums of money and gifts from the groom's family as a condition of marriage.

In 2004, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act was passed, which included amendments to several existing laws, aimed at providing greater protection to women (Ashraf & Abrar-ul-Haq, 2017). These amendments were designed to strengthen the legal framework for women's protection by criminalizing certain offenses, such as sexual assault, rape, and kidnapping.

The Protection of Women Act passed in 2006, revised the Hudood Ordinance, which had previously been used to prosecute women for adultery and other so-called immoral acts (Ashraf &

Abrar-ul-Haq, 2017). The Hudood Ordinance had been criticized for its discriminatory treatment of women, who were often prosecuted without evidence or due process. The Protection of Women Act removed these discriminatory provisions and provided greater protection to women against false accusations.

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, passed in 2010, addressed the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace. This act aimed to provide women with legal protection against harassment and assault in the workplace, recognizing that many women faced significant challenges in the workplace. (Qaisrani et al., 2016)

The Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act passed in 2010, was another significant milestone in the protection of women's rights (Qaisrani et al., 2016). This act aimed to offer women a reliable and protected working space by prohibiting workplace harassment, including physical, verbal, and psychological harassment.

In 2011, the Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Act was passed, which aimed to address various forms of discrimination and violence against women. (Ashraf & Abrar-ul-Haq, 2017) This act criminalized several practices, including forced marriages, the sale of young girls, and the deprivation of women's inheritance rights. It also introduced harsher penalties for those found guilty of these offenses.

The Criminal Law Act (Second Amendment, 2011), referred to as the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act, aimed to address the growing problem of acid attacks in Pakistan. This act provided greater protection to women against acid attacks, which had become a common form of violence against women (Butt & Mirza, 2019).

The Criminal Law Act (Third Amendment, 2011), referred to as the Prevention of Anti-Women Practices, further strengthened the legal framework for women's protection. This act criminalized various practices that were discriminatory against women, including the forced eviction of women from their homes and the use of women for prostitution.

The Women in Distress and Detention Fund (Amendment) Act 2011 was passed to modify the Women in Distress and Detention Fund Act of 1996. The purpose of this revision was to support and ensure financial assistance to destitute and helpless women who are in custody or have been released from custody (Muneer, 2017).

The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2012 was passed to safeguard women from domestic abuse and to provide effective remedies for victims of such violence. It defines domestic violence broadly and includes physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, and economic abuse, as well as stalking and harassment (Karmaliani, et al., 2017).

The National Commission on the Status of Women Act 2012 was approved to establish the National Commission on the Status of Women, which is responsible for monitoring the

implementation of policies, programs, and legislation aimed at improving the status of women in Pakistan. The Commission makes recommendations to the government on policies and programs that would promote gender equality (Muneer, 2017).

The Enforcement of Women Ownership Rights Act 2012 was passed to enforce the ownership rights of women in agricultural land. It aims to prevent the unlawful dispossession of women's land, provide speedy and effective remedies to women whose land rights have been violated, and ensure that women have equal access to land ownership.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elimination of Customs of Ghag Act 2013 was passed by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly to eliminate the custom of Ghag, which is a practice in some parts of the province where women are given away in marriage to resolve disputes between families. The act makes it illegal to give or receive women as compensation for disputes and provides stringent punishments for those who violate the law (Naylor & Ali, 2013).

These acts are part of the legal framework aimed at the preservation of the rights of women in Pakistan. However, the effectiveness of these laws is limited by circumstances such as poor implementation, lack of public awareness, and cultural attitudes that are not supportive of gender equality. Violence and abuse against women are significant dilemmas in many societies around the world, and Pakistan is no exception. Women in Pakistan suffer various forms of violence, including domestic violence, violence justified by religion, politics, and culture, and acid attacks. This paper aims to provide an overview of the different forms of abuse against women in Pakistani society.

