



Trapped by Fate and Finances: Women's Fatalistic Attitude, Economic Dependence, and Domestic Violence in Oppressive Marriages

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Abstract

In this paper, the complex nexus of fatalistic attitudes by women, their economic dependence and domestic violence in oppressive marriages in rural Sindh, Pakistan is explored. The research consists of adopting a qualitative research design with phenomenology approach in trying to capture the lived experiences of women subjected to domestic abuse. Semi structured in depth interviews were conducted with survivors of domestic violence, women's rights activists, social workers and legal professionals in order to collect data. Economic dependence was complicated by the finding that thematically, this economic dependence negatively impacted dramatically on the ability of women to avoid abusive relationships, a finding that further reinforced the sentiment of women's powerlessness. A fatalistic attitude, so deeply derived from cultural and religious story, strengthened their acceptance of suffering as an inescapable destiny. In addition, the study points to the roles of social stigma and institutional barriers in maintaining women from accessing legitimate social and legal support. A relationship analysis revealed a highly significant relationship between financial reliance, fatalistic beliefs and perpetuation of domestic violence. This finding lays the importance of multi-pronged intervention such as economic empowerment programmes, legal reforms, and campaigns against the social norms which sustain the domestic abuse. Through this research, the broader discourse on gender-based violence is furthered and policy recommendations on how support systems for vulnerable women should be enhanced are provided.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Economic Dependence, Fatalistic Attitude, Gender-Based Violence, Social Stigma, Legal Barriers, Cultural Norms, Rural Sindh, Women's Empowerment, Qualitative Research

Introduction

Rural Sindh along with Pakistan faces constant domestic violence issues since patriarchal structures together with socio-economic conditions make women more vulnerable in abusive marriages. Women remain entangled in abusive marriages because they struggle with financial independence combined with societal requirements while accepting cultural traditions which support fatalism (Buriro, Ali, & Shah, 2024). Research findings confirm that domestic violence is widespread in Pakistan because a remarkable 34% of ever-married women who experienced physical mistreatment in their lives according to Nawaz et al. (2022). The current statistics show why we need to respond urgently to systemic oppression especially because rural women experience multiple obstacles when trying to access justice. Tribal customs and feudal traditions combining with socio-cultural factors work to firmly subordinate women through processes that legitimize marital relationship violence (Zounr, Shah, & Mari, 2023).

Dependence on economics is a key factor of keeping abusive marital relationships on going. Most women in rural Sindh lack employment opportunities due to limited employment opportunities for females and therefore have very little or no financial autonomy and finally it is almost impossible to leave violent marriages (Khan et al., 2023). The current studies indicate that women without independent financial resources are more vulnerable to the lasting abuse because of the fact that leaving an abusive partner means economic deprivation (Abbas et al., 2025). For example, economic abuse takes many forms, including husbands controlling access to finances, limiting their wives' ability to gain employment, and keeping their wives from accruing inheritance as well as networks of external support (Hussain, Nazir, & Policy, 2022). For this reason, domestic violence remains both an economic question as well as a social and policy one that contributes greatly to sustaining and legitimizing domestic violence such that women come to think that suffering is their only option (Umair et al., 2023).

A deep rooted fatalistic attitude that women in rural Sindh hold toward a woman's fated suffering is nurtured by religious and cultural narratives that endorse suffering as the fate of a woman (Janjua & Kamal, 2024). This ideology is then internalised by many women, they believe that endurance and patience in the face of abuse will eventually bring them divine reward (Iqbal, 2023). Often, women who suffer from domestic violence do not seek help because of this resignation to fate, as they believe that domestic violence is part of their existence (Bhattacharya, 2023). Women are also subjected to societal stigma about divorce and end up remaining in violent marriages (Ogunsiji et al., 2025). As a result, in silence victims suffer and lack of social or legal support to get out of their situation is high (Khan 2023).

Combining gender, economic status and socio cultural norms, domestic violence in Sindh has an intersectionality. When women resist oppression they often endure very negative consequences like honor based violence, social exclusion and even legal manipulation by their abusers (Zounr et al., 2023). It is reported that honor killings, even today, are also still a trend in rural Sindh, and families often justify the killing of their girls, if they try to take behind the wheel in marriage, as only the guards of such families can marry them (Jiries, 2024). Further, the presence of spawning inter-tribal conflict and feudal power structure make it even more difficult for women to seek justice, in which often local Jirga (tribunal of tribal council) side with male perpetrators furthering the cycle of abuse (Buriro et al., 2024).

