



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

Research Commons

<http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

## Research Commons at the University of Waikato

### Copyright Statement:

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

The thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of the thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from the thesis.

**Representations of Domestic Violence in Pakistani Television News and Activist  
Campaigns:  
Perspectives from Journalists, Women's Rights Campaigners, and Audiences**

A thesis  
submitted in fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree  
of

**Doctor of Philosophy in Screen and Media Studies**

at

**The University of Waikato**

by

**Omer Bin Nasir**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

2024

## Abstract

This thesis offers an in-depth examination of the representation of domestic violence news on television channels and in activists' campaigns in Pakistan from the perspective of journalists, women's rights activists, and audiences. It is a compilation of five studies; three investigate the perspectives of Pakistani television news journalists regarding representation, professional ethics, and journalistic imperatives involved in domestic violence news reporting. The fourth study examines the viewpoints of Pakistani women's rights activists regarding domestic violence news coverage and how activist campaigns represent the issue in their efforts to highlight and prevent this kind of violence. The fifth study is centred on Pakistani audiences' responses to news media reporting of domestic violence and materials designed to draw attention to women's rights issues including campaigns against domestic violence. Together, these studies provide important insights into the as yet largely unexamined issue of how domestic violence is portrayed in television news and activists' campaign materials in Pakistan.

Research for this thesis was conducted using qualitative methodological approaches. Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with television news journalists and women's rights activists, and four focus groups with Pakistani television news audiences. Eleven experienced Pakistani television news journalists were interviewed to explore: how Pakistani television news media represent domestic violence; how reporting is perceived to reflect ethical practices; and which journalistic imperatives are involved in the selection of news. Five Pakistani women's rights activists were interviewed to explore their views about domestic violence reporting in mainstream media and how they address domestic violence violence in the course of their activism. To understand audience responses to domestic violence reporting on television news and women's rights activists' campaigns, 22

participants (11 females and 11 males) constituting focus groups representing higher, middle, and lower socioeconomic backgrounds were recruited. All four focus groups were conducted in the city of Lahore, Pakistan.

The research findings demonstrate how socio-cultural factors and ethical practices shape Pakistani journalists, activists, and audience understanding of domestic violence. Even though domestic violence has been criminalised in Pakistan, television news channels do not prioritise it in primetime reporting unless the incident is particularly horrific or involves well known named individuals. The coverage is predominantly incident-based and relies on limited sources. The research findings highlighted that there are no written guidelines or training for the coverage of domestic violence. At most, journalists do not disclose the victim's identity, though this is not consistently practised. Consent is also often bypassed and data gathering practices can be unethical. Pakistani activists and audiences were of the view that coverage of domestic violence provided by television news is limited and sensational, while Pakistani audiences expressed appreciation for women's rights campaign materials initiating educated and transformative debate about the endemic and structural social nature of women subjugation. Women's rights activists cited patriarchal cultural practices and an unresponsive state as factors that contribute towards the widespread abuse of women in the country, and perceive the news media to be only interested in generating controversy and ratings.

This thesis identifies an urgent need to develop comprehensive ethical guidelines and training programmes for responsible reporting of domestic violence on television news channels in Pakistan. Dialogue between decision makers in television news organisations and women's rights activists should be initiated to shift the focus of the news agenda towards promoting better awareness and understanding of the causes and consequences of domestic violence in Pakistan.

## Acknowledgments

This research project would never have become a reality without the contributions of so many people. It might not be possible to list them all here, but the following people stand out for investing their passion and professionalism in this work. I am deeply honoured to have found the opportunity to learn from Prof. C. Kay Weaver and Prof. Gareth Schott. Their remarkable supervision transformed my very raw and abstract ideas into a genuine and much needed academic inquiry.

I also want to extend my gratitude to dozens of people - journalists, women's rights activists and common citizens of Pakistan who cheerfully responded to my emails, calls and text messages - especially those who granted me lengthy interviews and participated in focus group discussions.

How can I forget my loved ones and dear ones? My parents, sisters, nephew, Adnan Bhai, Irfan Bhai. Special credit goes to my partner Sahrish for her constant encouragement at every step of this long and daunting journey. This could not have been possible without her warm support. Big thanks to Faiqa for her culinary skills and delicious meals throughout study sessions. I am also grateful to Moira Barry for proofreading the whole manuscript.

Here, I also want to extend my sincerest affections to my loveliest cat companion "Mano" who left for the heavens a few months before the submission of this dissertation. She used to spend her days and nights on the couch with me while I studied. A major chunk of this manuscript was drafted in her soothing and charming presence.

Lastly, I dedicate this work to Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and his teachings for inspiring me to undertake this research. Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) is not only the torch bearer of human rights, but also a remarkable source of spreading awareness regarding women's rights, even long before the conception of feminist ideology.

Islam condemns violence against women in any form. However, ill-interpretation of religion, normative cultural beliefs, rigid masculine ideology, biased institutional practices, and misrepresentation in the media are some major factors for the continuation of this gendered crime. It is my deepest desire that this work could prove to be beneficial to Pakistani women's struggles in gaining equality, feminists' organisations' mission and most importantly, to Pakistani journalists in improving the standard of reporting and representation of violence against women.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>List of Publications/Presentations</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. The Media Landscape and Structure of Pakistani Television News Channels	5
1.2. - Thesis Rationale	9
1.2.1. - How Do Pakistani Television Journalists Represent Domestic Violence News (Study 1)	11
1.2.2. - Ethical Guidelines and Practices for Pakistani Television News Journalists Reporting on Domestic Violence (Study 2)	13
1.2.3. - Journalistic Imperatives Involved in Television News Reporting of Domestic Violence in Pakistan (Study 3)	14
1.2.4. - Pakistani Women’s Rights Activists Campaigns and Views on Television News Reporting of Domestic Violence (Study 4)	15
1.2.5. Pakistani Audience Responses to News Reporting and Women Rights Activists Content about Domestic Violence (Study 5)	16
<b>Chapter 2: Domestic Violence: Contributing Factors and Research Literature</b>	<b>18</b>
2.1. - Domestic Violence in Pakistan	18
2.2 - Factors Contributing to the Prevalence of Domestic Violence in Pakistan	20
2.2.1 - Patriarchal Society	20
2.2.1.1 - Practices in Marriage	22
2.2.1.2 - Notions of Honour	24
2.2.2 - Religious Interpretations	26
2.2.3 - Pakistani Law	28
2.3 - The Emergence of Women’s Rights in Pakistan	31
2.4 - Domestic Violence and Media	34
2.4.1 - Representation and Reporting of Domestic Violence in Pakistani Media	36
2.5 - Audience Response	39
2.5.1 - Audience Research in Pakistani Context	41
<b>Chapter 3: Domestic Violence as News: Television Journalists’ Discursive Understanding and Reporting of Domestic Violence in Pakistan (Study 1)</b>	<b>43</b>
3.1 - Abstract	44
3.2 - Introduction	44
3.2.1 - News Reporting and Treatment of Domestic Violence	46
3.2.2 - The Perceived Role of Media and Journalists in Pakistan	48
3.3 - Method	49
3.4 - Findings and Discussion	52
3.4.1 - Pakistani Journalists Understanding of Domestic Violence	52
3.4.1.1 - Psychological and Emotional Abuse	54
3.4.1.2 - Marital Rape	55
3.4.1.3 - Violence against Domestic Helpers	57
3.4.2 - Explanations for the Persistence of Domestic Violence in Pakistan	58
3.4.2.1 - Journalistic Activism	60
3.4.3 - Incident Based Reporting as Indirect Advocacy	62

3.4.4 - Sensationalism and Tabloidisation	63
3.5 - Conclusion	65
<b>Chapter 4: Ethical Guidelines and Practices for Pakistani Television Journalists Reporting on Domestic Violence (Study 2)</b>	<b>66</b>
4.1 - Abstract	68
4.2 - Introduction	68
4.2.1 - Journalism Ethics and Domestic Violence Reporting	70
4.2.2 - Existing Ethical Guidelines on Domestic Violence News Reporting	71
4.2.3 - Crime News Reporting in Pakistan	73
4.2.4 - Formalized Codes of Ethics in Pakistani News Media	74
4.3 - Method	77
4.4 - Findings and Discussion	81
4.4.1 - Editorial Guidelines and Code of Ethics	81
4.4.1.1 - Consent	84
4.4.1.2 - Journalistic Plagiarism	86
4.4.2 - Professional Training for Journalists	87
4.4.3 - The Impact of Existing Reporting Practices	88
4.4.4 - Sources	90
4.4.5 - Statistics, Experts, and Avenues of Victim Support	92
4.5 - Conclusion and Recommendations	93
<b>Chapter 5: Journalistic Imperatives Involved in Television News Reporting of Domestic Violence in Pakistan (Study 3)</b>	<b>95</b>
5.1 - Introduction	95
5.1.1 - Journalism and News Values	97
5.1.1.1 - Fatal Incidents	98
5.1.1.2 - Incidents Involving Celebrities	100
5.1.1.3 - Social Media Influence on Mainstream News Selection	100
5.1.3 - Research on Media and Domestic Violence in Pakistan	101
5.2 - Method	103
5.3 - Findings and Discussion	105
5.3.2 - Celebrity Status and Fame	107
5.3.3 - Social Media Influence on Mainstream Media	108
5.3.4 - Commercial Imperatives	110
5.3.4.1 - Lengthy Headlines and Commercials	110
5.3.4.2 - Breaking Stories of Domestic Violence	112
5.3.6 - Social Justice and Awareness (Advocacy Journalism)	115
5.4 - Conclusion & Recommendations	116
<b>Chapter 6: Pakistani Women's Rights Activists Assessment of Mainstream News Reporting on Domestic Violence and Their Representations of Domestic Violence (Study 4)</b>	<b>119</b>
6.1 - Introduction	119
6.1.1 - Women Rights Activism in Pakistan	121
6.1.2 - Dominant Strands of Feminism in Pakistan	122
6.1.3 - Opposition to Women's Rights Activism in Pakistan	123
6.1.4 - Use of Media in Women Rights Activism	124
6.1.4.1 - Social Media	125
6.2 - Method	126
6.2.1 - Participants and their Recruitment	127
6.2.2 - Interview Schedule	129
6.2.3 - Analyses	130



6.3 - Findings & Discussion	130
6.3.1 - Pakistani News Media is Not Interested in Domestic Violence	130
6.3.2 - Preference for Sensationalism and Controversy	131
6.3.3 - Lack of Contextualisation of Domestic Violence	133
6.3.4 - Socio-Systemic Explanations for Domestic Violence	134
6.3.4.1 - Cultural Norms and Religious Interpretation	134
6.3.4.2 - Unresponsive State	135
6.3.4.2.1 - Inadequacy of Response from Criminal Justice Systems	136
6.3.4.2.2 - State and Religion	137
6.3.5 - Nature of Activism in Line with Understanding of Domestic Violence	139
6.3.5.1 - Grassroots Level Initiatives to Bring About Socio-Cultural Change	139
6.3.5.1.1 - Social Media for Activism	140
6.3.5.2 - Activism for Legal and Policy Reforms	140
6.4 - Conclusion	142
<b>Chapter 7: Pakistani Audience Responses to News Reporting and Women Rights’ Activists Content about Domestic Violence (Study 5)</b>	<b>144</b>
7.1 - Abstract	144
7.2 - Introduction	145
7.2.1 - Literature Review	148
7.3 - Method	150
7.3.1 - Selection of Content to Screen for Focus Group Participants	151
7.3.2 - Recruitment of Focus Group Research Participants	152
7.3.3 - Conducting the Focus Group Interviews	153
7.3.4 - Data Analysis	155
7.4 - Findings and Discussion	156
7.4.1 - Responses to Domestic Violence News Stories	156
7.4.1.1 - Social and Cultural Norms	156
7.4.1.2 - Inadequacy of Justice System	158
7.4.1.3 - Insufficient Details and Lack of Contextualisation in News Reporting	159
7.4.1.4 - Domestic violence in the Context of Religion	161
7.4.1.5 - Justifying Violence Against Women	162
7.4.1.7 - Viewers’ Recommendations to Mainstream News Media	166
7.4.2 - Responses to BBCSHE Social Justice Activist Campaign Material	167
7.4.2.1 - Activist Content and Awareness Raising	167
7.4.2.2 - Providing a Supportive Platform for Content Focused on Pakistani Women	169
7.4.2.3 - Identifying Double Standards in Pakistani Society	170
7.4.2.4 - Reforms To Support Women’s Equal Rights	172
7.4.2.4.1 - Social Reforms	172
7.4.2.4.2 - Educational Reforms	173
7.4.2.4.3 - Legal Reforms	173
7.4.2.4.4 -Media Reforms	174
7.5 - Conclusion	175
<b>Chapter 8: Conclusion</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>Appendix A. Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for Interviews with Journalists</b>	<b>245</b>
<b>Appendix B. Information Sheet (For Journalists)</b>	<b>247</b>
<b>Appendix C. Participant Consent Form (For Journalists)</b>	<b>248</b>
<b>Appendix D. Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for Interviews with Activists</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>Appendix E. Information Sheet (For Activists)</b>	<b>251</b>

<b>Appendix F. Participant Consent Form (For Activists)</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>Appendix G. Focus Group Interview Schedule</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>Appendix H. Information Sheet for Potential Focus Group Participants</b>	<b>257</b>
<b>Appendix I. Consent Form for Focus Group Participants</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>Appendix J. Co-Authorship Forms</b>	<b>261</b>

## List of Tables

Table 3.1 Demographic Details of the Participants	52
Table 4.1 Relevant Clauses in Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority's Code of Ethics	75
Table 4.2 Ethical Guidelines Related to Crime and Violence Coverage in Pakistan	76
Table 4.3 Ethical Issues in Domestic Violence News Reportage, 2019	78
Table 6.1 Details of Participating Activists	129
Table 7.1 Demographic Characteristics of Focus Groups Participants	153

## List of Publications/Presentations

The following peer reviewed publications<sup>1</sup> are reproduced in this thesis:

### Chapter 3

Nasir, O. B., Weaver, K. C., & Schott, G. (*in press, 2024*). Domestic Violence as News: Television Journalists' Discursive Understanding and Reporting of Domestic Violence in Pakistan. In D. Kishan Thussu and S. Roy (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and media in the Global South*. Routledge.

