

## Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Self Esteem of Women in Pakistan

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The aim of this research was to investigate the impact of intimate partner on the self esteem of women .Since this was a very sensitive area henceforth the triangulation method was used for in-depth study A purposeful sampling was applied after the screening of the participants with the help of HITS (Kevin) The sample included 118 abused women and 98 of them were not abused. The instruments were translated into the native language to commune well with the participants. Both the scales i.e. HITS (Kevin), and Rosenberg self-esteem scales, were translated. The qualitative findings suggest that factors like economic dependence, insecurity social pressures, were the general themes concluded from the transcripts for the low self esteem of an abused women .The Quantitative data analysis indicated that the self esteem of the psychologically and physically abused was more shattered then the not abused women the t-test calculated and found to be significant as  $p < .05$  There was one major limitation related to the size and representation from all the provinces to draw a clear view of the situation. This study can help in identifying the vulnerability level of women for future pathology and assist in developing a program for the rehabilitation of the victims by removing the barriers and helping them to cope well.

Keywords: violence, women, self esteem, intimate partner

### Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a form of threat or actual use of physical power against a current or former husband/wife, boyfriend, girlfriend, date, or other intimate partner that either results in or has the possibility to result in fatality, injury, or impairment. Intimate Partner Violence comprises of both physical and sexual aggression, both of which are often escorted by psychological/emotional abuse. It may also include psychological and/or emotional exploitation that occurs in the absence of physical or sexual violence when there has been previously threatened or actual physical or sexual violence in the relationship. Some of the common terms that are used to describe IPV include *domestic abuse, spouse abuse, domestic violence, courtship violence, battering, marital rape, and date rape*.

Some of the prevailing social norms allow the spouse to correct or discipline his wife, and that marriage is an undertaking regardless of the partner's behavior. In some places of Pakistan, marital rape is not considered a crime. Marriage declaration for women may still include the phrase 'to love, honor, and obey.' Norms allowing men to isolate their better halves include the concepts that a woman's job is to look after home affairs, that jealousy is caused by love, and that admittance to bank accounts and family records may be controlled by one partner – usually the male.

In olden times men were allowed to use moderate physical punishment to control their wives without any apprehension of lawful sanctions (Browne, 1987) and the Jude's – Christen ethnic educated husbands to physically chastise their wives as it would remind women of the power and authority of their husbands (Hutchings1988)

Spousal abuse is prevalent in many cultures and affects most of the world's female population (Gilliland & James, 1997; Tshiwula, 1999). It remains difficult to obtain actual and recent statistics of the incidence of spousal abuse in Pakistan due to various religious and cultural constraints, the lack of available funding to deal with the problem of spousal abuse, and the fact that there are no well developed legal system for which spousal abuse is often underreported.

Violence irrespective of any type affects the lives of women regardless of the race, ethnicity, social status, educational background, and geographic location. Women all over the world are victimized and executed by their intimate partners (Ellsberg, et, al; 1999; United Nations,1996), intimate partner violence against women is extensively recognized as a serious public health issue with serious repercussions for a woman's physical and psychological well-being (Ellsberg et al., 1999). Although the exact degree of prevalence of intimate partner violence is not available throughout the world. But whatever the research data is available indicates that there is no country in the world where such violent acts are

absent (United Nations, 1996). According to the prevailing statistics 17-50% of women are physically battered by their intimate partner at least once in their lives (Ellsberg et al., 1999; United Nations, 1995). Such violent behavior is an international problem that involves not only the individual but all the community members, and hence it should be treated as a community liability and not just as an individualized crime.

Domestic violence can have an enormous negative impact on self-esteem, of the abused victim. There are innumerable negative side effects of damaged self-esteem on a victim's behavior, which can result in arrogance, Conduct problems, inability to concentrate depression, anxiety, inability to sleep ,changes in appetite, social incompetence emotional numbing and constant focus on the violent events.

The abused woman's self-worth is an integral part of the response she chooses. The above theories and empirical studies illustrate this, but perhaps do not place enough emphasis on it.