3.4.1 Domestic Violence

A widespread problem concerning violence in Pakistan is domestic violence, affecting women of all ages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. According to a 2012 study, by a women's rights organization in Pakistan, nearly 90 percent of married women in Pakistan are victims of some form of domestic violence. The most common forms of domestic abuse or oppression include physical violence, emotional and sexual abuse, and economic repression (UNESCO, 2012).

Domestic violence has a significant influence on the everyday lives of women in Pakistan. Women experiencing domestic violence often suffer from physical as well as mental health problems, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and anxiety. They also face social isolation, economic restraints, and decreased opportunities for education and employment (UNDP, 2013).

Efforts to address domestic violence in Pakistan have been ongoing for many years. In 2006, the Pakistani government approved the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, which criminalizes domestic abuse and violence and provides legal protections for victims (Pakistan Human

Rights Commission, 2020). However, implementation of the law has been slow, and women are still hesitant to report domestic aggression due to social stigma and terror of retribution.

3.4.2 Violence and Religion

Religion plays an important role in Pakistani society, and it has been used to justify violence against women (Amir-ud-Din, Fatima, & Aziz, 2018). For example, some religious leaders in Pakistan have justified domestic violence as a necessary means of disciplining women. In addition, laws and practices related to marriage and divorce in Pakistan are heavily influenced by Islamic law, which can disadvantage women in terms of their legal rights.

Efforts to counter violence against women justified by religion in Pakistan have been ongoing. Women's rights organizations and religious scholars have worked together to reinterpret religious texts and challenge traditional interpretations that support violence against women (Haroon, Iftikhar, Kim, Volk, & Enright, 2021). For example, in 2019, the Council of Islamic Ideology, a constitutional cabinet in Pakistan, issued a landmark ruling declaring that physical violence against women is un-Islamic.

3.4.3 Violence and Politics

Politics has also been a factor in violence against women in Pakistan. Women who are politically active or hold positions of power are often targeted for violence, including harassment, threats, and physical attacks. This is particularly true for women who belong to minority groups or who advocate for women's rights (Noor, 2004).

Efforts to address political oppression against women in Pakistan have been limited. Women's rights organizations and political parties have called for stronger legal protections for women in politics, as well as increased representation of women in political positions (Ashraf & Abrar-ul-Haq, 2017). However, progress in this area has been slow, and women in politics continue to face significant obstacles and risks.

3.4.4 Violence and Culture

Culture is another important factor in violence against women in Pakistan. Traditional gender roles and cultural norms that prioritize male authority and control can contribute to violence against women (Ali & Khan 2007). For example, the practice of honor killings, in which women are killed or murdered by family members for supposed transgressions of family honor, is still prevalent in some parts of Pakistan.

Efforts to counter-cultural factors that contribute to oppression against women in Pakistan have been ongoing. Women's rights organizations and other civil society groups have worked to raise public awareness about the negative consequences of traditional gender roles and cultural norms (Pakeeza, 2015). In addition, the Pakistani government has introduced several laws and policies intended to protect women's rights and advocate gender equality.

3.5 Acid Throwing and Acid Attacks

Acid attacks, also known as acid violence, are a kind of violence that has been prevalent in several parts of the world (Gulrez, 2016). However, Pakistan has been one of the countries with the highest incidence of acid attacks, particularly against women. This form of violence has devastating consequences, including disfigurement, disability, psychological trauma, and even death. Despite the prohibition of acid attacks under local and international laws, their prevalence in Pakistan continues to be a serious concern. Gulrez (2016) examines the prevalence and impact of acid attacks in Pakistan, the perpetrators of acid throwing, the historical context of acid violence, and the consequences for victims.

3.5.1 Prevalence of Acid Attacks in Pakistan

Acid attacks are particularly prevalent in Pakistan, with the face being the primary target of these attacks. The perpetrators of these attacks are usually men, and the victims are often women. Women are particularly targeted because they are seen as a symbol of family honor and their appearance is closely linked to their social status and marriageability (Ashraf & Abrar-ul-Haq, 2017). Women who do not correspond to traditional guidelines of obedience or behavior are seen as a threat to the patriarchal structures of society and therefore, more vulnerable to acid attacks.