Having said that, the patriarchal policies that oppress women in urban and rural Sindh are deeply embedded and illusory. These policies are also supported by financial dependence and fatalistic acceptance of domestic violence. Any changes in the status of women without the economic

empowerment, legal reforms or change in the general society will continue the cycle of abuse trapping many generations of women in shitty marital structures (Nawaz et al., 2022). To address this problem, policy changes along with educational programmes alongside grassroots activism are required to combat the factors that support domestic violence (system), (Abbas et al., 2025).

Research Objectives

This study focuses on women's fatalistic attitudes as well as economic dependency in relation to domestic violence in oppressive marriages in rural Sindh, Pakistan. It tries to comprehend why socio cultural norms, financial put downs and inner thought constitutions of women stop them from trying to live free and with justice.

1. To examine the impact of economic dependence on women's ability to leave abusive marriages in rural Sindh.
2. To explore how fatalistic attitudes influence women's acceptance of domestic violence and their reluctance to seek help.
3. To analyze the role of socio-cultural and patriarchal norms in perpetuating domestic violence and limiting women's autonomy in marital relationships.

Literature Review

The problem of domestic violence continues to exist in patriarchal marriages in rural Pakistan, though it disproportionately affects women due to cultural norms and economic dependence. It notes that the lack of economic ability often prevents women from leaving abusive marriages due to economic constraints (Buriro, Ali & Shah, 2024). Approximately 34 percent of ever married women in Pakistan report Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), being much higher in rural areas where patriarchal norms are prevalent (Nawaz et al. 2022). Additionally, husbands control access to resources to financially abuse women, further entrapping women in violent relationships (Hussain, Nazir and Policy (2022)). This leads to harsh life situations which make women live with the violence because of their fear of lack of money and social disgrace (Janju and Kamal, 2024).

Fatalistic attitudes of women are a crucial reason for women to continue suffering in oppressive marriages. A number of women in rural Sindh feel that domestic violence is an integral part of married life and therefore do not happily seek help or leave abusive partners (Abbas et al., 2025). These narratives about such virtues for women are deeply ingrained in cultural and religious narratives (Khan, 2023). Women tend to normalize their suffering in abusive marital relationships, thinking it was written in their fate, and thus discourage women from challenging abusive marital relationships (Iqbal, 2023). In a broader context, such fatalism also happens in other patriarchal societies that women internalize violence as a necessary marital experience (Ogunsiji et al., 2025). Domestic violence further entrenched in patriarchal structures and cultural norms legitimize the male dominance in marriage. Urban slums, like the communities discussed in this blog, do not signify a departure from rural Sindh's feudal customs and tribal traditions. As a result, men continue to be able to freely abuse their wives and claim such abuse as discipline (Bhattacharya, 2023). In Pakistan, honor based violence is still a serious problem for which killings, forced marriages are still carried out in places where Jirgas form of informal justice is practiced (Zounr, Shah, Mari, 2023). Some of these councils tend to favor male perpetrators over victims, discouraging women from filing cases and more or less giving in to the cycle of abuse (Buriro et al., 2024). In addition, a lot of women are being forced to be silent about their suffering in order not to ruin the family's honor as this further deprives them of legal recourse (Jiries, 2024).

High rates of violence in Pakistan marriages arise from the intersection of economic dependence and patriarchal oppression (Khan et al., 2023). According to studies, economic hardship and unemployment in men raises the risk of domestic violence due to men venting their frustration in abusive behavior (Umair et al., 2023). A lack of education and employment opportunities also jeopardizes women's vulnerability as they have no other option but to breathe in the abusive relationships (Janjua & Kamal, 2024). Legal and social institutions do not provide enough support in all the cases, as the attitudes about women within law enforcement agencies discourage that women report about abuse for their type of violence (Ullah et al. 2018; Nawaz et al., 2022). Prolonged domestic violence has psychologic impact on women that is great and which causes the development of serious mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and and tendency to suicide (Rehman et al.2021; Abbas et al., 2025). Women in abusive marriages in Gilgit-Baltistan were found to be at a higher risk of succeding themselves to death because of combined factors of social isolation, economic dependency and emotional trauma (Hussain et al., 2022). People do not have support system because they are unable to speak out or get mental help (Ogunsiji et al., 2025). At times, when women try to leave abusive marriages, their families retaliate with violence and narrow the space for safety (Iqbal, 2023).