Mohamed (2003), states that the experience of being in an abusive relationship and the way in which one deals with it is a complicated process that is associated with changes in the self. This point to the importance of endogenous factors in maintaining abusive relationships. The low self-esteem that abused women experience often allows the abuse to continue. A woman who believes that she is nothing but trouble will not only put up with abusive behavior from a partner, but may actively participate in abuse. According to Hendrix (2004), a gauge of self-rejection in these situations is the degree to which a partner (the woman) will not ask to be treated with dignity and respect. It has been found that the longer woman stay in an abusive relationship, the lower their self-esteem. The self- doubt about whether they could make it on their own also contributes to the women's decisions to stay (Okrun, 1996). This low self-esteem allows the perpetrator to abuse her more because, deep down, the victim believes she deserves it (De Beer, 2001).

### **Hypothesis**

-Self esteem of the psychologically abused women will be low as compared to not psychologically abused women.

-Self esteem of the physically abused women will be low as compared to not physically abused women.

### **Methodology**

The aim of this study was to explore and identify the reasons behind low self esteem of women who get

entrapped into an abusive relation and to further explore how their self confidence is different from women who are not abused. The mixed research method was used to study this very significant and sensitive issue since the goal was not only to identify but also to explore, henceforth both the qualitative and quantitative methodologies were incorporated for this research. This study comprised of qualitative tools like conducting an interview and running a focus group for counseling after data collection. The quantitative tools like various scales in order to quantify the various aspects, personal and social factors contributing to the victim's abuse. The triangulation method maximizes the strengths and minimizes the weaknesses of each approach, but also strengths research results and contribute knowledge (Morse 1991).

### **Sample**

This is a very sensitive issue and involved a lot of risk in the participants home it was very essential to seek prior permissions from the volunteers. Before stating on with data collection frequent visits were made in the areas where it was mentioned in the areas for data collection, so that the people in the locality do not get threatened by the presence of the examiner and rather feel at ease. The purposeful sampling with the help of snow ball technique was employed for the selection of the participants based on their knowledge and experience of the issue under investigation. Participants were at various stages within the abusive relationship, with the difference in duration and severity of abuse hence the research could be continued with 216 participants. The age range also varied from 18 to 60+. The age range was not limited for the sample keeping in view that the data collection for this sensitive area would be limited. The sample further was segregated into 2 groups; the first group consisted of abused participants and non abused. The length of relationship with their partner ranged from less than a year to 23 years.

### **Research instruments**

#### *Demographic sheet*

The demographic data sheet was constructed based on the basic information of the participant, her spouse and her family. The measurable characteristics on the data sheet included two parts one contained the details of the participant and the other part gathered the information related to spouse and family. For the women, current marital status, age, race/ethnicity, religious preferences education, number of people

living in the respondent's household, number of children from this marriage, usual occupation along with number of working hours and for their current male partners, age, race/ethnicity, religious preferences, present occupation along with number of working hours. The data sheet also recorded the nature of abuse and the duration /length of abusive relationship

#### *Measuring tools*

The Language of both the scales (HITS & Self-esteem) used in this research was English. Since the sample was a combination of both literate and illiterate women, hence it was very important to use the medium of language the whole population understands since Urdu is the National Language and the people of all the provinces understand it.

#### *Screening violence*

Hurt, Insulted, Threatened and Screamed (HITS) Scale

The HITS scale is a domestic violence screening scale developed and tested in a female population at Christ hospital in Chicago. This tool was developed as a Simple, brief instrument for use in clinical practices Hurt, Insulted, Threatened and Screamed Scale (HITS) (Sherin et al., 1998); HITS is a very popular short screening scale for domestic violence and intimate partner violence. It has been frequently used in family practice to screen physical and verbal abuse in intimate relations. It is comprised of four items. The respondents rate items on 5-point rating scale to report how often their partner physically Hurt, Insulted, Threatened with harm and Screamed at them. These four words make the abbreviation HITS. Each item is scored from 1=never to 5=frequently. The scores for this inventory range from 4-20. The cutoff score of 10 is used to indicate presence of Intimate Partner Abuse (IPA). HITS has been translated into various languages and has been validated on a wide range of populations from different parts of the world.

Measuring self esteem: Rosenberg self-esteem scale

The *Rosenberg self-esteem scales* (RSES), developed by sociologist Dr. Morris Rosenberg, and is a self-esteem measure widely utilized for research purposes. The RSES is designed similar to social-survey questionnaires. It is a ten-item scale where each item is rated on a four-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Five of the items measure the positive and optimistic side of the person while

the other half measures the negative and pessimistic side. The scale measures state self-esteem by asking the respondents to reflect on their current feelings. The original sample for which the scale was developed consisted of 5,024 high-school juniors and seniors from 10 randomly selected schools in New York State. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale is considered a reliable and valid quantitative tool for assessing self-esteem. Rationale for using Rosenberg self esteem scale was that this instrument is meant to assess the persons self worth and it is a short and easy to administer instrument.