### Chapter 4

Nasir, O. B., Weaver, K. C., & Schott, G. (2023). Ethical guidelines and practices for Pakistani television journalists reporting on domestic violence. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 38(3), 146-161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2023.2228307>

### Chapter 7

Nasir, O., Weaver., C.K., & Schott, G. (2023). Pakistani audience responses to news reporting and social justice campaign content about domestic violence. *73<sup>rd</sup> International Communication Association Annual Conference*, Toronto, Canada, 25<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> May.

---

<sup>1</sup> The conference presentation listed required a full-paper submission that was blind peer-reviewed prior to acceptance.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

I introduce this thesis by providing a brief account of domestic violence, which is followed by an account of my motivation to do this research. As the research is set in a Pakistani television news media context - one likely foreign to the readers - the introduction chapter is accompanied by a description of Pakistani news channels' organisational structure and operating procedures. This thesis is by publication, and I end this chapter by providing the rationale for each of the five studies which make up this research endeavor.

Domestic violence is a recognised global social and public health problem (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2013; Kivisto & Watson 2016). In academic literature, the terms domestic violence and intimate partner violence (IPV) are often used interchangeably to describe physical, psychological, sexual violence against, or stalking and threatening behaviour by a current or former partner (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) defines IPV as behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours. It may also include psychologically harmful acts of intimidation such as yelling, shouting, humiliation and emotional manipulation (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005). In comparison to IPV, domestic violence is a broader term which encompasses violence and abuse perpetrated by any family member. Domestic violence can also include economic or financial abuse that involves intentional behaviours that sabotage or exploit an individual's economic potential and opportunities (Postmus et al., 2016). This can impact women's economic prospects and social mobility (Rayner-Thomas et al., 2016).

It is important to clarify that the term domestic violence has been used in the thesis instead of family violence. This is in line with how the issue has been classified and

referenced in federal and four provincial legislations of Pakistan. Since all Pakistani legislation broadly categorises violence against women as domestic violence, a conscious effort was made to stick to this term rather than use the term family violence. I also used domestic violence instead of intimate partner violence in most places because intimate partner violence denotes abuse perpetrated by partners, while this thesis also deals with abuse perpetrated by parents, siblings and in-laws. Nonetheless, I do use the term intimate partner violence in places where I was referring to research conducted on abuse perpetrated by the intimate partner.

Drawing on data from 161 countries between 2000 and 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) estimates that worldwide, over a quarter of women aged between 15 to 49 years have been subjected to different forms of violence perpetrated by an intimate partner at least once in their lives. Men and women may experience domestic violence, but women experience it more often and in far more severe forms than men (Black et al., 2011). The prevalence of violence against women has been found to be high in South Asian countries. According to quantitative longitudinal research conducted in India, 40% of women suffer IPV (Konde, 2021). In the Maldives, Nepal, and Bangladesh, around 50% of women reported having suffered various forms of violence in domestic and intimate settings, which also affects children in a relationship (Jejeebhoy et al., 2014). It is important to be mindful of the fact that domestic violence presents itself differently in different societies owing to different regional histories, cultural norms, attitudes, and laws (Menjívar & Salcido, 2002). For example, in South Asian countries the prevalence and cause of domestic violence has cultural roots in asymmetrical gender expectations, gender roles and dowry practice (Khan et al., 2014). Socioeconomic status, cultural beliefs, cultural norms and past experiences have been found to influence behaviour and attitudes toward domestic violence (Sami & Ali ,

2012). To summarise, domestic violence is a known issue internationally, with the extent of the problem clearly documented and reported.

My motivation to pursue this very feminine topic through research derived from personal experiences and professional convictions as a former television news journalist and a male from a well-established patriarchal country, Pakistan. In 2005, I began my journalistic career as a sub-editor for a local Urdu newspaper *Daily Waqt* (translates to Daily Times), in the city of Lahore, Pakistan. In the mornings I would go to University of the Punjab as a student studying for an Honors degree in Communication Studies. In the evenings I would work at the newspaper. After a few months of exertion and learning on various desks such as the international news, sports and entertainment news, city and crime news desk, I finally made it to the main desk. As suggested by the name, journalists working on the main desk are responsible for editing important news stories for the most important pages - front and back. Considered the backbone of the newspaper, these two pages are a reflection of its editorial policy. Advertisements placed here are more expensive than on other pages. Similarly, headline stories and exclusive news materials, including impactful pictures, were reserved for these sections of the newspaper.

During my two and a half years' experience of print journalism, I was never really made aware of what the editorial policy of the newspaper was. Nothing was given to me in black and white regarding policy or guidelines for reporting. If there were special instructions about any news, the chief news editor would announce it verbally. Also, I did not receive any form of professional training while working as a sub-editor except for the on-job-learning. Interestingly, my experiences are not uncommon and were also shared by colleagues. I remember frequently asking my chief news editor why we did not publish social issues as front or back page news. The usual answer was social issues are not that important; readers want to read political news and controversies on front and back pages.

In 2007 I switched from print journalism to electronic news media and joined *Express News* television news channel as associate producer. I worked there for almost ten years and was rewarded with multiple promotions - reaching the position of senior producer, in-charge of eight hours of morning shift transmission. Strangely again, no orientation was provided to the editorial policy of the news channel. Most of the time instructions were passed on verbally on important matters and, on occasion, were displayed on the newsroom noticeboard. Also, I was never offered the opportunity to engage in skill development training. Again, these experiences were shared by other colleagues.

At the television news channel, there was also a black landline phone sitting on the table of the executive producer with a white sticker pasted on its receiver displaying the word “hotline” written in bold. This was an exclusive incoming communication line from the channel's owner who would call every now and then to pass instructions regarding political content and advertisements. This was his innate fashion of exerting direct influence and control over news agenda and, in doing so, often overriding the professional agency of journalists. Interestingly, none of us would ever challenge or oppose these interventions. In a nutshell, the owner’s dictation would set the direction of editorial policy and news agenda.

While working as senior producer, people close enough to me disclosed that they had been facing persistent domestic abuse for years. Not only was I emotionally affected by these disclosures, they also drove home to me the deficiencies in how the news media covered domestic violence. Some of my relatives recounted that apart from social pressures, stereotypical media reporting of IPV also kept them from disclosing abusive experiences earlier on. I tried to bring these issues up with my journalist colleagues, with the intention of finding ways to improve media coverage on incidents of violence against women, but I could not get much traction. This is attributed, in part, to the frantic nature of the newsroom that does not permit such discussions as staff are always on the go. It is hard for them to find time



for reflexive practices unless facilitated by the organisation. Hence, I decided to pursue an academic inquiry into this topic to scope the nature of representation of domestic violence in television news and how audiences were interpreting this reporting. I hope that the findings of this research may assist in bringing about a positive change in domestic violence news coverage in Pakistan.

In the next section, I will describe the standard organizational structure, hierarchy, and operations of news channels in Pakistan. This serves as a frame of reference to understand the hierarchical decision-making structure of a Pakistani news channel. I wrote the following section drawing on my decade-long experience as a senior television journalist in Pakistan.

### **1.1. The Media Landscape and Structure of Pakistani Television News Channels**

According to the Pakistan Media Regulatory Authority's (PEMRA) Annual Report 2018, in 2018 there were 88 television channels in Pakistan including 26 national news and current affairs channels. However, in 2019 an additional 48 licenses were issued which brought the number of television channels to 135 and which increased the capacity of national, regional, and city-based news reporting. There are many role conceptions that professional journalists may follow (Donsbach, 2008).

Based on the role conception and performance model of journalism explicated by Mellado and Dalen (2014), Pakistani journalists incline toward the watchdog, loyal-facilitator, and the infotainment models of journalism. The watchdog model of journalism holds powerful entities accountable through criticism, accusations, investigative reporting on official matters, and extensive coverage of trials. In comparison, the loyal-facilitator model materialises in two ways: In its first variation, it seeks to support and collaborate with de facto power structures. In the second variation, it tends to promote the

concept of a nation-state by promoting the image of the country and comparing it with other states/ regions/ countries. Unquestionably, the infotainment model of journalism - highlighting scandals, emotions and presenting news sensationally - has dominated news reporting in Pakistan since 2000 which saw an influx of private news channels.

Generally, in every news channel, the chief executive officer and chief operating officer holds the top managerial and administrative post. In most cases, this designation is held by the owner(s) of the news channel, who tends to be a business tycoon. Shabir et al. (2020) found empirical evidence of owners' interference in Pakistani news channels' editorial policies through the manipulation of news content for their personal interests. In a survey with 200 journalists from 10 Pakistani news channels, 58% of respondents aligned with this perspective. Constant interference in editorial policy may lead to compromise in journalists' agency and professional independence, and editorial competency. Therefore, it is little wonder that 60% of Pakistani journalists have also reported self-censoring to avoid the risk of losing their jobs due to a conflict with news organisation owners and their interests (Shabir et al., 2019).

In terms of operations and editorial policy implementations, all Pakistani news channels can broadly be divided into two sections: news and programming. The news section/department primarily deals with news gathering, processing, and broadcasting. News is gathered through the reporters, correspondents (local/ international), and numerous other online sources of information. Then the raw information and relevant visuals are processed in the newsroom by news producers. The final step involves broadcasting the news and headlines at scheduled hourly bulletins. Whereas the programming section/department manages hourly programmes, talk shows will often offer more insightful analysis on news stories. Due to the focus of this research, I will next detail the function of the news department - often referred to as the newsroom.

Typically, in Pakistan, news departments are headed by a Director of News (DN) who holds all the executive power and authority to implement the channel's editorial policy. Under the authority of the director of news, one or two news controllers manage the daily flow of news and its transmission in morning and evening shifts. Their job is primarily to take critical editorial decisions on behalf of the DN. Under the news controllers, one executive producer takes on the responsibility of one shift (morning/evening/night) and reports back to the news controller directly.

From a hierarchical perspective, the positions outlined above are primarily involved in decision making, setting the news agenda, giving directions, planning, and setting deadlines for the rest of the staff including reporters. Further down the line, senior producers or shift in-charges, are responsible for one full eight-hour long shift. Their place of work in the newsroom is called the rundown desk. Their obligations include designing hourly news headlines, the execution of hourly news bulletins, and news updates every thirty minutes. They also manage the flow of incoming information in the form of tickers running at the bottom of the television screen. Senior producers have this completed by three to four producers working in each shift under their supervision. Shift-in-charges also keep in touch with different reporters from various bureaus, correspondents from small cities, and special correspondents from different countries by giving them deadlines for new stories and asking for follow-ups on events already reported.

The rundown desk is considered the most important, critical, and busiest section of a newsroom as information landing on the rundown desk is processed quickly by producers and broadcast on-air through the Master Control Room (MCR). All sub-departments in the newsroom fall under the rundown desk. For instance, the assignment desk manages the network of reporters, correspondents, and special correspondents to stories. The assignment desk is responsible for providing the relevant news story or information demanded by the

rundown desk while the copy desk is where copy editors edit the news stories. The packaging department modifies news stories into news packages by enriching the content and adding sound bites as per requirements of the rundown desk. Designing graphics, animations and virtual layovers is the main job of the creative department. The ticker's desk is responsible for displaying new information related to news stories in the form of tickers running across the bottom of the screen. Ticker operators must inform the rundown desk immediately about all important tickers so that the information can be presented as breaking news to the audience. Finally, the monitoring desk keeps a close watch on other national/international news channels regarding the latest updates and unfolding events which might have been missed out by the news network.