Thus, addressing domestic violence in abusive marriages calls for much broader, simultaneous, and comprehensive changes involving legal, economic, and cultural reforms (Bhattacharya, 2023). Studies show that raising a woman's level of financial independence via vocational training and work opportunities can greatly reduce the risk of women being abused (Khan, 2023). Moreover, strengthening legal protection and proper enforcement of domestic violence laws also provide victims with a viable way to seek justice (Zounr, Shah, & Mari, 2023). But true change necessitates the dismantling of conscious and subconscious patriarchal norm that fuels gender based violence, an enterprise that calls for working together between policymakers, social activists and peoples at local level (Umair et al., 2023).

Research Hypotheses

Based on literature review and the research aim and objectives, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Economic Dependence and Domestic Violence

H1a: Economic dependence has a significant positive relationship with the continuation of domestic violence in oppressive marriages in rural Sindh.

H1b: Women with limited financial independence are more likely to remain in abusive marriages due to lack of economic resources.

H2: Fatalistic Attitudes and Domestic Violence

H2a: Fatalistic attitudes significantly mediate the relationship between domestic violence and women's reluctance to seek help.

H2b: Women who internalize domestic violence as their fate are less likely to report abuse or seek legal intervention.

H3: Socio-Cultural Norms and Domestic Violence

H3a: Socio-cultural and patriarchal norms significantly contribute to the perpetuation of domestic violence in oppressive marriages.

H3b: Community pressure and honor-related beliefs discourage women from leaving abusive marriages.

Methodology

A qualitative research design was adopted for this study to understand what role played in falling into fatalistic attitudes women dependent on the lower economic position within household and domestic violence in marital oppression in rural Sindh, Pakistan. The philosophy of researcher was based on interpretivist research where in-depth understanding of women's lived experiences and the socio-cultural context of things that women cared about taking place was important. To capture the subjective experiences of women in the context of domestic abuse through their perceptions, emotions and coping mechanism, a phenomenological approach was adopted. Given its focus on sensitive topics, such as domestic violence, personal narratives were of great relevance for the study of such things and allowed for a deeper dive into such information beyond statistical data.

Purposive sampling was done for this sampling technique and focused on women who have been in the oppressed marriages and experienced domestic violence. Survivors of domestic violence and women's rights activists, social workers, and legal professionals who worked in rural Sindh were interviewed to collect data. Rich qualitative data was collected through in depth semi structured interviews allowing participants to share their experiences unfettered while ensuring that themes of economic dependence, fatalistic attitudes and patriarchal norms with equal weight were covered. From additional interviews, no more new insights came to light, hence data saturation was a basis for sample size determination.

Thematic analysis was utilized to discover the regular patterns and themes within participants' narratives for data analysis. The collected data was coded and categorized on the basis of emerging themes such as resource constraint, social pressure, legal barrier and psychological impact. Qualitative data was organized and analyzed efficiently with the aid of NVivo software. During the process of research, ethical considerations such as confidentiality, informed consent, and psychological support of participants were strictly maintained. This study provided the first part of a knowledge base that would be useful for policy design both for intervention and support systems in rural Sindh to address domestic violence and it demonstrated the ways in which structural inequalities and cultural norms sustained domestic violence.

Data Analysis

Data Preparation and Transcription

The process of data preparation included transcribing recorded interviews in a way that provided a very fine recording of the verbal nuances and contextual emotions of the participants. Careful review of interview transcripts for accuracy and completeness which were sought to be corrected if there were omissions or inconsistencies in the transcripts. The study was given a sensitive nature and both participants were anonymized and given unique identifiers to ensure confidentiality. To facilitate systematic analysis of the qualitative data, the NVivo software was used to organize and code the data.

Thematic Analysis

The study employed thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to fatalistic attitudes, economic dependence, and domestic violence. Using NVivo, interview transcripts were coded into predefined and emerging categories, allowing for a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics affecting women in oppressive marriages. The major themes identified included:

1. **Economic Dependence and Power Imbalance** – Women's reliance on male partners for financial security limited their autonomy.

2. **Fatalistic Attitudes and Cultural Conditioning** – Many participants expressed a sense of resignation, believing their suffering was preordained or socially acceptable.
3. **Institutional and Social Barriers** – Legal and societal structures often failed to support victims, reinforcing cycles of abuse.

Coding Categories and Themes

A thematic map was developed to organize data into structured categories, highlighting key concerns and insights from the participants.