#### *Procedure*

The procedure was followed in the following stages: *Rapport Phase:* The initial step taken by the researcher was to visit various communities and shelters in order to develop a rapport between the members of the community so that at the time of the interview they do not get threatened by the presence

*Screening phase:* In this phase the participants who agreed to volunteer were screened with the help of HITS scale and then they were accordingly assigned to the abused group or non abused group.

*Delivery of Ethical Codes Phase:* The Informed consent form was given to all the participants prior to the interview and the details of the research goals were narrated to them and later were asked to sign them after they were satisfied. The statements given in the consent form were read to those who were uneducated and were later asked to leave a thumb impression on the form as a sign of their agreeing to the research terms and conditions (Some of the participants backed out when asked to sign the form or put a thumb impression on the sheet as they thought it was threatening to give something as written commitment)

*Qualitative Data Collection phase:* After obtaining the informed consent from each participant, data was primarily collected through in person, Open ended, semi structured interviews. A total of 216 in-depth, 90 minutes each interviews were conducted in a non directive manner employing a semi-structured interview guide and audio taped by the researcher.

#### *Qualitative data analysis*

The principal analysis of the interview data was conducted in two stages. First, the participants verbatim transcripts were read multiple times and systematically coded line by line. The second stage involved re-reading the transcripts, highlighting salient passages of text which revealed emerging themes and rethinking the open codes. The coding scheme was further refined through subsequent

readings of all transcripts. In this way reduction of data occurred as the result of an inductive process. The last phase of analysis involved re-reading all transcripts and assigning the final codes and comparing this information with the research questions.

**Quantitative data collection phase**

The quantitative data was collected as soon as the interview session was done. The participants were asked to fill in the information on the Rosenberg Self esteem scale. Those participants who were not literate at all they were read out the items of the scales and noted their responses accordingly.

**Ending phase: Running a focus group**

The last step of the procedure was to help resolve some of the conflicts of the participants and encourage better coping skills to resolve their issues. The researcher in the end would form a group of 10

women .In this focus group the women would share their grievances with other women and try to explore the possible options and alternatives they could apply to their present circumstances and reduce the intensity and frequency of pain. These focus groups were welcomed by many women as they felt that this was the first time they could share their feelings with others who were just like them and were not going to exploit them later on .Most of the participants reported that they felt much relaxed after the Focus-Group Session .

**Results**

According to Table 1 Note The correlation obtained for translated version was significant as it was 0.8 Polit and Beck (2007) recommend to eliminate items whose correlations with the total scale is less than .30 but values as high as .60 have been recommended.

Table 1. Inter-item correlation matrix for HITS.

	TOTAL ENG(hits)	TOTAL URDU(hits)
Total ENG(hits)	1.000	0.802
Total URDU(hits)	0.802	1.000

Table 2 shows the correlation obtained for translated version was significant as it was 0.8 This Table

illustrates internal reliability above .06 are adequate as indicated by Fitzpatrick & Wallace (2006)

Table 2. Inter-item correlation matrix for RSES.

	Total-Urdu(self esteem)	Total-Eng self esteem )
Total-Urdu(Self Esteem)	1.000	0.751
Total-Eng(Self Esteem)	0.751	1.000

The result of Table 3 shows \*P<.05 accept claim that there is significant difference between the self esteem of psychologically abused and not psychologically

abuse the psychologically abused women have low self-esteem as compared to non-abused women

Table 3. Showing difference in the self esteem of psychologically abused and not psychologically abused.

		Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
								Upper		Lower
self esteem	Equal variances assumed	1.555	0.214	-1.799	214	0.073	-1.17695	0.65418	-2.46641	0.11251
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.543	42.718	0.130	-1.17695	0.76287	-2.71572	0.36181

According to Table 4,  $*p < .05$  accept claim that there is significant difference between the self esteem of physically abused and not physically abused. The

physically abused women have low self-esteem as compared to non-abused women.

Table 4. Showing difference in the self esteem of physically abused and not physically abused.