According to a study by the Acid Survivors Foundation, 1,500 acid attacks were reported in Pakistan between 2010 and 2016 (Qaisrani et al., 2016). However, the actual number of attacks may be higher as many cases go unreported due to fear of retaliation and administrative and judicial neglect. Victims of acid attacks often face barriers to justice, including corruption, unprofessionalism, lack of education and gender sensitivity, and a complex legal system that includes high courts, sharia courts, and tribal courts.

3.5.2 Perpetrators of Acid Throwing

The perpetrators of acid attacks are usually men who are known to the victims (Pakistan Human Rights Commission, 2020). In some cases, the attackers are family members or spouses seeking to punish or control their victims. In other cases, the attackers may be individuals who have been rejected

by the victim or who see the victim as a threat to their social status (Pakistan Human Rights Commission, 2020).

The usage of acid as a weapon is a particularly insidious form of violence, as it requires very little physical strength or skill. Acid is easily accessible in Pakistan, and the lack of regulations on its sale and distribution makes it a popular weapon of choice for attackers (Shah, 2009). Perpetrators can purchase acid from local markets without any questions asked, making it easy for them to carry out attacks without fear of being caught.

3.5.3 Historical Context of Acid Attack in Pakistan

The prevalence of acid attacks in Pakistan can be traced back to the country's complex social and political history. The use of acid as a weapon was initially employed by men in the rural areas of Pakistan to punish women who violated traditional codes of behavior or refused to conform to their expectations (Gulrez, 2016). Over time, acid attacks became a more widespread phenomenon, with women from all walks of life becoming victims.

The rise of religious extremism in Pakistan has also contributed to the prevalence of acid attacks. Extremist groups have targeted women whom they see as challenging traditional gender roles, including women's rights activists and those who refuse to adhere to strict dress codes. These attacks are often carried out as a form of punishment and as a means of exerting control over women (Shah, 2009).

3.5.4 The Etiology of Acid Violence

The acid attack against women is a heinous criminality that has a complex and multifaceted etiology. It is a prevalent issue in Pakistan and has been identified as a kind of violence that disproportionately affects women. Several circumstances have been recognized as contributing to the pervasiveness of acid violence, including social, cultural, and economic factors (Ali & Gavino, 2008).

Jealousy, revenge, and punishment for perceived transgressions are the driving factors behind acid attacks. Perpetrators of acid violence use this form of violence as a means of control and to assert power over their victims, particularly in cases of domestic violence. Acid attacks are often used as a means of punishing women who have challenged male authority or have sought to assert their autonomy (Zia, 2013).

Studies have shown that poverty, unemployment, and lack of education are significant contributing factors to the prevalence of acid violence in Pakistan. Women from marginalized communities who lack access to education and employment opportunities are more vulnerable to this form of violence.

Due to their lack of financial independence, they often have limited options for escaping abusive situations and are forced to endure violence and abuse (Karmaliani et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the occurrence of acid attacks in Pakistan is further compounded by a lack of legal and institutional frameworks aimed at addressing this issue. The existing legal framework is often weak, poorly enforced, and fails to provide adequate protection and support to victims of acid violence. Moreover, there is no awareness and sensitivity among law enforcement officials, medical professionals, and the public about the seriousness and impact of acid violence. This lack of awareness and sensitivity often leads to inadequate response and support for victims (Zia, 2013).

To prevent acid violence, there is a need for a comprehensive approach that addresses the underlying social, cultural, and economic factors that contribute to this form of violence. This approach must involve strengthening the legal framework, improving access to education and employment opportunities, and promoting gender impartiality and women's empowerment. There is also a need to increase awareness and sensitivity among law enforcement officials, medical professionals, and the public about the seriousness and impact of acid violence (Ali & Gavino, 2008).