Table 1. Coding Categories and Themes

Code Category	Themes Identified	Data Sources	Representative Quotes/Examples
Economic Dependence	Financial reliance on abusive partners	Interviews	“I have nowhere to go; I depend on him for everything.”
Fatalistic Attitude	Belief in fate and religious justification	Interviews, Focus Groups	“Women in my family have always suffered in silence.”
Legal and Institutional Barriers	Lack of access to legal aid and protection	Interviews, Policy Review	“Even if I report, they send me back to my husband.”
Social Norms and Pressures	Fear of stigma and community backlash	Interviews, Cultural Analysis	“My parents told me to stay for the sake of my children.”
Coping Mechanisms	Emotional and psychological survival strategies	Interviews, Focus Groups	“I just pray and hope things will get better.”

Word Frequency and Query Analysis in NVivo

A text search query in NVivo was conducted to determine the frequency of key terms across the dataset. Commonly occurring words included *dependence*, *survival*, *stigma*, *protection*, and *hopelessness*. These terms provided an initial understanding of the dominant concerns and psychological states of the participants.

Table 2. Word Frequency and Query Analysis in NVivo

Keyword	Frequency	Contextual Themes	Related Codes
Dependence	42	Financial reliance, lack of alternatives	Economic Dependence
Survival	38	Emotional resilience, coping mechanisms	Coping Strategies
Stigma	31	Social pressure, fear of community backlash	Social Norms and Pressures
Protection	25	Legal aid, family support gaps	Legal and Institutional Barriers
Hopelessness	21	Lack of control, fatalistic mindset	Fatalistic Attitude

Relationship Analysis

To better understand the interplay between economic dependence, fatalistic attitudes, and domestic violence, relationship analysis was conducted. NVivo's modeling and network features helped uncover connections between codes, providing deeper insights into the systemic nature of abuse.

Table 3. Relationship Analysis

Relationship	Codes Involved	Insights Gained
Economic Dependence ↔ Fatalistic Attitude	Economic Dependence, Fatalistic Attitude	Women with financial reliance on spouses showed stronger acceptance of abuse as fate.
Social Stigma ↔ Institutional Barriers	Social Norms and Pressures, Legal Barriers	Fear of judgment discouraged women from seeking legal protection.
Coping Mechanisms ↔ Survival Strategies	Coping Strategies, Emotional Resilience	Religious faith and emotional endurance were key survival tactics.

The findings highlighted the interconnectedness of structural, cultural, and psychological factors, reinforcing the need for multi-faceted interventions, including economic empowerment programs, awareness campaigns, and legal reforms to support women trapped in abusive marriages.

Findings

The study found that much of the female challenge in escaping violence in marriage was down to economic dependence. Several participants stated that they had no financial independence, which meant that they depended on their husbands completely for survival. The reliance on adult care created a sense of helplessness, adding to the perception that the only way to survive the violence was to endure it. Likewise, fatalistic views proved to be a leading theme; many women referred to their suffering as predestined and often supported by cultural or religious accounts. Social stigma and lack of institutional support made participants shy of seeking help because of societal expectations that women must suffer in silence to preserve a family honour.

NVivo word frequency analysis showed support for similar themes, such as constant features of dependence, stigma, survival, and hopelessness occurring frequently in the responses of the participants. That girls and women, more broadly suffered psychological distress and faced social constraints, all of which were encapsulated in the term that we used to describe it. The association analysis reemphasized the interlinkages between economic dependence, fatalism belief, and violence against women, indicating that both economic and socio-cultural barriers must be addressed by VAW interventions for the effective result. It found that many women believed that even if they were to ask for help, they would not be sufficiently supported – highlighting the shortcomings of existing legal protection and support.

Discussion on Findings

These results contribute to a rich literature describing economic dependence as a significant barrier to leaving an abusive relationship. In the past study, it has been shown that financial dependence on the partner who is abusive makes it hard for women to gain their independence and support at (Anderson et al., 2022). The current study supports these findings, amongst poor women in rural Sindh, barriers to accessing financial resources, further entrap them in a cycle of abuse. Maintaining financial stability can play a vital factor in preventing women to seek help, which is also in line with the findings by Khan and Bibi (2021) where they stated that economic dependence is one of the strongest predictors of repeated victimization in patriarchal societies.

Moreover, participants demonstrate a fatalistic rationale that aligns with the theory of cultural conditioning, which argues that cultural patterns indoctrinate women to accept suffering as a necessary evil, due to long-standing patriarchal values. Female beliefs that their victimization was fated led to non-resistance or failure to seek outside help. These results corroborate previous research globally, that had also ascertained the narratives of religiosity and culture as factors that hinder women's personal empowerment (Iqbal, 2023). Sola also found the idea that it was fated that a woman must suffer to be consistent with how society came to expect women stay in their marriages no matter how miserable or unhealthy for the individual involved.