		Levene's test for equality of variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
								Upper		Lower
Self esteem	Equal variances assumed	0.004	0.949	-2.048	214	0.042	-0.98658	0.48180	-1.93626	-0.03691
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.042	208.640	0.042	-0.98658	0.48311	-1.93898	-0.03419

## Discussion

The general themes that came out after the qualitative analysis of the data are as follows:

### *Fear of failure as a successful wife*

A woman in the Pakistani society has always been dependent on the male of her family from the time of her birth till her marriage she is dependent on her father or brother after her marriage she is controlled by her husband. All the major decisions of her life have been taken by these men in her life. Since she has been dependent on significant others in her life for choosing options, she lacks confidence. A battered woman becomes more vulnerable and her self confidence is completely stripped off. In these circumstances she develops an intense fear of failure in taking a life time decision to leave or stay with the abusive spouse. She feels that once if she chose the wrong man she might repeat the same mistake. Henceforth she remains reluctant to make decision.

One of the Muslim participant said "I have lost trust in all men and especially in my own self because I have always made the wrong decisions in life. So it is better to stay with him rather than making another mistake and make a fool out of myself."

A Christen battered participant "All men are evil, one is worst then the other, so I think it is okay to live with the lesser evil. As he at times does care for me. I know some of those women who are abused 24/7. At least I am not in that condition".

### *Crushed self image*

In today's Pakistani society it has always been difficult for parents to find a right groom for their daughter. Tying a matrimonial knot with a decent and noble man has always been a challenge for parents. The other social evil prevailing in this society is

dowry, which has engulfed the whole nation. Some of the abused victims reported that even if they get out of relation who will remarry them without a big dowry. So it is better to remain in the same relation. Some of them said that they have lost their charm after marriage and are no more pleasant looking and were of the view no one marry them now so it is better to keep clinging on to this abusive husband who has the patience to bear her ugliness. These victims were very low in confidence and self esteem.

### *Insecurity*

The social stigma and its subsequent feeling of insecurity is another significant reason for women to stay in an abusive relation. Some of the abused participants reported that this society was not safe for a single women or a divorcee. If she leaves this relation she will become more vulnerable to exploitation by other men around. They might harass and abuse them in different ways so for these women the better options were to be abused by a man who at least owns them.

### *Lack of alternatives*

Most of the abused participants reported that they do not have any options. They are not self sufficient to take care of themselves, they are not educated enough to seek jobs. They are financially not strong enough to bear their own expenses. Not only this they also lack self confidence to stand up and fight for themselves. Some also stated that their family members were not very supportive either to help them get out of this abusive relationship.

## Conclusion

According to the research findings there was a significant level of difference found between the physically and psychologically abused women as

compared to non abused women (Tables 3 & 4). One of most significant reason could be that during the process of abuse, the self-esteem of the victim is completely crushed so much so that she lacks the confidence to preserve autonomy. Domestic abuse has been reported to dent and shrink a woman's self-esteem and individuality (Hague, Mullender & Aris, 2003). Often, women who abscond the violent associations have trouble earning sufficient amount of money to live a decent life or find a secure and affordable shelter. Due to lack of financial means, social support and personal resources, even a completely worn out women may feel obligated to return to offensive relationship. Living in an abusive relation could further damage the ego of the women hence making her more vulnerable to the challenging situation.

According to the findings women who were living with their abusive counterparts had low self esteem as compared to those who chose to leave the relation for self dignity and respect. Kishor and Johnson (2004) argue that the frequency and intensity of women victimization, pinpoints the fragile status of a women in a society. According to their findings where women routinely experience violence, they are likely to be devalued as well .The women who were treated as inferior and moreover, they treated themselves inferior. The lack of physical power leads to general timidity in women. During the middle ages, cruel and inhuman treatment was meted out to them. They followed the Holy Scripture in which they were told to get, happiness by submissiveness. The women sacrificed every thing including their lives. The higher the sacrifice, the higher the salvation became a motto for women. In reality women rarely had an identity apart from that given to them as wives, mothers, and daughters. Although, they were worshipped as deities at home, they were treated as second class members of the family (Bahl & Manish, 2007). Majority of the women world over have to face some kind of ill-treatment by the males in the society which could damage their self-system ,thus lowering their level of self efficacy and self-esteem .The self system is based on the individual's attitudes, abilities, and cognitive skills. This system plays a significant role in how we perceive, attribute

and react to different situations. This system turns completely negative in abused women and inversely affects the level of her self-esteem and loses faith in self (Bandura, 1995).

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