Addressing the root causes of acid violence and strengthening the legal and institutional frameworks aimed at addressing this issue is crucial. All stakeholders, including government officials, civil society organizations, and the public must work together to combat acid violence and to create a society that is free from all forms of violence (Zia, 2013).

Acid violence is a pervasive and devastating form of violence that has far-reaching physical, psychological, and social consequences. The survivors of acid attacks often experience permanent physical and psychological damage, leaving them with disfigured faces, blindness, and other severe health issues (Shah, 2009). Moreover, survivors of acid attacks often face social stigma and discrimination, which further compounds their trauma.

Acid violence against women is a grave issue that requires urgent attention. A comprehensive approach that addresses the underlying social, cultural, and economic factors that contribute to this form of violence is necessary to combat acid violence. Furthermore, strengthening the legal and institutional frameworks aimed at addressing this issue is crucial. It is essential to increase awareness and sensitivity among law enforcement officials, medical professionals, and the public about the seriousness and impact of acid violence. Finally, it is crucial to promote gender equality and women's empowerment to prevent acid violence and to create a society that is free from all forms of violence against women.

3.5.5 Consequences for the Victims

The consequences of acid violence for victims can be severe and life-altering. Victims often suffer from physical and psychological trauma, as well as long-term disfigurement, blindness, and other

debilitating health conditions. Survivors of acid violence often face significant barriers to receiving adequate medical treatment and rehabilitation services and may experience ongoing social stigma and discrimination (Ahmed & Ahmad, 2019). The psychological trauma associated with acid violence can also be profound, leading to depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders (Naylor & Ali, 2013). The consequences of acid attacks can be devastating for victims, both physically and psychologically. Acid causes severe burns that can lead to disfigurement, disability, and even death (Yousuf & Purkavastha, 2016). Victims often require multiple surgeries and long-term medical treatment, which can be costly and inaccessible to many (Haroon, Iftikhar, Kim, Volk, & Enright, 2021).

3.6 Legislation

In recent years, there have been significant efforts to combat acid violence through legislative reform in Pakistan. In 2011, the Pakistani government adopted the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Bill, which imposes harsh penalties on perpetrators of acid violence and provides a framework for the prevention and treatment of acid attack survivors (UNESCO, 2012). The bill also provides for the regulation of the sale and distribution of acid, requiring vendors to maintain records of sales and report suspicious transactions to the authorities.

3.6.1 The Role of Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations

The issue of acid violence in Pakistan has garnered attention from governmental and non-governmental organizations that work towards prevention, intervention, and awareness-raising. The responsibility of the government in focusing on the issue of acid violence is crucial (Ashraf & Abrar-ul-Haq, 2017). The Pakistani government has taken some measures to curb acid violence, such as passing the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Bill in 2011. However, the implementation and enforcement of the law remain a challenge (Bhattachariya, 2020). Moreover, there is a need for the government to take a more active role in addressing the causes of acid violence, such as gender inequity and discrimination against women.

Non-governmental organizations have performed a substantial role in addressing the issue of acid violence in Pakistan. One of the most prominent organizations is the Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF), which provides medical and rehabilitation services to survivors of acid violence, as well as advocating for legislative reform and increased public awareness of the issue. ASF has provided services to thousands of survivors of acid attacks in Pakistan since its foundation in 2006 (Bhattachariya, 2020). Other organizations, such as the Aurat Foundation, provide legal and support

services to survivors, as well as conduct research and raise awareness of violence against women more broadly (Ahmed & Ahmad, 2019).

However, the work of non-governmental organizations is not without challenges. One of the significant challenges that these organizations face is funding (Shafqat & Khurshid, 2015). Many organizations rely on donations and grants to continue their work, which can be challenging to secure. Additionally, non-governmental organizations face security risks, particularly when working with survivors of acid violence. There have been instances of attacks on non-governmental organizations' staff, which underscores the need for the government to ensure the safety and security of non-governmental organizations' staff working in this area (Ali & Khan 2007).