In Pakistan, all nationwide news channels broadcast live throughout the day. Every hour begins with news headlines and every thirty minutes brings fresh news updates. However, after the midnight hours, many programmes and talk shows are aired as repeat telecasts. The structure of the 24 hours broadcast is known as Fix Point Chart (FPC), indicating time slots for news bulletins, fresh programmes, and repeat programmes. Normally, 7pm till through to 11pm is considered primetime – a time which guarantees the greatest viewership and commercial benefits through peak advertising rates. Primetime is the most crucial asset for every news channel as viewership trends (Target Rating Point/ TRP) are determined during these hours. For holding the maximum commercial value, the 9pm news bulletin is regarded as the jewel in the crown. Therefore, all resources are utilized in preparing the 9pm news broadcast to gain maximum ratings and commercial benefits.

The preceding section provides the context in which this research is set. In the next section, I provide the research questions that guided this research inquiry, which is followed by rationale for each study.

## 1.2. - Thesis Rationale

Pakistan's first television station, a state-owned enterprise called *PTV*, was launched on 26 November 1964 and maintained its dominance till 1990 (Pakistan Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2019). The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) was established in 2002 and has awarded more than 135 television licenses. Currently, in Pakistan, almost 140 channels are on-air, of which, 35 channels are completely news-based (The Nation, 2023).

There is significant viewership of Pakistani television news in Pakistan. In Pakistan, 72% of viewers claim to watch television up to 2 hours daily (Gallup Pakistan, 2019), and 44% claim to watch news channels regularly (Gillani Research Foundation, 2017). A survey of viewership trends in 2021/2022 identified an increase in television news consumption in previous years (Aurora, 2023). With the advent of dozens of private news channels, newspaper circulation has been on a consistent decline in Pakistan (Achakzai, 2022). While domestic violence is reported on other forms of media in Pakistan, this thesis focused on television news given its significant reach and audience base. Examining the representations across multiple mediums would have prevented me from fully exploring factors that influence news production which can be unique to one form of the media

The broad aims of this thesis were to: investigate Pakistani television news journalists' processes for reporting and portraying domestic violence; explore how Pakistani women's rights activists' view television news channels' representation of domestic violence; and finally, examine how Pakistani audiences view and respond to television news reporting and activists' campaign representations of domestic violence. The following research questions formed the basis of this scholarly inquiry:

**RQ1:** How do Pakistani journalists understand domestic violence and represent it in news media?

**RQ2:** What professional ethics are followed by Pakistani television news journalists while reporting incidents of domestic violence?

**RQ3:** How do Pakistani women's rights activists assess mainstream media reporting of domestic violence in Pakistan?

**RQ4:** Do activists have alternative explanations for domestic violence in Pakistan to those represented by the mainstream media, and if so, what are they?

**RQ5:** How do Pakistani audiences respond to domestic violence television news content and social justice activists campaign materials?

In the context of Pakistan, there has been limited scholarly investigation into representations of domestic violence produced for television news broadcasts. Equally, we know little about how Pakistani audiences respond to news coverage of domestic violence or campaigns designed to prevent such violence. This research seeks to fill this gap in the literature by providing the perspectives of journalists, women's rights activists, and Pakistani audiences on these matters.

This thesis was designed from the outset to be a PhD with publication. This means that parts, not all, of it were submitted for publication and as conference papers as the research was being written up. Because of this approach and the need for papers and publications to represent stand-alone projects, this thesis comprises five research studies which, when combined, answer the research questions detailed above.

One of the consequences of completing this thesis through the 'with publication' model was that reviewers could request revisions to a manuscript submitted for publication that took the work in a slightly different direction than originally envisaged, and indeed in a different direction than the larger thesis. This was the case with Chapter 4 of this thesis. When the original manuscript draft of that chapter was submitted to the *Journal of Media Ethics*, one of the reviewers strongly recommended that the work should draw on the notion

of a feminist ethics of care in considering how journalists reported on domestic violence in Pakistan. This was duly done in the process of revising and resubmitting the manuscript to the journal. However, this is the only place in the thesis that feminist ethics of care is referred to, and readers might wonder why it did not feature more widely in the thesis. As I suggest in the concluding chapter, future research into news coverage of domestic violence in Pakistan, could draw to a much greater degree than I have here on research and theorising around feminist ethics of care to make a case for how such reporting could better represent the experiences and perspectives of the victims of such violence.

In the next section, the rationale for each of the five studies is described in more detail.

### ***1.2.1. - How Do Pakistani Television Journalists Represent Domestic Violence News (Study 1)***

Violence against women is a global social and public health problem with every third woman above the age of 15 having been the victim of either physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner violence or both (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021). Even countries highly ranked on Gender Equality indices demonstrate this phenomena. For example, it is estimated that over one-fifth of European women and one quarter of women in the United States have experienced physical and/or sexual violence ( WHO, 2021). Globally, more than a third of murdered women were killed either by a current or ex-partner (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). According to a nationally representative survey in Pakistan, 28% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 reported having experienced physical violence. Spousal violence ranging from physical, emotional to sexual abuse was reported by 34% of married women (National Institute of Population Studies, 2019).

Scholarly interest in media reporting on violence against women has been growing (Carlyle et al., 2008; Custer & Van den Bulck, 2013; Morgan & Simons, 2018; Richards &

Gillespie, 2011; Michelle & Weaver, 2003; Sutherland et al., 2016). The media represents a major source of information while issues visible in the media are considered important by the public (McCombs, 2014). It means that underreporting of certain forms of violence against women and overreporting of others may impact the public's understanding regarding the problem and its urgency (Carlyle et al., 2008). International studies suggest that the more individuals are aware of domestic violence, the more likely they are to intervene and/or support the victims of domestic violence (Ghafournia et al., 2021; Palazzolo & Roberto, 2011). Research also suggests that biased or stereotypical representation of domestic violence may undermine women's ability to recognise it (Flood & Pease, 2009) and encourage victim blaming (Estes & Webber, 2017; Michelle & Weaver, 2003; Savage et al., 2017). On the other hand, women can learn to escape dangerous situations through sensitive media reporting (Carlyle et al., 2014; Franiuk et al., 2017).

News reporting on violence against women in the West has been criticised for depicting victims experiences in a sensational manner (Comas-d'Argemir, 2014, End Violence Against Women Coalition, 2012), with the tendency toward victim blaming (Berns, 1999, Custers & Van den Bulck, 2013; Meyers, 1994). In the Pakistan context, a few studies have examined the depiction of crime news. For instance, researchers found that Pakistani news broadcasts use attention grabbing words and headlines and often contain sensational dramatisations of crimes (Ahmed, 2014; Hassan, 2018; Raza et al., 2012). Bhatti and Hassan (2016) caution that the use of violence and sensational imagery can lead to desensitisation towards crime among youth. Given the alarming rates of violence against women in Pakistan, how the media represent this prevalent problem is important to understand (Meltzer, 2023). While research has examined the proportion of different types of violence against women covered in Pakistan in newspapers and news channels (Ahmed, 2012, 2014; Agha & Ahmed, 2018); the representation of women in crime news stories in Urdu newspapers (Ali & Pasha,



2022); the discursive representation of domestic violence and the portrayal of women in dramas (Ahmad, 2023; Ahmed & Wahab, 2019; Dutoya, 2018; Kareem et al., 2021), there is a scarcity of data on how Pakistani television news channels represent domestic violence. To investigate this the first study in this thesis (Chapter 3) explores how Pakistani journalists understand domestic violence and then represent it in news media.

### ***1.2.2. - Ethical Guidelines and Practices for Pakistani Television News Journalists***

#### ***Reporting on Domestic Violence (Study 2)***

In the second study, (Chapter 4), an examination is conducted into the ethical guidelines and code of ethics practiced by Pakistani television news journalists in their reporting of domestic violence. Journalism ethics are concerned with how journalists and the news media should function according to their perceived roles and responsibilities in society (Ward, 2019). Feminist media scholars argue that stereotypical and sensational depictions of domestic violence can reinforce victim blaming and gender stereotypes (Estes & Webber, 2017; Michelle & Weaver, 2003; Savage et al., 2017). On the other hand, if media portrayals of intimate partner violence contextualise the crime and emphasise the abuser's responsibility, not only can it encourage victims to seek help but also motivate public support for them (Carlyle et al., 2014; Franiuk et al., 2017)

Indigenous Pakistani media scholarship reflects a trend toward sensational reporting of crime (Arshad & Ashraf, 2014). News organisations regularly broadcast dramatised depictions of crime to increase viewership (Yousaf et al., 2019). Re-enactments of the event, fast-paced editing, and loud emotive music with voice over narrations are frequently employed (Hassan, 2018) which makes the distinction between news and entertainment difficult to process (Abdullah, 2017). These trends in coverage may be a result of limited professional training on the part of journalists and news producers. Statistics show that there are around 20,000 journalists in Pakistan, of which around 70% have neither a formal

journalism degree nor professional training (Siddiqi, 2016). No study has investigated the ethical guidelines and ethical reporting practices involved in domestic violence coverage in Pakistan. Therefore, the second study in this thesis (Chapter 4) investigates what, if any, professional ethics are followed by Pakistani television news journalists while reporting incidents of domestic violence.

### ***1.2.3. - Journalistic Imperatives Involved in Television News Reporting of Domestic Violence in Pakistan (Study 3)***

To date, media researchers and theorists have identified several news values that guide reporting across different news topics (Donsbach, 2004; Salgado & Stromback, 2012). In their seminal work, Galtung and Ruge (1965) listed twelve factors determining the selection of a story: frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, personification, and negativity. Since then, multiple theorists have revised the list (e.g., Conley & Lamble, 2006, Harcup & O' Neill, 2001; McGregor, 2002). For example, Harcup and O'Neil (2001) proposed a set of news values such as the power elite, entertainment, celebrity, surprise, good and bad news, relevance, magnitude, follow-up (i.e. stories already in the news), and news agenda (i.e. stories that fit the news organisation's coverage priority). They argued that stories must satisfy one or more of these criteria to become newsworthy.

With respect to stories of violence against women, research shows that incidents involving fatalities and homicides (Carlyle et al., 2008; Simeunovic-Patic, 2018) and involving celebrities (Hayes & Kwiatkowski, 2015; Heuva, 2016) tend to be prioritised. While researchers have examined what types of violence against women tend to be reported more in Pakistani news (Ahmed, 2012; Agha, 2018; Agha & Ahmed, 2018), none have explored the imperatives behind journalists and news organisations selection of domestic

violence news stories. Hence, the third study reported in this thesis, (Chapter 5), examines the news imperatives embedded in television news reporting of domestic violence in Pakistan.

#### ***1.2.4. - Pakistani Women's Rights Activists Campaigns and Views on Television News Reporting of Domestic Violence (Study 4)***

Campaigns for equal rights, the elimination of discrimination and oppression of women, and to end violent practices against women have become a global phenomenon (Mohajan, 2022; Tax, 2022). Women's rights activists have been highlighting the magnitude of this problem using a variety of media platforms for decades (Weaver et al., 2013; Feigenbaum & McCurdy, 2015; Mahoney, 2022; Rohlinger, 2014). Recently, "hashtag feminism" has started to play a pivotal role in raising awareness about domestic violence (Bowles Eagle, 2015; Williams, 2015). Women's rights activists have been working for women's rights since the inception of the country (Rafay et al., 2016; Serez, 2017). These activists note several obstacles to their making progress in raising awareness about and campaigning against domestic violence. They identify social norms, an unstable economic and political environment, and lack of state will to bring about change as prime factors that contribute to the continuing prevalence of domestic violence (Critelli, 2010; Critelli & Willet, 2013).

In Pakistan, human rights activists use the media to highlight various social issues by participating in news bulletins, special programmes and content production (Khan, 2016; Rafi et al., 2015; Sahar, 2022; Shahid et al., 2023). At the same time, Pakistani activists have expressed concerns about the media's market-driven approach and its use of sensationalism when covering violence against women (Huda & Kamal, 2017; Talib et al., 2012). The fourth study in this thesis, Chapter 6, therefore seeks to explore how Pakistani women's rights activists view television news coverage of domestic violence; what alternative explanations they offer for the prevalence of this violence, and what platforms they use to raise awareness about it.

### ***1.2.5. Pakistani Audience Responses to News Reporting and Women Rights Activists***

#### ***Content about Domestic Violence (Study 5)***

The fifth study in this thesis examines how Pakistani audiences respond to news reporting and social justice campaign content about domestic violence. “Media messages are powerful” (Nettleton, 2011, p. 142), and it is argued that exposure to media content can impact individual and societal beliefs (Kellner, 2011; Slater et al., 2006). Research evidence shows that media can have an effect on perception about gender roles and behaviours (e.g., Greenwood, 2007; Greenwood & Lippman, 2010; Taylor & Setters, 2011), improve patriarchal attitudes (Lapsansky & Chatterjee, 2013) and increase awareness of women’s rights (Chatterjee & Pillai, 2018; Dasgupta, 2019; Fazal, 2009).