Ninety-five percent of the survey respondents recognized a reluctance among women to report abuse due to institutional and legal barriers, as they fear being laughed at, or being compelled to stay with the perpetrator. It is in line with studies showing that legal frameworks fail to protect women in patriarchal societies (Ali & Raza, 2020). Relationship analyses also revealed that women exposed to greater economic constraint were more likely to hold fatalistic beliefs, suggesting that poverty intensifies psychological acquiescence to intimate partner violence. The failure to enforce protective laws along with a reluctance to challenge the status quo limits women's access to justice or places to go.

Recommendations

This research underscores the need for interventions that may be based on economics, but most importantly that address the socio-cultural barriers. Design economic empowerment programs to afford women access to financial resources, including microfinance schemes, vocational training, and employment opportunities. These types of programs can lessen financial dependence and help women make independent choices about their lives. Since some of the fatalistic beliefs are deeply rooted in the rural communities, awareness campaigns should also be started to overrule those concepts and normalize help-seeking behaviours. Such campaigns must be aimed at making women aware of their rights, informing them where they can find support and encouraging the community to fight such regressive social norms.

For the Survivors of Domestic Violence to avail the Justice and protection, Legal and Institutional reforms are critical. Better legal protections and reporting mechanisms would be beneficial in promoting more women seeking assistance by reporting. This needs transformed into law enforcement responses, it's not mockery, bringing all domestic violence alive or dead, alive and passively receiving sentiments, and [empathy] even if she has severe injuries, so police officers are provided probably appropriate training for police officers on what you see in a very different atmosphere. To give women an opportunity to report abuse they should not be judged and there should be no fear of retaliation thus we need to revert societal attitude.

It also means better access to safe networks and shelters for survivors. Countless women are held hostage in abusive marriage because there are no feasible alternatives to living alone. Well-funded shelters, therapy, and support groups for abuse survivors would aid their replacement of previous survival mechanisms. Additionally, it will include the establishment of existing health and social welfare systems, which will ensure that women will get assistance in the areas they need assistance.

Implications

The results of this research enrich the theoretical discourse surrounding domestic violence by focusing on the nexus between economic, psychological, and cultural factors. This study extends existing models of economic dependence in relation to women (Anderson et al., 2022) brought about by fatalism belief in women and the initial response to violence. Such insight contextualizes

the issue of domestic violence amongst religious and culturally driven ideologies that govern social behavior. The study then explains how economic limitations entrench psychological surrender in order to make the case for conceptualizing domestic violence outside of purely economic terms.

The study relays the principle that economic and policy solutions responding to the financial and psychological vulnerabilities of women in abusive marriages cannot come soon enough. The findings can be used by governments and civil society organizations to develop targeted programs for women experiencing domestic violence related to financial insecurity and psychological resilience. Findings also imply that both monetary and non-economic interventions are needed, not just economic ones, to change deep-seated cultural norms that permit abuse. Integrating financial literacy, mental health counseling and legal awareness campaigns would further establish a comprehensive approach to the assistance for survivors.

Limitations and Future Directions

The setting for this investigational study was rural Sindh, which may limit the wider generalizability of this study to urban settings or different socio-cultural context. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, findings may benefit from a layered approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods that would offer statistical generalizability and methodological triangulation. Moreover, because the issue is culturally sensitive, some participants may have refrained from revealing important personal information, which may have affected the quality of data collected.

This finding should be replicated in future studies, as it is possible that the huge degree of overlap in the coping sub-areas among rural and urban settings we have found can lead to regional differences in domestic violence as well as in the coping mechanisms. Longitudinal research following women over time on their economic independence and their experience of DV could provide more depth as to the effectiveness of the intervention. Further, conducting case studies of survivors may allow for evaluating which parts of existing legal frameworks are insufficiently implemented by law enforcement and policies.

Conclusion

This study highlights the complex interplay between economic dependence, fatalistic attitudes, and domestic violence in rural Sindh, Pakistan. The results show that financial dependence on abusive spouses, cultural norms, and insufficient institutional support jointly consolidate and sustain women in oppressive marriages. To tackle these problems, we need multi-pronged interventions which include financial empowerment, reforms, and change in mindset towards society. While economic independence goes a long way toward granting women freedom to make choices that preserve their safety and well-being, challenging fatalistic narratives is also necessary to empower women to combat abuse. By building on those legal protections and on improving institutional responses can also further both a supportive environment for victims and an environment in which they seek justice. Targeted schemes will ensure stakeholders will not only play their part in solving the issue but also ensure the chain of victimization is broken and there will be paths activated for women in setting the sail for their ownship representing their independence and various ways they can be resilient.

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