The work of governmental and non-governmental organizations in addressing the issue of acid aggression in Pakistan has made considerable improvements in recent years. However, there is still a long way to go in eradicating acid violence in the country. One area where more work is needed is in preventing acid violence from occurring in the first place. To achieve this, there needs to be a multi-sectoral approach that involves not only government and non-governmental organizations but also communities, families, and individuals (Butt & Mirza, 2019).

One of the ways to prevent acid violence is to increase consciousness of the issue in the community. This can be done through media campaigns, educational programs, and community mobilization. By raising awareness, individuals can recognize the harm that acid violence causes and take steps to prevent it (Butt & Mirza, 2019). Additionally, there is a need for more support for survivors of acid violence. This includes not only medical and rehabilitation services but also legal and social support, which can help survivors rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society.

Governmental and non-governmental organizations have performed a critical role in addressing the issue of acid violence in Pakistan. The government needs to take a more active role in addressing the root causes of acid violence, while non-governmental organizations provide critical services and advocacy (Pakistan Human Rights Commission, 2020). However, more work is needed to prevent acid violence from occurring in the first place, including raising awareness and providing support to survivors. By working together, we can create a safer and more just society for all.

3.7 Case Studies of Acid Violence against Women in Pakistan

Pakistan has been plagued by a spate of acid attacks on women, with several high-profile cases receiving widespread media attention and sparking public outrage. One such case is that of Fakhra Younus, who was attacked with acid by her husband in 2000 (Gulrez, 2016). Younus suffered severe disfigurement and chronic health problems because of the attack and eventually took her own life in 2012. Her case received international attention, bringing the issue of acid violence to the forefront of public consciousness in Pakistan.

Another prominent case is that of Rukhsana Bibi, a human rights activist who was attacked with acid by a group of men in 2012 (Bhattachariya, 2020). Bibi's case received widespread media coverage, shedding light on the targeted violence faced by women in Pakistan and the urgent need for stronger legal protections for survivors of acid attacks.

Acid attacks are a particularly heinous form of violence against women, leaving victims with disfiguring and life-altering injuries. These attacks are often fueled by misogyny and a desire to control and intimidate women, as seen in the cases of Younus and Bibi. Survivors of acid violence face immense physical, emotional, and social challenges, including chronic pain, difficulty finding employment, and social isolation due to the stigma associated with their injuries (Ashraf & Abrar-ul-Haq, 2017).

Despite the severity of this issue, acid attacks are often underreported and under-prosecuted in Pakistan. Perpetrators may receive light sentences or escape punishment altogether, leaving survivors without justice or protection from future attacks (Zia, 2013). This impunity only serves to perpetuate the cycle of violence and make it more difficult for women to come forward and seek help.

However, Younus and Bibi's cases helped to bring greater attention to the issue of acid violence and sparked public outrage and advocacy efforts. In the wake of these attacks, several organizations and activists have worked to raise awareness of acid violence and push for stronger legal protections for survivors (Zia, 2013). These efforts have resulted in the introduction of new laws and policies aimed at preventing and addressing acid violence, as well as increased resources and support for survivors.

Despite these strides, much work remains to be done to combat acid violence in Pakistan. Survivors must be given the assistance and resources they need to recover and rebuild their lives, as well as the justice and protection they deserve (Von, 2013). This requires not only changes in the legal system but also shifts in cultural attitudes and norms that perpetuate violence against women. By working together to address the root causes of acid violence and support survivors, we can create a safer and more equitable society for all women in Pakistan (Shah, 2009).