A person’s understanding of violent crime is often based on mediated experience (Surette, 2018), as most people get to know about crime incidents from the media (Davies et al., 2018; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Therefore, inaccurate media portrayals may leave the audience misinformed about reality (Silveirinha, 2007). Scholars have identified a trend of sensationalistic framing of domestic violence across all media platforms (Sutherland et al., 2016; 2017), overwhelming emphasis on physical abuse and murder incidents over emotional forms of abuse (Caryle et al., 2008; Eastal et al., 2018; Sutherland et al., 2016) and victim blaming (Estes & Webber, 2017; Michelle & Weaver, 2003; Savage et al., 2017). Hence, it is important to examine how the audience engages with the media content on domestic violence.

International studies have examined audience engagement with portrayals of domestic violence on the media (e.g. Adekoya & Olaseinde-Fayomi, 2021; Anastasio & Costa, 2004; Olaseinde & Ogwuche, 2022; Weaver, 1995; Yue et al., 2019) . For example, there is research evidence documenting the effectiveness of entertainment-education to raise awareness about domestic violence (Yue et al., 2019). Studies show that framing to emphasise responsibility of

the perpetrator and provision of background information about the victim increases the likelihood of blame attribution to the perpetrator (Anastasio & Costa, 2004; Carlyle et al., 2014; Palazzolo & Roberto, 2011). This fifth study, Chapter 7, performs the important function of exploring how Pakistani audiences respond to domestic violence news on television and activists materials related to it.

Given the focus of this thesis on domestic violence representations on Pakistani media and Pakistani audience engagement with it, it is important to note the socio-cultural landscape of Pakistan relevant to this thesis topic. Therefore, in the next chapter, I provide information regarding the prevalence and contributing factors of domestic violence in Pakistan as well as historical and current trends in women's rights activism in Pakistan. I also provide an overview of literature on media representation of domestic violence and audience response.

Finally, it is important to again note that this thesis is submitted as a thesis with publication. As such, the chapters, with the exception of Chapters 1, 2 and 8, are written in the format of a journal article, handbook chapter or conference paper. Chapters based on the studies start with a bridge that links the chapters. The publication approach adopted has inevitably resulted in some repetition of content across chapters. In particular content related to: causes and consequences of domestic violence in Pakistan; the representation of domestic violence in the media; and the explanation of the methods used to conduct research investigations.

## **Chapter 2: Domestic Violence: Contributing Factors and Research Literature**

This chapter begins by providing information about the prevalence of domestic violence in Pakistan and outlines domestic violence psychological and physiological effects. This is followed by an account of socio-cultural, religious and institutional factors that contribute to the incidence and maintenance of domestic violence in the country. The chapter then briefly accounts for the struggle for women rights in Pakistan, both historically and contemporarily. Following this, the focus shifts to outlining previous research literature that has explored the representation of domestic violence in the media and audience responses to such representations.

### **2.1. - Domestic Violence in Pakistan**

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is the supreme law of the country. It outlines the overarching principles to guide federal and local governance of the country. It articulates fundamental human rights of the people of the country, state's constitutional laws and orders, and the constitutional structure and establishment of the institutions (PakVoters, 2023). The Constitution of Pakistan in its Article no. 25 (1 & 2) states: "All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law." Additionally: "There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex" (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012, p. 15). Further, Constitutional Article 34 states: "Steps shall be taken to ensure full participation of women in all spheres of national life" (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012, p. 18). Pakistan is also a signatory of the United Nations convention on the elimination of discrimination against women (CEDAW, 1996). Despite these constitutional and other safeguards, the Global Gender Gap report 2023 (World Economic Forum, 2023) places Pakistan at 142<sup>nd</sup> position of 146 countries in terms of inequalities between men and women across the domains of Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and

Political Empowerment. Also, while Pakistan has a female population of 107 million, women have the lowest representation in managerial, legislative, and senior roles (only 4.5%) compared to other countries and regions. According to a Pakistan Demographic Health Survey (2017-18), 34% of ever-married women have experienced IPV. Twenty-six percent of women report experiencing emotional violence and 23% report experiencing physical violence. Six percent of married women report experiencing sexual violence. Due to spousal violence, 26% women sustained injuries with cuts and bruises being the most reported. Despite that, 56% of women who have been subjected to IPV neither sought help nor shared their plight with anyone.

Adding to the work being conducted by health and social services, academic studies present a similar picture of the scope of domestic violence in Pakistan. For example, a systematic review of 23 studies conducted in Pakistan from 1999 to 2012 found that around 28 to 35% of Pakistani women had experienced physical violence while estimates for psychological abuse ranged from 42 to 84%. Within the studies reviewed, there was discrepancy in the statistics reported by some studies due to differences in sampling, data collection tools and procedures (Ali et al., 2015), which signifies the need for more robust and deeper data on the subject.

Domestic violence and IPV in Pakistan have often also been associated with a number of mental and physical health issues for victims (Haqqi & Faizi, 2010; Zakar et al., 2013). In terms of mental health, it can result in depression, lowered self-esteem, lack of confidence and self-belief. Many studies have also reported an association between domestic violence and suicidal ideation and death by suicide. For instance, victims of domestic violence are up to four times more likely to report suicidal ideation (Derives et al., 2011) and one out of every four victims in Pakistan attempt suicide (Ellsberg et al., 2008). A study of pregnant women showed that 16% of women who have been victims of IPV during or before their pregnancy

considered suicide as a response (Karmaliani et al., 2008). Being abused at home can also impact a person's trust in the people and world around them, leaving them vulnerable, with a sense of hopelessness and helplessness (Salcioglu et al., 2017).

Domestic abuse can also result in fatality or chronic disability (Websdale, 2021). Physical abuse may cause reproductive health issues (Nasrullah, et al., 2014). For instance, during pregnancy violence might cause serious risks to the health of mothers and infants (Fikree et al. 2006). Sadly, if a victim of violence does go to a hospital, she would probably be referred to the forensic department and then onto the police, courts, or other related institutions without the provision of much needed health care (Mumtaz et al., 2005). In the next section, I outline the cultural factors that contribute to the prevalence of domestic violence in Pakistan.

## **2.2 - Factors Contributing to the Prevalence of Domestic Violence in Pakistan**

### ***2.2.1 - Patriarchal Society***

Patriarchal ideology represents the strongest social power dynamic that has legitimised the subjugation of women to men throughout the ages (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). In Pakistan, Ali and Gavino (2008) suggest that the history of domination over women by males is deep-rooted in the feudal-dominated agricultural economy of the country. Violence is used to establish and maintain control over women (Fikree et al., 2005). Over a minimum period of 12 months, Fikree et al. (2005) studied 176 married men belonging to three different socioeconomic backgrounds (low, middle-income, and high) in Pakistan. Almost half of the respondents (46%) were of the view that it is the right of the husband to beat his wife, and around 88.6 % believed that society is tolerant of domestic violence. The prevalence of physical and verbal abuse was self-reported at 49.4% and 94% respectively, while 65% of



the participants witnessed their mother being physically abused (Gillani Foundation Report, 2017).

According to cultural family norms men are the main income earners and decision makers, while women's roles are primarily concerned with household duties. Men are expected to start earning as soon as they are able to - on reaching physical maturity in rural areas and low income families, and after completing education in middle-class families (Batool et al., 2023). Women are expected to concern themselves with the household responsibilities in middle-class and upper-class families in the country. Hence, they are expected to leave their academic and career pursuits after marriage, committing themselves to household chores and raising children (Ali et al., 2020). In rural areas, women engage in labour outside of their homes as well as taking care of the house (Amin et al., 2009).

Women leave their childhood home after marriage and go to live with their husband and, typically, his family (Nadeem & Malik, 2021). These practices and limited economic independence can cause women's identity to become attached to their marital status, and they can end up feeling more pressure to make the marriage work (Bhatti et al., 2011; Shah, 2022). The power imbalance between men and women makes women more susceptible to domestic violence (Batool et al., 2023; Bhatti et al., 2011). The use of force from men may be taken as a legitimate practice to discipline women (Akram, 2021). Different emotional and behavioural characteristics are valued in men and women. With strength, toughness and independence valued in men, the characteristics of softness, submissiveness and deference are encouraged in women (Nadeem & Malik, 2021). Such socialisation can foster tolerance towards abuse because women are expected to submit to the will of men and show a forgiving attitude (Wendt, 2014). Families are considered sacred spaces and whatever happens in intimate relationships is regarded as a private matter. This may explain why

women tend to remain silent in the face of abuse due to social conditioning, fear of judgement and shame (Nadeem & Malik, 2021; Bhatti et al., 2011; Rabbani et al., 2008).

Historically, patriarchal norms are stronger in rural areas (Zakar et al., 2013), where about 63% of the Pakistani population live (World Bank, 2011). Women in these areas are at increased risk of violence (Koenig et al., 2003), especially psychological violence (UN Women, 2014). The lower socioeconomic position, lower literacy rates and lower levels of awareness about social and legal rights among rural women are further factors that contribute to the likelihood of their being victims of domestic violence (Peek-Asa et al., 2011). Rural women also lack access to legal services and community support with regards to IPV. Usually, they are more dependent on male relatives due to lack of economic opportunities in villages (Koenig et al., 2003).

Early marriages are also more common in rural areas. Women, who marry in their teenage years also experience higher levels of spousal violence in Pakistan as it increases their dependence on their husbands, which in turn increases their vulnerability to exploitation (Nasrullah et al. 2014). Again, this dependence can severely limit a woman's capacity to escape abuse. Low education among both victims and perpetrators is also a significant predictor of spousal violence, which additionally contributes to a lack of awareness of basic rights and access to resources for seeking help (James et al. 2013). There are also certain practices in the institution of marriage in Pakistan that further put women at a disadvantage, which are detailed in the following subsection.

#### 2.2.1.1 - Practices in Marriage

A patriarchal mindset also manifests itself in various cultural institutions, beliefs and practices that further weaken women's autonomy and promote gender-based violence. For example, some practices in marriage further disadvantage women, such as *watta satta*,

*walwar*, *vani*, *dowry* and marriage to the Quran. Although these practices are not approved by the law, they are sanctioned through the normative culture.

*Watta Satta* or exchange marriage is a simultaneous marriage of a brother-sister pair from two different households. This is common in both rural and urban setups. Usually, the stability of one marriage depends on the other, and it can be the cause of abuse and retribution for women involved in such relationships (Niaz, 2004). Similarly, *Walwar* (bride price) is a common custom in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In this custom an amount of money is given to the father of the girl to be married by the bridegroom's family. Sometimes rich older men exploit poor parents of young girls through the power of money. In the event of abuse in these relationships, the bride is discouraged from leaving the house of her husband because her parents cannot afford to pay back the bride price money to the perpetrator, or they may not want to (Niaz, 2004). The custom of *vani* is also illegally practiced in some parts of Punjab and Sindh. This involves women, predominantly minor girls, being forcibly married off to settle personal, tribal, or family disputes (Akhtar & Metraux, 2013). In the province of Punjab and Sindh, some girls are married to the Muslim holy book, the Quran, preventing them from marrying any man for the rest of their life. This illegal practice is performed to protect assets and properties from being distributed outside the family as Islam gives women the right to inheritance (Akhtar & Metraux, 2013).

In Pakistan, dowry is also a common practice through which the bride's family gives money and/or other goods in the form of a gift to the bridegroom or his family. This can put undue pressure on the bride's family. Sometimes in-laws exploit this tradition and make excessive demands on the bride and her family. These demands may continue after the marriage, and the bride may be abused if the demands are not met. Scholars also found empirical evidence suggesting a link between dowry and violence in Pakistan. Khan & Hussain (2008) conducted interviews with middle-class and upper-class Pakistani women and

found that dowry practices and social and cultural beliefs, such as discriminatory legislation, have been contributing towards violence against women. In other research, dowry demands and the husband's addiction to alcohol and other substances have been cited as common determinants of violence against women (Ali & Khan, 2007). Every year, about 2000 dowry related deaths have been recorded in Pakistan - the highest rate in the world (Khattak & Bezhan, 2021). Sometimes, the death of a wife - falsely attributed to accidental kitchen explosions - can be used by the husband as an opportunity to pursue another marriage and, consequently, more dowry (Niaz, 2003). Apart from these practices in marriage that disadvantage women, certain aspects of how honour is construed in Pakistan also contribute to domestic violence, which is discussed in the following subsection.

#### 2.2.1.2 - Notions of Honour

It is estimated that every year around 5,000 women and girls are killed in the name of honour in different countries (Honour Based Violence Awareness Network, n.d.). Amnesty International (2012) and the United Nations General Assembly (Manjoo, 2012) conclude that women of different ages, locations, religions, social background, education, and wealth are all susceptible to becoming victims of horrific honour crimes. In some sections of Pakistani society, especially tribal and feudal cultures, there is acceptance of violence in response to notions of dishonour and those who bring it (Perveen, 2010). According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, more than 470 cases of honour killings were reported in 2021. Fathers, brothers, and uncles have been identified as the most likely perpetrators of honour killings (Lima et al., 2020). Since honour killings are considered a private matter, many are never reported to the police (Kulczycki, 2011).

Women are considered the honour of the house in Pakistani culture. This notion involves taking care of women in the family, protecting them and treating them with respect (Hamid et al., 2011). This notion also places restrictions on women to ensure protection of

their chastity (Fatima, 2019). This protection, however, can take the form of control and can lead family members to use violence to prevent women from going on the “wrong path” and compromising the honour of the family (Niaz, 2003). The acts through which a family’s “honour” can be tainted (by a woman) include a woman’s involvement in a pre- or extra-marital affair and/or pregnancy out of wedlock, being a victim of sexual assault or rape, their wanting to marry out of choice, or demanding divorce from an abusive husband (Lari, 2011).

Honour killing is one the most extreme manifestations of honour related crimes which might be intended as a warning to women of all ages, especially younger women (Singh & Bhandari, 2021). Zafar and Ali (2020) interviewed 25 individuals who had been closely related to female victims of honour killings. According to the accounts of one man, he murdered his wife because she asked for a divorce. Apparently, her “immoral demand” hurt the masculinity of her husband and brought shame to his family. Therefore, he killed his wife after accusing her of being promiscuous (Zafar & Ali, 2020). The custom of honour killing in Pakistan is thought to have been initiated from Pashtun and Baloch tribal culture and from there spread to Sindh and Punjab (Lari, 2011).

In Pakistan, a typical form of honour killing, commonly known as *Karo Kari*, is openly practiced in some parts of the provinces of Balochistan and Sindh. This brutal act, despite being declared illegal and unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, is often sanctioned by local tribal councils (Khan, 2018). “Karo” means “black man” and “Kari” means “black woman”. These labels are given to individuals who engage in illicit relationships. The punishment for this “sin” is death which is usually carried out by male family members. Since men have more economic resources, they are often able to flee the punishment or pay to buy forgiveness from the family of the Kari. Therefore, women are more likely to fall victim to Karo Kari (Patel & Gadit, 2008). According to Patel and Gadit

(2008) the perpetrators of this form of honour killing may also have ulterior motives such as family revenge and property confiscations. For example, in the city of Jacobabad in 2011, province of Sindh, an 18-year-old school teacher named Khanzadi Mehboob was detained by her extended family who wanted her to marry against her will so that they could occupy the school she had been running. After running away and marrying out of her own choice, her family declared the couple *Karo Kari* (Khan, 2018). Patel and Gadit (2008) found that victims of *Karo Kari* were mostly married females while many of the perpetrators were husbands or the brothers of the victims. In some instances, under-aged male members of the family were asked to carry out the honour killing as juveniles, usually get lesser sentences if convicted for an honour killing crime. To sum up, domestic violence has been a prevalent issue in Pakistan and some socio-cultural practices have a role to play in this incidence and maintenance.

### ***2.2.2 - Religious Interpretations***

Religion is an important part of the lives of Pakistanis. Hence, what Islam says about conduct at home is important. The use of physical violence in marriage has been a subject of debate among Islamic scholars (Ammar, 2007). To provide justification for violence, some individuals turn to Verse 4 in Chapter 34 of the Quran:

Men are the maintainers of women because Allah has made some of them to excel others and because they spend out of their property; the good women are therefore obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded; as for the women who show rebellion, you shall first enlighten them, then desert them in beds, and you may beat them as a last resort. Once they obey you, do not seek a way against them; surely Allah is High, Great. (Translation by Shakir, 1974).

There are different translations for this verse, which have formed inspiration for different interpretations (Ammar, 2007). According to one group of scholars, use of violence is permissible if a wife disobeys her husband. This interpretation also draws from another Quranic verse, 2:228, which places husbands a degree over their wives (Shaikh, 1997). This

position is not endorsed by major religious scholars (Ammar, 2007). A second group of scholars emphasises that hitting a wife is only allowed in the case of serious misconduct and disloyalty, only to be used as the last resort (Abu Shaqah, 1994; Al-banna, 1998; Badawi, 1971). According to Badawi (1971), such measures should only be used in extreme situations where marriage breakdown is likely due to the wife's misconduct. This symbolic hitting is considered an extreme measure to be used rarely as wife beating has never been condoned by Islam (Sulaiman, 2015). Early Islamic scholars also believed that the husband was only allowed to beat his wife using a "Miswak", a small natural toothbrush not thicker than the index finger (Al- Qaradawi, 1982; Ibn Kathir, 1996).

A third group of scholars state that use of violence is against the spirit of Islam. That is, it goes against the teachings of Islam, Hadith (which are sayings of Prophet Mohammad) and Sunnah (actions of Prophet Mohammad). They cite examples from Prophet Mohammad where he never raised a finger against any one of his wives (Alkhateeb, 1999) and also discouraged women from choosing suitors who had temper issues (Sahih Muslim, Book 009, Number 3512, 2007 ). In relation to this, Douki et al., (2003) cautions that this verse is misinterpreted to mean that violence is desirable. Finally, a fourth group states the verse is linguistically misinterpreted, and it does not mention using violence against the wife (Mernissi, 1999). They bring attention to different translations of this verse because of the lack of consensus on a proper equivalent of certain keywords in the verse (Ammar, 2007).

The discrepancy in these interpretations also exists among the Pakistani religious figures. Many eminent scholars such as Javed Ahmad Ghamidhi, Tariq Jamil and Muhammad Ali Mirza agree to emphasise the relationship of immense love and respect between spouses and propose that hitting the wife lightly is permitted in extreme cases. However, these steps should be preceded by efforts to reconcile (Ghamidi Centre of Islamic Learning, 2020; Molana Tariq Jameel Bayan, 2020; RAAH-e-HIDAYAT [Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza],

2019). On the other hand, other religious figures such as Imams at mosques put greater emphasis on women's roles in ensuring marital harmony and permit the use of violence in case of routine disagreement provided it does not result in injury (Zakar et al., 2013). In the next section, I detail the legal frameworks meant to protect women's rights in Pakistan. I also draw on the literature to critically examine the effectiveness of the legal system.

### **2.2.3 - Pakistani Law**

Violence against women is a punishable offence in Pakistan conforming with international law. The national assembly and four provincial assemblies have recently passed legislation to provide a wider scale of protection for women from abuse. Regarding domestic abuse, the first law was *The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2013* which was passed by the provincial assembly of Sindh. The next year, *The Balochistan Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2014* was enforced. After two years, *The Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act 2016* was enacted. In 2021, two anti-domestic violence legislations were passed in the national assembly and the Khyber- Pakhtunkhwa assembly. These were referred to as the *Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2020*, and the *Khyber- Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence Against Women (Prevention and Protection) Act 2021*, respectively. All this legislation regards physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence as domestic violence and sanctions imprisonment and hefty fine(s) on/against the offender(s). However, the Council of Islamic Ideology, a federal institution to review different legislations merits in accordance with Islamic principles, has been opposing such laws (Yousuf, 2023).

The Council of Islamic Ideology also staunchly opposed the *Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act* passed in 2016 (Khan, 2016). This law provides women with increased protection from abuse and aims to promote gender equality. It set up a women's task force in the province to respond to women's grievances about psychological, financial



and/or physical abuse (The Punjab Commission on the Status of Women, 2019). It gives the task force the right to enter any property for the enforcement of women's protection. The law also includes approval of funding for the establishment of women's shelters and empowers courts to restrain offenders from entering these homes. Last but not least, the Act includes a plan to set up a toll-free telephone line to report abuse (The Punjab Commission on the Status of Women, 2019). Importantly, the law does not criminalise domestic violence, rather it seeks to promote reconciliation between the victim and the perpetrator (Khan, 2016). However, when first introduced in early 2015, orthodox religious scholars and a few politicians opposed it, calling it a threat to the traditional family system. In their view, the bill was contrary to the teachings of the Quran as it was seen as promoting divorce. They threatened to launch a series of protests and, consequently, there was a delay in passing the law by the provincial assembly (Hanif, 2016; Ahmad, 2023). Pakistan's Council of Islamic Ideology proposed a "model" women's protection bill in its place which allowed a husband to 'lightly' beat his wife 'if needed' (Khan, 2016).

Honour killing was not punishable in Pakistan until 2004 (Dawn, 2014) when the national assembly of Pakistan passed the Honour Killings Act. According to this law, offenders were liable to seven years imprisonment. However, the law contained a loophole allowing the family of the victim to pardon the murderer. In October 2016, The *Anti-Honour Killing Laws (Criminal Amendment Act) 2015* was enacted. This also provided an escape for the murderer according to the Islamic practice called Diya. In Diya if the perpetrator was given capital punishment, the heir of the victim's family can still withdraw the prosecution resulting in all charges against the perpetrator being dropped (Gondal, 2017). Even though honour killing is a punishable crime in Pakistan, the parallel illegal justice system such as *Jirga* (Tribal council), and *Panchayat* (Village council), stemming from misinterpretation of

religion and patriarchal cultural ideology, has been permitting committal of high level of femicides in Pakistan (Rafi, 2019).

The legal system in Pakistan has also been ineffective in delivering social justice to women. Even when women break their silence to report domestic abuse, law enforcers and formal institutions still treat it as a private matter, preferring to initiate mediation between the couple instead of acting against the perpetrator (Bibi et al., 2014). Women are also likely to get similar reconciliation advice from the family elders when they share their abusive experiences and request a divorce (Siddiqui, 2021). In such scenarios, usually the fate of children is decided by the court of law. Here again, rich men can afford to sway the law and claim custody of the children. This can be an additional trauma for the woman after going through spousal abuse and an acrimonious divorce (Anderson et al., 2010; Bibi et al., 2014).

Due to the weak justice system, dominating cultural norms and fear of shame, the tendency to seek help and report abuse among female victims is very low (Bibi et al., 2014). Anderson et al. (2010) analysed the 2004 national survey of abuse against women in Pakistan and found that nearly one third of the 23,430 women interviewed had experienced physical violence. Yet only 14% had reported it to the police. They also explained that reporting violence may exacerbate the situation for Pakistani women, leading to separation or divorce and loss of children.

In addition to the social stigma attached to divorce, loss of children and family pressure, inadequate social services or victim support networks also keep women from disclosing violence committed against them (Malik et al., 2021). In Pakistani society, divorced women may be blamed for bad marriages and face sexual harassment (Nawaz et al., 2022). Pakeeza (2015) found discrepancies in the theory and implementation of laws meant to protect Pakistani women from violence. In her opinion, these laws have been implemented from a traditional, cultural, and patriarchal mindset that encourages the devaluation and

disempowerment of women. In the next section, I trace the trajectory of women's rights struggle in Pakistan to provide an understanding of attempts to end violence against women and its cultural condoning.

### **2.3 - The Emergence of Women's Rights in Pakistan**

The feminist movement surfaced right after the independence of Pakistan, primarily centring around the objectives of achieving equality in political, economic, social, and legal rights for women without discrimination (Batool et al., 2018). In 1947, the state gave women the right to vote. The same year, through the vision of Fatima Jinnah (the sister of the founding father of Pakistan), the Pakistan Girl Guides Association was established and was acknowledged by and rewarded membership of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGS) in 1948. During the same year, women's rights groups convinced the government to pass the *Muslim Personal Law of Shariah*, legalising inheritance rights for women (Shabbir & Mahmood, 2020). In 1949 Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan, wife of the first Pakistani prime minister, founded the All Pakistan Women Association (APWA) (Awan, 2020). During the same year, she established a craftsman colony in Karachi to create economic opportunities for women.

Through consistent campaigning of women's rights advocates, the Muslim Family Ordinance Law (MFOL) was enacted in 1961. According to this legislation, women were permitted to divorce their husbands, and husbands were legally bound to seek permission from their existing wife before taking another spouse. Property inheritance laws were made to ensure that women got their share of inheritances (Rathore, 2015). Women could also demand an amount of maintenance if husbands had failed to take good care of them.