One other high-profile case of acid attack in Pakistan is that of Kainat Soomro. Soomro was just 13 years old when she was attacked with acid by four men in 2007. The attack was reportedly in retaliation for her brother's alleged relationship with a woman from one of the attackers' families. Soomro suffered severe burns to her face, neck, and hands, and underwent several surgeries to try to repair the damage (Shafqat & Khurshid, 2015). Soomro's case received widespread media attention and sparked a public outcry, as it highlighted the occurrence of honor-based brutality in Pakistan and the impunity with which perpetrators of such violence often operate. Despite facing numerous challenges, including threats and intimidation from the attackers' families, Soomro continued to fight for justice and was ultimately able to see two of her attackers convicted and sentenced to life in prison.

Soomro's case, along with those of Younus and Bibi, helped to raise awareness of the issue of acid violence in Pakistan and the urgent need for stronger legal protections for survivors. It also highlighted the important role that survivors can play in advocating for their rights and seeking justice in the face of immense challenges (Shafqat & Khurshid, 2015).

4. Discussion

Acid violence, also known as acid attacks, has emerged as a severe issue in Pakistan. Such attacks involve the use of sulfuric or hydrochloric acid that is thrown at an individual's body or face, causing severe burns and disfigurement. The victims suffer from physical, psychological, and social harm that may include permanent disfigurement, chronic pain, blindness, and social isolation. Unfortunately, Pakistan has one of the highest percentages of acid attacks globally, with hundreds of such cases being reported every year. The victims are women and girls, and the attacks are usually motivated by domestic disputes, revenge, or refusal of marriage proposals. The offenders often escape punishment due to ineffective laws, corrupt law enforcement, and the social stigma attached to victims.

The acid attack problem in Pakistan is multifaceted and requires a comprehensive approach to address. Firstly, developing and enforcing robust laws is necessary to ensure that perpetrators receive severe punishment. The current legal system is inadequate in prosecuting acid attacks, as such cases are often prosecuted as assault or attempted murder, failing to reflect the gravity of the crime. Therefore, Pakistan must have specific legislation to deal with acid attacks, ensuring that the offenders receive long prison sentences and hefty fines.

Secondly, raising awareness about acid attacks and their harmful consequences is vital. Education campaigns should target men and boys, the primary perpetrators of these attacks, emphasizing that violence against women and girls is intolerable and punishable. Furthermore, such initiatives should focus on empowering women and girls by providing them with education and economic opportunities, enabling them to escape poverty and vulnerability.

Thirdly, support and rehabilitation services should be available to help acid attack survivors recover. Survivors of such attacks typically suffer significant physical and psychological challenges that require long-term medical and psychological care. Moreover, they face social stigma and discrimination that can make it challenging for survivors to reintegrate into society. The government should provide financial support for medical and rehabilitation costs for survivors, as well as education and employment opportunities to help them rebuild their lives.

Lastly, addressing the root causes of acid attacks in Pakistan, such as gender inequality, poverty, and social stigma, is critical. Women and girls are particularly exposed to acid attacks and empowering them and improving their social status can help reduce the incidence of such attacks. Economic and social empowerment programs that provide education and employment opportunities for women and challenge harmful gender norms can contribute to the reduction of acid attacks. Acid attacks pose a severe threat to society in Pakistan, causing immense harm to the victims and their families. A comprehensive approach is necessary to tackle the problem effectively, including legal, social, and economic interventions. The government, civil society organizations, and international

partners must work collaboratively to raise awareness, strengthen laws, provide support services for survivors, and address the underlying causes of acid attacks. By doing so, Pakistan can reduce the incidence of acid attacks, provide justice and support for the survivors, and create a more just and equitable society for all.

4.1 Summary of Findings

Acid violence is a form of gender-based aggression that involves the deliberate use of acid or other corrosive substances to harm or disfigure a person, usually a woman. This type of violence is particularly prevalent in Pakistan, where it is estimated that there are hundreds of cases of acid attacks each year.

The problem of acid violence in Pakistan has deep roots in the country's history, social norms, and cultural practices. One of the major factors promoting acid attacks is the patriarchal society in Pakistan, which values male dominance and control over women. Women who challenge these traditional gender roles, such as by seeking education or employment outside the home, are often targeted for violence, including acid attacks. Additionally, the lack of legal protection for women, particularly in cases of domestic violence, makes it easier for perpetrators of acid violence to go unpunished.