In 1956 and 1973, 3%, and 5% of seats respectively were reserved for women in the national and provincial assemblies (Rasul, 2014). It was a major political gain for women to

participate in the electoral process and have agency over governance structure and policy making. Women's political participation seemed at its peak when, in 1965, Fatima Jinnah contested for the highest public office of the presidency against the then military dictator, general Ayub (Iqbal et al., 2004). Despite her enormous contributions to Pakistan's liberation movement, her critical role as the sister of the founder of Pakistan, and extreme popularity among the people, she lost the election due to rigging and state harassment (Saiyid, 2001). To counter her wave of support among all social segments of the country, maligning campaigns were launched against her (Saiyid, 2001).

Women's engagement with social, political, and economic activities were drastically reduced to the confinements of the four walls of their homes as a strict state policy under the excuse of Islamisation during the prolonged and oppressive regime (1977-88) of military dictator general Zia (Ahmad & Aman, 2021). Dictator Zia used discriminatory legislation against women to quell their fundamental rights, suppressing them through imposing checks on their mobility, and limiting the socialisation opportunities for women. Such activities were portrayed as Westernised and against Islam. With the support of rigid and ultra-orthodox religious scholars, the veil was strictly imposed on women (Imran et al., 2020). In 1979, the applicability of a discriminatory Hudood ordinance practically denounced women as second-class citizens. According to the law, if a woman was raped then she had to produce four witnesses otherwise she could be charged with false accusation of adultery, a severely punishable offence (Lau, 2007). In 1984, the law of evidence (Qanoon-e-shahadat) was implemented. According to this law, testimonies of two women were considered equivalent to a man's testimony (Lau, 2007).

Since the enactment of Hudood Ordinance in 1979, there have been a few cases that made headlines locally and globally highlighting it as a tool to persecute women rather than providing them justice (Sabir, 2020). For example, in 1983, a blind 18-year-old girl was raped

by her landlord and his son in Sahiwal, Punjab, and she became pregnant with a child. A case was registered with the police, and the victim was ordered by the court to recognise the rapists and produce four male witnesses testifying that she was raped, which she could not do. Her failure in identifying culprits brought her a sentence of three years in prison, 15 lashes, and a 1,000 rupees fine. Ironically, the judge also gave remarks that the girl was given light punishment because she was young and blind (Sabir, 2020).

The enactment of Hudood laws brought backlash from across Pakistan. Numerous feminists, scholars, and women's rights organisations demanded it be revoked. In 1981, prominent feminists of Pakistan such as Fareeda Shaheed, Nighat Khan, Khawar Mumtaz and others, founded the Women Action Forum to resist anti-women legislations. As a result, in 1997 an inquiry commission was set up to review the law. Finally in 2002, certain sections of the Hudood law were rescinded on the recommendations of the National Assembly's Commission on the Status of Women (Freedom Network, undated).

Another prominent case which was a testament to discrimination against women in Pakistani law was reported in 1994 in a village near Attock, Punjab. A local priest of the village mosque, Qari Sharif inflicted severe physical torture on his wife, Zainab Noor. Tying her to the bed, he inserted iron rods in her vagina and anus and gave her electric shocks (Dawn, 2003). The victim survived torture but lost her three organs. On the directives of the then female Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, Zainab was sent to London for surgery (Dawn, 2003). On February 19, 1994, the trial court sentenced the culprit to 30 years imprisonment. On appeal, the culprit's sentence was reduced to 10 years by Lahore High Court. However, after spending only six years in jail, Qari Sharif was given remissions in sentence and was released by the jail authorities (Dawn, 2003).

Feminism in Pakistan can be delineated into two categories: Secular feminism and Islamic feminism. Secular feminist ideology advocates total separation of religion and the

state to achieve complete freedom for women in the social sphere. It also espouses the agenda of equality between men and women in every aspect of socioeconomic and cultural domains. The conception of liberty, equality, and empowerment of women and/or beyond Islam has marked the fundamental disagreement between discursive ideology of secular feminists and Islamic feminists groups in Pakistan. Modern Islamic feminist groups do not seek the ideals of equality and freedom for Muslim women that have been achieved by the women in the West (Barlas, 2019; Serez, 2017). Rather, they tend to embrace the principle of women's empowerment within the boundaries of Islamic teachings, and through promoting non-patriarchal interpretations of the Holy Quran (Barlas, 2019; Hebert, 1998).

Undoubtedly, the #MeToo movement encouraged women around the world (Kunst et al., 2018; Mendes et al., 2018) to share their experiences of sexual abuse and harassment on social media. Pakistan also felt the impact of this global movement. Consequently, the debate and divide between secular liberal and modern Islamic feminists intensified with a series of Aurat March (women's marches) in Pakistan (Akhtar et al., 2021; Nusrat 2018). According to Wasif (2018), on account of the #MeToo campaign, a 40% increase in complaints of sexual harassment across Pakistan was observed. Students at the university of Balochistan also took to the streets to protest sexual harassment by male academic staff (Siddiqui, 2019).

Having touched upon the various manifestations of domestic violence in Pakistan, its consequences, and risk/contributing factors, I now move to outline how media construct social realities and affect opinions, and how violence against women has been represented in Pakistani media, especially on television news channels.

#### **2.4 - Domestic Violence and Media**

Media representation may be a major determinant of how domestic violence is perceived (Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Carlyle et al., 2008). They are not passive reflections of reality but

are the sites of contestation as well as constructions of social values, beliefs and relations which may eventually shape the perception of the audience (Carter & Steiner, 2004; Fairclough, 1995, 2001). Unfortunately, there have been misrepresentations of domestic violence in media coverage internationally (Berns, 1999; Carll, 2003, Meyers, 1994). To elaborate, Batanchiev (2008) analysed two well-known American movies portraying domestic violence - *Enough* and *Sleeping with the Enemy*. It was stated that the female protagonists were shown as stereotypically weak and only able to get out of a relationship with the help of other men. This, according to the author, could encourage the audience to rationalise the abuse that the female victims went through and blame them for remaining in such abusive relationships for a very long time. In addition, female voices were not given their due share in the production of these two movies. Batanchiev (2008) further analysed seven segments of US news from NBC and found that the news of domestic violence was framed in a way to blame the victim for not “solving” the problem.

According to Carll (2003), from analysis of three news stories of domestic violence involving homicide in America from 1995 to 1996, misrepresentations of women and violence against them in news media are more problematic than in movies as the former is a reflection of real life. In two cases where the husband fatally shot the wife, the headlines included an excusable reason while no excuse was given in the headline where the wife shot the husband. Rather, the headline was written as “blasted the spouse with the shotgun.” Interestingly, the news story later described the woman as being disabled. Carll (2003) further stated that domestic violence incidents involving female perpetrators were more likely to make headlines. Carlyle et al. (2008) also analysed daily newspaper stories (randomly sampled to represent all the media outlets in the USA) (n = 395) involving IPV and found it was framed as episodic rather than as a continuing experience. In addition, more coverage

was given to news on homicides related to domestic violence, which the authors argued, discourages domestic violence victims from leaving their abuser(s) due to fear for their lives.

Some critical questions have also been raised about how domestic violence has been represented in documentaries (Michelle & Weaver, 2003). Michelle and Weaver (2003) analysed three New Zealand television documentaries presenting personal case studies of domestic violence. Victims narrated their stories, which, according to the researchers, put the burden of explanation and rationalising what happened to them on themselves. Perpetrators were not called upon to explain their behaviour. Michelle and Weaver (2003) concluded that the case studies also privileged personal explanations over socio-cultural explanations.

Also included in these patterns of media coverage, sources of information are largely restricted to law enforcement authorities, with other experts (such as social workers, counsellors, activists) not being given as much airtime (Bullock, 2008; Michelle & Weaver, 2003). Moreover, information on seeking help is seldom provided alongside media representations of domestic violence (Bullock & Cubert, 2002). One quarter of newspaper articles examined by Bullock and Cubert (2002) in the USA mentioned either options for a legal course of action, domestic violence intervention or support related programmes, or domestic violence statistics. How domestic violence is represented in the media may distort viewers' perceptions of it. For example, domestic violence portrayed as an isolated incident may cause audiences to view this problem as less severe and less likely to reoccur (Hilton, 1993). It may also contribute to ambiguity in responses of the parties involved including the victim, abuser, social circles, and professionals, which could result in lower numbers of reporting, court cases and conviction rates (Lyoyd & Ramon, 2017).

#### ***2.4.1 - Representation and Reporting of Domestic Violence in Pakistani Media***

Media coverage of domestic violence has garnered interest from international sociological and media researchers for several decades now. In Pakistan, however, only a handful of



studies have investigated representations of violence against women in the media (Agha, 2018; Ahmed, 2012, 2014; Ahmed et al., 2022; Sadia et al., 2022). It is worth noting that the focus of some of these studies has not exclusively been on domestic violence. Sadia et al. (2022) analysed the 9pm headlines of the *Geo News* channel. Employing thematic discourse analysis in news headlines they found that women have been depicted as victims and disempowered in headlines. Also, female expert opinion and sources are considered less credible compared to male sources. Ahmad (2014) conducted a content analysis on domestic violence news broadcasts of *The Dawn* and *Express* news television channels from January to April 2013. They found that both news channels represented incidents of sexual violence (rape) and physical torture the most, followed by honour killing news stories. It was also noted that news stories of violence against women were represented sensationally with little background information.

Similarly, Ali and Khalid (2021) examined newspaper articles published between March to August 2020 in three newspapers: *The Dawn*, *The News* and *The Express Tribune* to analyse domestic violence coverage during the COVID-19 lockdown period. They found that domestic violence was presented as a condemnable social problem, directly linked with financial restraints, poor social services, and inadequate support and response from the government. Ahmed et al. (2022) analysed crime news representation of women in five daily English newspapers: *The Daily Times*, *The Dawn*, *The News*, *The Nation*, and *The Express Tribune*. Researchers described that female victims of crime, domestic and IPV were always constructed with respect to their marital status and age. Ahmed (2012) did a comparative analysis of English (*Daily News*) and Urdu (*Daily Khabrain*) newspapers from 1993 to 2003 using systematic sampling techniques. The results showed the incidents of sexual harassment were reported the most followed by physical violence. On the other hand, content analysis of

the regional Sindhi language newspaper spanning six months revealed that the incidents of honour killing were reported the most followed by physical violence, rape, and kidnapping.

Besides analysing television and newspapers reportage of domestic violence, portrayal and representation of domestic violence in television drama serials have also become an important area of inquiry for researchers. Ahmad (2023) critically examined the discursive representation of domestic violence in Pakistani drama serials. She found liberal humanist instrumentalism and socio-systematic discourses were used to assert and maintain control over women. The former conceptualises domestic violence as ways of attaining and maintaining control over women while the latter relates the incidence of domestic violence to societal structures (O' Neills, 1998; 2000). Kareem et al. (2021) examined female characters in television dramas during three political eras: 2001-2008, 2008-2013, and 2013-2018 respectively. The study found a similar pattern of assigning women with more domesticated roles and less professional roles across three eras. Mostly women were shown as housewives, and dependent on their husbands or other male characters in the family. Similar findings were reported by Ahmed and Wahab (2019) - that women are portrayed as weak and submissive in Pakistani dramas in comparison to men. However, Dutoya (2018) explored a transformative trend in female characterisation in four Pakistani dramas. The researcher argued that the Pakistani dramas: *Rehaai* (Deliverance), *Kankar* (Pebble), *Chup Raho* (Remain Quiet), and *Zindagi Gulzar hai* (Life is a Bed of Roses) have not only adequately highlighted the struggles of Pakistani women but also attempted to alleviate their status and outlook from victims to survivors and from dependents to independent decision-makers.

Apart from domestic violence, few studies have assessed the issue of divorce and gender construction in textbooks (Jadoon, 2015; Khan et al., 2014). Jadoon (2015) analysed five novels, three with Indian and two with Pakistani female authors, using feminist analysis to assess the issue of divorce. The author argued that the topic of divorce was highly

stigmatised. Based on hardships faced by divorced women, experience of divorce was not presented as a free choice but as a last resort for women. Few studies have analysed representation of gender and identities in Pakistani textbooks (Agha et al., 2018; Jabeen et al., 2014; Khan et al., 2014). Researchers found textbooks content and pictorial representation to be stereotypical and heavily biased against women with important roles given to males, which may promote the conception of patriarchal ideology among young learners.

## **2.5 - Audience Response**

Early media audience research scholar, David Morley (1980, p. 11) defined reception as a process through which “audiences differently read and make sense of messages which have been transmitted, and act on those meanings, within the context of the rest of their situation and experience.” For several decades, interest in media audience studies and reception has been growing across a wide range of academic disciplines (Kirkland-Ives, 2021). Several models of audience reception have been proposed (e.g., Hall, 1980; Neuman, 1982; Richardson & Corner, 1986). However, the turning point in media research in general and in audience research particularly came with Stuart Hall’s Encoding/Decoding model, initially published in 1973 and then republished in 1980. He suggested a relationship between socio-demographic context and audiences’ ability in decoding media messages (Hall, 1980).

Literature on news audiences confirms that interpretation is a subjective phenomenon that cannot be predetermined (Bird, 1992; Kellner, 2011; Morley, 1980). It is influenced by multiple factors including the text itself and the ideological surroundings that shaped it (Philo, 1990), pre-existing beliefs (Bird, 1992), socio-demographic determinants (Morley, 1980), and exposure to and reliance on the news media (Madianou, 2009). Moreover, audience researchers acknowledged that “the power of viewers to reinterpret meanings is

hardly equivalent to the discursive power of centralized media institutions to construct the texts which the viewer then interprets” (Morley, 1992, p. 31).

The media can provide audiences with a forum to debate social issues, including violence against women (Silveirinha, 2007). It has been said that they tend to rely on media and journalists accounts of matters of social concern, especially when it comes to understanding complicated social issues such as domestic violence (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Therefore, media audience research provides a significant opportunity to understand how viewers make sense of mediated messages (Jenkins, 2000).

Some media scholars have examined the influence of local television news viewing and its relationship with fear of crime (Gross & Aday, 2003; Romer et al., 2006). For instance, Gross and Aday (2003) explored how viewers may identify crime as a problem, but they are not likely to be afraid of becoming the actual victim. Similarly, Romer et al. (2006) analysed US audience responses to violent dramatic primetime programming. Results of their study indicated that local television news may increase the concern about and fear of crime. Empirical data also suggests that frequency of viewing violent mediated content could lead to desensitising effects and change in viewers perception (Curry, 2001).

It is important to be mindful that the effects of media messages may not flow unidirectionally from producers to text to audience. That is, producers may draw on different frames of meanings present in society to produce content (Doyle, 2006). Overall, there has been a scarcity of scholarship on how audiences and viewers respond to, and make sense of, domestic violence in television news. A few studies from the US involving undergraduate students found that victim blaming was less likely if more information was provided to highlight the responsibility of the perpetrator (Carlyle et al., 2014; Palazzolo & Roberto, 2011) and more information was offered regarding a victim’s personality, ethnicity, location, profession, etc (Anastasio & Costa, 2004).

### ***2.5.1 - Audience Research in Pakistani Context***

Despite the prevalence of domestic violence in Pakistan, we know very little about how viewing news about domestic violence impacts on audience understanding of this endemic social problem. Research that does exist has examined psychological effects of watching violence on television (Bhatti & Hassan, 2014), influence of Cable TV on female viewers social attitudes (Zia, 2007), and views about television news reporting (Hassan, 2018; Khan & Tahir, 2021; Raza et al., 2012). Bhatti and Hassan (2014) examined the psychological effects of television news violence on youth and found that 76% became desensitised due to repeated exposure to violence while an almost equal number reported experiencing fear because of watching violence on television news.

Zia (2007) assessed 432 women aged 18 to 40 years to see how exposure to cable TV in Pakistan influenced female viewers, including their social views. Three levels of cable TV consumption - heavy (four or more hours per day), moderate (more than two but less than four hours a day) and light (one to two hours a day) - were compared to assess its effect on participants' routines, social behaviours, cultural practices, and expenditure habits. Data was collected from Lahore, as it is the traditional capital city of Punjab, the biggest province of Pakistan, and hosts a diverse population comprising all the major ethnicities and religions across the country. The data analysis revealed no association between demographic characteristics and viewership patterns. The research confirmed that heavy viewing of cable TV had more impact on the participants' daily activities, social behaviours, cultural practices, and shopping habits than moderate and light viewers; it made their views less traditional. That is, they were more likely to hold views that household responsibilities and decision making should be shared between husband and wife and women should have a say in their marriage and pursue a career.

Almost half of the respondents were of the view that television channels are highly entertaining in their presentation while 70.67% labelled reporting as unfair and only moderately informative. Around 44% described news presentation styles as unappealing. Hassan (2018) noted that predominant styles of reporting included sensationalist imagery and rhetoric. Raza et al. (2012) found that 75% of Pakistani viewers considered there to be sensationalism in mainstream news channel reporting. Around 57% of viewers agreed that news channels use breaking news to create hype and excitement, while 46% strongly agreed that news and current affair programmes use presentation tactics that intend to shock.

In summary, domestic violence is a prevalent issue in Pakistan perpetrated and maintained by societal norms, values and practices, religious interpretations and unresponsive legal systems. Women's rights activists have challenged the status quo since Pakistani's inception and have faced many challenges. International studies have identified a number of issues in the portrayal of domestic violence in news which is problematic as media serves as one source of information on social issues. However, research in Pakistan is scarce - both in terms of how domestic violence is represented in news and how the audience responds to it. This research aimed to address this gap through a qualitative inquiry. The research drew on data from interviews with eleven television journalists, five activists and four focus groups of Pakistani television news viewers. Since this is a thesis by publication, details of methods employed can be found in each article.

### **Chapter 3: Domestic Violence as News: Television Journalists' Discursive Understanding and Reporting of Domestic Violence in Pakistan (Study 1)**

This chapter consists of an inquiry into how domestic violence is represented in television news media in Pakistan, and journalists' understanding of domestic violence. During the early planning phase of this research project, analysing a sample of domestic violence news stories was considered. However, since journalists are the decision-makers, it was deemed appropriate to pose the questions regarding the representations of domestic violence in the news to them directly. Doing so enabled me to gain access to journalists' views about domestic violence as it is commonly reported in the news, and also to ask about factors such as organisational priorities, commercial imperatives, values and ethical guidelines that influence the way domestic violence is represented. The questions about the ethical guidelines, values and imperatives that influence reporting are explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

This chapter was first submitted as a full paper proposal to the Journalism Studies Division of the 71<sup>st</sup> *International Communication Association's Annual Conference*, held in 2021 in Denver, United States. Following the reviewing process, the paper was accepted for presentation. Some changes were made in line with the recommendations of the reviewers prior to its presentation. Due to COVID and travel restrictions imposed to and from New Zealand, the paper was presented remotely to the conference. Following the ICA conference presentation an invitation was received from Dr. Sudeshna Roy to submit the work as a chapter for the proposed *Routledge Handbook of Communication and Media in the Global South*. Following that invitation the manuscript was further polished and reworked to fit the *Handbook* chapter format. At the time of writing, the editors have stated that the *Handbook* will be published in early 2024. Omer Bin Nasir is the first author of this publication, C. Kay

Weaver, the second, and Gareth Schott the third. Full details of the authorship contributions to this paper are provided in Appendix J.

### **3.1 - Abstract**

In 2018, a nationwide study of Pakistan (population of 207.7 million) found that at least 28% of women report experiencing physical, sexual and/or emotional violence in domestic partnerships. With high levels of unreported incidents posited, domestic violence in Pakistan is very likely much more widespread than this. Television news coverage of domestic violence plays a central role in representing this social problem in Pakistan, yet reports are often presented in a sensational manner covering vicious incidents outside of official charges or court proceedings. This research set out to investigate Pakistani television news journalists' knowledge and understanding of domestic violence in light of their power and influence in the representation of this particular social problem. The chapter reports on interviews conducted with Pakistani news journalists ( $n=11$ ). Domestic violence was conceptualised as a problem resulting from, and maintained by, Pakistan's patriarchal social structures. However, news reporting largely presents domestic violence in terms of isolated events with no reference to wider contributory contextual or societal factors. The study did, however, identify an implied mode of journalistic advocacy based on attempts to prompt police intervention in domestic violence cases in response to news reporting. Yet, journalists' commitment to social justice rarely extended beyond the context of criminal convictions to include broader efforts to change violent behaviour or attitudes towards behaviours.

### **3.2 - Introduction**

Domestic violence is socially endemic in Pakistan (Ali et al., 2020). A Thomson Reuters Foundation (2018) survey consisting of 550 experts on women's issues ranked Pakistan fifth



highest in the world for rates of non-sexual violence that included domestic violence. A national survey in Pakistan in 2017/18 (National Institute of Population Studies, 2019) reported that 28% of women between the ages of 15-49 have experienced physical violence with an additional 6% having experienced sexual violence. Among married women, 34% reported experiences of spousal violence ranging from emotional to physical and sexual violence. The most common forms of violence committed against married women have been identified as emotional (26%) and physical violence (23%). Seven percent of women reported suffering violence during pregnancy. Yet the prevailing patriarchal structure of Pakistani society reinforces the belief that domestic violence is a private matter (Lari, 2011) creating a powerful barrier against victims speaking out, seeking help or change (Niaz, 2003). Research shows that one in three men living in urban areas believe it is their right to beat their wives to “discipline” them, with 20% of women endorsing this “right” (World Justice Project, 2018). Among Pakistani women who have reported experiencing violence, 56% neither sought help nor revealed their abuse to anyone else (National Institute of Population Studies, 2019).

In Pakistan audiences for mainstream broadcast television news programming continue to remain sizable. A 2017 study involving a nationally representative sample showed that 44% of the population continue to watch television news daily, 32% watch it three to four times a week, and 18% watch it at least once a week (Gillani Research Foundation, 2017). This level of television news viewership in Pakistan is significant, as the manner in which domestic violence is discursively framed by news journalists is likely to reflect or reinforce opinions on its nature, extent and causes and the degree to which it is considered a serious social issue (Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Carlyle et al., 2008). What Pakistani audiences view in television news media may also constitute one of the few forms of social acknowledgment or responsiveness to domestic violence. With this in mind, Chesney-Lind and Chagnon (2017) state: “such media representations [can often] constitute a

hegemonic patriarchal ideology, which obfuscates the issue of domestic violence, as well as the underlying social relations that create the phenomenon” (p. 50).

To date, there has been little research on domestic violence reporting within Pakistan. A handful of studies have quantified the proportion of coverage of violence against women in Pakistan print and television news media (Ahmed, 2012, 2014; Agha & Ahmed, 2018), but this did not extend to include consideration of how violence is discursively represented. The present research therefore set out to form a better understanding of Pakistani television news journalists’ knowledge and understanding of domestic violence taking into account the proclivity for incident-reporting on domestic violence.

### ***3.2.1 - News Reporting and Treatment of Domestic Violence***

Feminist media researchers have long highlighted how news media largely ignore the fundamental nature and forms domestic violence can take - for example, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse (Caringella-MacDonald, 1998; Meyers, 1997; Weaver et al., 2013). Carlyle et al’s (2008) analysis of 395 news stories involving IPV, published in a representative sample of newspapers in the USA, found that news coverage predominantly required domestic violence to result in a fatality for it to constitute a news item. In Pakistan, a content analysis of a regional Sindhi newspaper (a province of Pakistan) similarly found that among the 70 incidents of violence against women covered over a six-month period in 2016, incidents of honour killing received the greatest coverage (Agha, 2018). The impact and gravity of focusing on loss of life in such reporting has been cited as likely to further discourage victims of violence from seeking help for fear for their lives (Carlyle et al., 2008).

The examination of incident-driven news coverage of domestic violence has identified the prevalent use of police commentary, often in preference to other forms of expertise such as counsellors and social workers (Bullock, 2008; Michelle & Weaver, 2003). Police tend to regulate their articulation of domestic violence at an ‘incident’ level, rather than classify the

episode as symptomatic of a larger endemic issue. This manner of news reporting is inadequate to address an enduring mode of treatment of women (Bullock, 2008; Surette, 2007) and/or the social structures that underwrite it (Sacco, 1995). In cases where domestic violence has received news coverage, research has revealed a tendency to blame victims (Berns, 1999; Meyers, 1994; Carll, 2003). Victims are portrayed as either ‘deserving’ or have their lived experiences undermined (Custers & Van den Bulck, 2013). In an analysis of seven segments of US news on *NBC*, Batanchiev (2008) found that victims were blamed for not solving the threat of violence. Similarly, in their analysis of New Zealand documentary coverage of domestic violence, Michelle and Weaver (2003) identified how the burden of explaining perpetual abuse was placed firmly on victims, quizzed as to why they did not leave the relationship earlier. In contrast, perpetrators of violence often have aggressive behaviours casually explained as an acceptable masculine response to frustration (Carll, 2003) or the result of individual behavioural flaws or pathologies (Bullock, 2007; Kozol, 1995; McDonald, 1999).

The research outlined above indicates a tendency for domestic violence to go unacknowledged as a socio-political issue. As news, domestic violence is rarely attributed to male power and dominance within patriarchal societies (Kozol, 1995; McDonald, 1999). Instead, domestic violence is frequently framed as a single isolated event and an exception to the norm, rather than as an ongoing lived experience for many women, affirmed by certain societal patterns and systems that support it. Framing violence against women in this way fails to register it as a significant social problem necessitating action and change (Hilton, 1993). Carlyle et al. (2008) suggest an increase in public support for initiatives to prevent domestic violence is unlikely to result from reporting of this nature, with Lloyd and Ramon (2017) suggesting a detrimental effect on crime reporting, referral to court cases and conviction of domestic violence offenders.