The consequences of acid violence for victims are severe and long-lasting. Survivors of acid attacks may suffer from physical disabilities, including blindness, disfigurement, and scarring, as well as psychological trauma, such as depression and anxiety. They may also face social stigma, exclusion, and economic hardship due to their inability to work or participate fully in their communities.

In response to the prevalence of acid violence, there have been legislative and advocacy efforts aimed at combating the issue. In 2011, Pakistan passed the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act, which imposes stricter penalties for perpetrators of acid violence and provides greater support for survivors. However, implementation of the law has been slow, and many cases of acid violence still go unreported or unpunished.

Advocacy groups, both within Pakistan and internationally, have also worked to raise public awareness of acid violence and to provide support for survivors. These efforts include providing medical and psychological care, as well as legal and economic assistance. Additionally, many organizations have focused on prevention efforts, such as education and training programs aimed at changing attitudes and behavior toward women and girls.

Despite these efforts, acid violence continues to be a serious issue in Pakistan. Case studies of acid attacks highlight the devastating impact of these attacks on survivors and the urgent need for increased public awareness and action. One such case is that of Zakia, a 21-year-old woman who was attacked with acid by her husband's first wife in 2011. Zakia suffered severe burns to her face, chest, and

hands, and was left blind in one eye. Despite reporting the attack to the police and seeking medical treatment, her husband's first wife was never brought to justice. Zakia's case highlights the challenges faced by many survivors of acid violence in Pakistan, including the lack of legal protection and the stigma and discrimination they may face.

Acid violence against women in Pakistan is a complex and multi-faceted issue that requires a comprehensive response. Focusing on the root causes of the problem, such as gender inequality and the lack of legal protections for women, is crucial. Additionally, greater efforts are needed to raise public awareness of acid violence and to provide support for survivors, including medical care, legal assistance, and economic opportunities. Only by working together can we hope to end the devastating impact of acid violence on women in Pakistan and around the world.

4.2 Limitations of the Study

Acid violence, also known as acid attacks, is a kind of gender-based brutality that is rampant in numerous countries around the world, including Pakistan. While several studies have been conducted on the incidence and consequences of acid violence against women in Pakistan, there are still several limitations that need to be acknowledged. In this paper, we will discuss three key limitations of the study on acid violence against women in Pakistan, including the sample size, data collection, and access to victims.

4.2.1 Sample Size

One of the limitations of the study on acid violence against women in Pakistan is the small sample size. The sample size for this study was relatively small and may not be illustrative of the entire population of acid attack victims in Pakistan. As a result, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to the larger population of acid attack victims in the country. While the study does provide valuable insights into the prevalence and consequences of acid violence against women in Pakistan, it is important to note that the findings may not apply to all victims of acid attacks in the country.

4.2.2 Data Collection

Another limitation of the study on acid violence against women in Pakistan is the reliance on secondary sources and case studies for data collection. Data collection for this study relied heavily on secondary sources and case studies, which may not accurately reflect the full extent of acid attacks against women in Pakistan. Additionally, there may be biases and inaccuracies in the reporting of cases. For example, cases of acid violence may be underreported or misreported due to the stigma

associated with the crime. Furthermore, the data collected may not provide a comprehensive understanding of the social, economic, and political factors that contribute to the prevalence of acid violence against women in Pakistan.

4.2.3 Access to Victims

The third limitation of the study on acid violence against women in Pakistan is the limited access to victims of acid violence. The researchers had limited access to victims of acid violence, which may have limited their ability to fully explore the consequences of acid attacks on victims and their families. Additionally, the researchers may not have been able to collect data on the experiences of victims who did not seek medical attention or report the crime to the police. Therefore, the study may not fully capture the experiences of all victims of acid violence in Pakistan.

The study on acid violence against women in Pakistan provides valuable insights into the prevalence and consequences of this heinous crime. However, several limitations must be acknowledged, including the small sample size, reliance on secondary sources and case studies for data collection, and limited access to victims. These limitations may limit the generalizability and validity of the findings. Therefore, future studies on acid violence against women in Pakistan should aim to address these limitations to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this issue. This will help policymakers and practitioners to develop effective interventions to prevent acid violence against women and support the victims of this crime.

4.3 Implications of the Study

Acid attacks are a pervasive problem in Pakistan, with hundreds of cases reported annually. These attacks involve throwing a corrosive substance on a person, resulting in severe burns and disfigurement. Understanding the scope and nature of acid attacks in Pakistan is crucial, and research can identify victims' demographics, the types of acid used, and the reasons behind these attacks. This knowledge can help develop targeted interventions that address specific needs and underlying causes of gender-based violence.

Medical and psychological research on acid attacks is necessary to provide support services for survivors, who require long-term care due to permanent disfigurement, blindness, chronic pain, and social isolation. Identifying effective treatments and rehabilitation services and barriers to accessing care can aid in providing adequate medical and psychological care for survivors.

Social and economic factors that contribute to acid attacks, such as poverty, lack of education, and harmful gender norms, require intervention through economic and social empowerment

programs, education campaigns targeting men and boys, and legal reforms that provide greater protection for victims. Legislation specific to acid attacks is necessary to ensure that perpetrators receive appropriate punishment.

Education campaigns targeting men and boys are necessary to raise awareness about the consequences of acid attacks and that violence against women and girls is unacceptable. These campaigns should focus on empowering women and girls by providing them with education and economic opportunities to escape poverty and vulnerability.

International aid organizations and governments can provide financial and technical support for research, legal and policy reforms, and support services for survivors. However, interventions must be tailored to Pakistan's specific needs and cultural and societal factors that contribute to gender-based violence.

Overall, addressing the acid attack problem in Pakistan requires a comprehensive approach that includes research, legal and policy reforms, education and awareness campaigns, and support services for survivors. Coordinated and sustained efforts are necessary to reduce the incidence of acid attacks and provide justice and support for survivors.

4.4 Suggestions for Future Research

To improve the understanding of acid violence against women in Pakistan, future studies should focus on expanding sample sizes. Collaborating with non-governmental organizations and government agencies could facilitate access to more data and victims, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the factors behind acid attacks. Increasing the sample size can also help researchers identify significant trends and patterns, providing more nuanced insights into the root causes of acid violence.

Another important consideration for future studies is the incorporation of diverse data collection methods. Researchers should consider interviewing victims and perpetrators, conducting surveys, and analyzing official government records to gain a fuller understanding of the issue. By using multiple methods, researchers can obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the complex causes of acid violence against women in Pakistan.

Additionally, future studies should also focus on conducting in-depth analyses of the consequences of acid attacks on victims and their families. This includes exploring the physical, psychological, and social impacts on individuals and their communities. By conducting in-depth analyses, researchers can identify the long-term effects of acid violence on survivors and their families, providing more comprehensive insight into the scope of the problem.

Collaboration with various stakeholders, such as NGOs, government agencies, and policymakers, is also crucial for future research. Such collaborations can help ensure that research findings are utilized to inform policy and practice in the prevention and response to acid attacks against women in Pakistan. Through collaboration, researchers can work towards the implementation of effective interventions to prevent acid violence and support survivors.

To improve our understanding of acid violence against women in Pakistan, future studies should incorporate larger sample sizes, diverse data collection methods, in-depth analysis of consequences, and collaboration with stakeholders. By addressing these limitations, researchers can inform evidence-based policy and practice, ultimately leading toward a safer and more equitable society for all. Furthermore, the results of future studies can provide insights that may help inform policy not only in Pakistan but also in other parts of the world, where acid violence is a problem.

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