In Pakistan, news reporting of violence against women is highly dramatised, presenting women's victimisation as entertainment (Alat, 2006; Cuklanz, 2000). Sensational language is used (Ahmed, 2014; Alat, 2006; Comas-d'Argemir, 2014, *End Violence Against Women Coalition*, 2012) and it is common for reconstructions to be included in news stories to dramatically depict events (Hassan, 2018; Raza et al., 2012). Half of the respondents in a study conducted by Hassan (2018) were of the view that Pakistani television channels are highly entertaining in the way that they present news. A tendency to sensationalise news ties in with the tendency to report incidents of violence that result in fatalities. Bhatti and Hassan (2016) conclude that frequent exposure to violent and sensational imagery in Pakistani news have been found to contribute towards feelings of desensitisation to violence amongst Pakistani youth.

### ***3.2.2 - The Perceived Role of Media and Journalists in Pakistan***

Understanding the role of Pakistani media in advocacy and social change is important if we are to analyse how journalists perceive and articulate their core social roles and responsibilities. In the context of Pakistan, constitutional clause Article 19 provides the guiding and governing principles that lay down the foundation of press freedom. It states:

Every citizen shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression, and there shall be freedom of the press, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of the glory of Islam or integrity, security or defense of Pakistan or any part thereof friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency, or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, [commission of] or incitement to an offence. (Constitution of Pakistan, Article 19)

In line with these principles, Siraj and Hussain (2016), in their survey of 170 Pakistani journalists, found that cultural and social improvement was identified as their foremost professional responsibility. Similarly, Memon (2011) reported that 67.6% of Pakistani journalists rated 'public advocacy' to be the most significant role of the media - comparatively higher than British journalists (56%) and US journalists (48%) (Mwesige,

2004). Public advocacy refers to providing a platform to voice public opinions and problems. In a nationwide survey the majority of participating Pakistani journalists reported satisfaction with the role of media in creating awareness and providing information to the public (Hanan et al., 2016). The study's findings also challenged the common perception that journalist practices are likely to be governed and influenced by news corporation owners. These are useful perspectives to keep in mind when considering the under investigated issue of how journalists report domestic violence in Pakistan. In light of the prevalence of this form of violence in the country, we set out to answer the following questions:

1. How do Pakistani television news journalists understand domestic violence?
2. How do Pakistani television news journalists represent domestic violence in news reporting?

### **3.3 - Method**

This research examines, from a constructivist perspective, the way journalists talk about domestic violence and its news reporting. In doing so, it draws on critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1995; Janks, 2006). The specific concerns of CDA are how culture, power and economics affects the construction and privileging of certain discourses over others, and how discursive practices create and perpetuate social inequalities (Fairclough, 1995). To elaborate, according to Fairclough (1995), socio-cultural practices can be explored across three dimensions: (1) cultural, dealing with values and culture in which the message is embedded; (2) economics, relating to the financial business models of, for example the media companies; and (3) political, concerning issues of ideology and power structures. In this research our concern has been to identify the discourses that Pakistani journalists align with in their understanding of domestic violence, and whether those understandings are reflected in their reporting or are at variance with their journalistic practices and outputs.

In line with the constructivist and CDA approaches that underpin this investigation, qualitative research methods were used to explore how journalists in Pakistan understand domestic violence and how that relates to current methods of reporting it. Specifically, a semi structured interview method was deployed to help build up a deep and rich understanding of the phenomenon being researched (Creswell, 1998).

We approached television news journalists via the primary author's network of contacts and former colleagues through email, phone and in person. The topic of study was explained to them and their participation in the project was requested. A total of 11 Pakistani journalists were interviewed, including seven males and four females, across three professional categories within the television news media industry: Directors of News, Producers, and Crime/Social Reporters. Interviewees were recruited using a purposive sampling approach. Eight journalists were interviewed from six national news channels with the highest viewer ratings. Two journalists were affiliated with the BBC and one with Voice of America (VOA) at the time of their interview. All the interviewees had a minimum of 13 years experience with seven having undertaken overseas assignments. Eight participants held Master's degrees in Mass Communication Studies, three had completed an M. Phil in Mass Communication and one was undertaking a PhD (see Table 3.1 below). Efforts were made to secure an interview with the only female Head of News and Current Affairs appointed to a state television news channel in Pakistan as well as the only female Bureau Chief associated with a private national news channel in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Both declined to participate in the research. One turned down the request via mobile text message, stating that she was not the right person to say anything on "the over-exaggerated issue of domestic violence".

Of the eleven interviews, seven were conducted in the city of Lahore where the head offices of most Pakistani television news channels are located. Six of these interviews were

carried out in news channels offices and one at the private residence of the reporter. The remaining four interviews were conducted in the federal capital Islamabad – all in the participants' offices.

The semi-structured interview protocol designed for this study ensured consistency of questions and structure for each interview (see Appendix A). All the interviewees used bilingual expressions in their interview responses. The interviews lasted between 25 and 45 minutes, were audio recorded with interviewees permission and then transcribed (and translated from Urdu to English language). This provided 117 pages of interview data. Transcripts of the interviews included pauses, emphasis, and notes on non-verbal gestures to help provide a sense of context for the response. A thematic analysis was conducted on the interview transcripts. Both paper and pen and NVivo 12 were used to generate codes and themes. In reporting on this analysis, we have quoted extracts from the participants' transcripts verbatim, but have been careful to remove any information that could lead to the interviewees, or their employer organisations being identified. We have identified each person in terms of their general news reporting role and gender.

Table 3.1

*Demographic Details of the Journalist Participants*

Designation and Identifier	Gender	Age (yrs)	Education	Experience (years)
Director News A	Male	55	Masters	25
Director News B	Male	52	Masters	24
Director News C	Male	45	Masters	18
Director News D (Former)	Male	50	Masters	22
Controller News	Male	39	M. Phil	18
Producer A	Female	43	M. Phil	19
Producer B (Senior)	Male	38	PhD (on hold)	13
Reporter A	Male	47	Masters	24
Reporter B	Female	35	Masters	13
Reporter C	Female	33	Masters	20
Reporter D	Female	43	Masters	14

### 3.4 - Findings and Discussion

In this section, we report on how the findings answer our two research questions. We first turn to how the journalist interviewees understand domestic violence.

#### 3.4.1 - Pakistani Journalists Understanding of Domestic Violence

From the interviews we sought to establish the extent to which journalists' personal views and understanding of domestic violence can be seen as shaping news coverage. Researchers have argued that journalistic interpretation of a news event is more significant than hard facts (Patterson, 1993; Salgado & Strömbäck, 2011), cautioning against regarding journalism as a passive form of communication. In the case of our respondents, we first established their broad understanding of what constitutes domestic violence. Responses included defining domestic violence as a mode of interpersonal violence that takes place in domestic settings between husband and wife, parents and children, in-laws, and daughters-in-law. Domestic violence was also considered as occurring between employers and domestic helpers. All participants indicated that domestic violence is "rampant" in Pakistani society and were highly critical of the legal justice system for its inability to prevent it. State institutions were



described as “weak” in terms of providing safeguards for victims (News Controller, Male), and the police were cited as “specifically afraid of getting these matters out in public” so they try “to resolve these matters under the table either by arranging reconciliation between partners or through granting bails to perpetrators” (Reporter A, Male). This comment was a reference to a ‘bribe culture’ within police departments and the weakness of the judicial system, through which resourceful abusers manage to escape punishment. Journalists provided general accounts of the way they believed the police would put forward weak cases, for example, including bail clauses for non-bailable offences. Accounts were also given of police pressure being used to suppress or prevent key witnesses supporting cases against abusers, or persuading victims of abuse to drop all charges against the perpetrator.

All eleven respondents regarded physical violence perpetrated by men on women as domestic violence. A male Director of News provided examples of domestic violence news, as the “husband gets angry and breaks his wife’s leg; angry husband throws down 3-month old baby after fighting with his wife; a woman tired of husband’s beating jumps in canal along with two children” (Director News D). Another Director of News offered examples when defining domestic violence, stating that: “heads are shaved off; faces are burnt for not heating up food. In areas where the feudal system is strong, if the person has more than one wife, then a disgruntled husband may throw acid on one of his wives for misbehaving” (Director News B, Male). The same interviewee considered any kind of violence that occurs in the domestic setting to be domestic violence and extended the definition to include the beating of children, which, according to him, is otherwise considered an acceptable practice in Pakistani society. He explained “although, in New Zealand, England, America and some other Western countries, parents cannot beat their children, doing so is not taken as a big issue in Pakistan” (Director News B, Male).

Among high income countries knowledge of, and data on, child abuse is generated and publicly disclosed, together with strategies to identify it and prevent its occurrence (Barth, 2009; Mikton & Butchart, 2009). However in Pakistan, either due to lack of priority or its acceptance, there is a lack of data outlining the nature and extent of child abuse. Results from one study that included 274 Pakistani university students revealed that 57% experienced physical abuse while 53% suffered emotional abuse during childhood. A high percentage (41%) also disclosed sexual abuse perpetrated by parents (20%), teachers (14%), and friends (16%) (Abbas & Jabeen, 2020).

It can be argued that the prevalence of child abuse in Pakistan stems from the strict hierarchical nature of relationship between parents and children. Parents consider themselves responsible for a proper upbringing of their children, where there is little to no room for learning from experience. Resultantly, some end up using harsh words and occasional force to discipline them. However, for others it may escalate into abuse (Irfan & Cowburn, 2004). It appears that a long-held acceptance of violence against dependents contributes to a general normalisation of violence within domestic relationships and settings in Pakistani society. As Zakar et al. (2013) have already indicated a “life-long process of gender socialization,” exists in Pakistan, “where the role of wife is projected as submissive and docile” (p. 246) in which men are perceived to be logical and responsible, defining their legitimate authority to control women (Ali et al., 2011).

#### 3.4.1.1 - Psychological and Emotional Abuse

Three female and two male participants acknowledged that domestic violence also includes psychological and emotional abuse. One female News Producer believed that “99.9% of women in Pakistan experience such abuse”, explaining it as the actions of “hurting somebody’s emotions through painful and insulting words” (News Producer A, Female). Two female respondents were able to give specific examples of how emotional abuse is

manifested and they spoke about the way in which female choices are limited and men ‘negate’ their experience (News Producer A, Female). Examples included: “psychological torture when a husband or in-laws prohibits a woman from visiting her mother’s house”; minimising the distress that arises from such treatment; or “not allowing someone to dress up or do the work by choice” (News Producer A, Female). ‘Mental torture’ was identified as the beginning stages of domestic violence, acknowledging that “for some people, shouting can be a violent act” (Reporter B, Female). One male respondent referred to ‘forced marriages’ (Rauf, et al. 2013) as domestic violence. This is corroborated by the USAID-sponsored Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (National Institute of Population Studies, 2013) that revealed from the 13,500 ‘ever-married’ women between the ages of 15 and 49, one in five women had experienced abuse in the year leading to the survey.

When discussing domestic violence, the majority of participants were preoccupied with describing its more visible physical manifestations, failing to really acknowledge or discuss violence as a constant everyday pattern of behaviours that form abuse. The focus of responses matched the emphasis given in the majority of domestic violence news stories on homicide or severe physical attack. The research therefore acknowledges that journalist responses to questions on the nature and form of domestic violence were likely influenced by participants’ recall of extreme examples of physical abuse covered within their professional role.

#### 3.4.1.2 - Marital Rape

Tied in with discourses reinforcing male authority and rights over women, marriage as an ‘absolute defense’ to rape (Klarfeld, 2011) employs similar reasoning for the continuation of domestic violence. Over the past three decades, international campaigns (e.g. UN’s 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women) against both domestic violence and marital rape have attempted to challenge those dominant social discourses and power

structures that condone these forms of violence. Despite this, both crimes remain vastly underreported, in part, due a lag in the implementation of national laws that safeguard women (Dalton & Schneider, 2001). Globally, and in Pakistan, legal systems have responded more swiftly to the need for laws criminalizing domestic violence than they have to marital rape (Schelong, 1994).

In our interviews journalists were asked to consider marital rape as domestic violence. In a response, one male respondent offered “it is quite possible that thousands of such incidents are happening in Pakistan. Unfortunately, if a husband forces himself on his wife, I do not think that in our society any wife would come forward to complain about it” (Director News B, Male). A female respondent more definitively declared that the “concept of rape does not even exist in marital relationships in Pakistan. No women would ever go to report marital rape because no one would believe in her story and that is the end of the story” (Reporter B, Female).

When asked if they would cover news stories on marital rape, all except one respondent said they would not, mainly because of the contentious nature of this issue. Journalists indicated that there were real obstacles to the acceptability of such news stories as the concept of marital rape is “debatable,” functioning to counter “religious” discourse and is therefore “blasphemous” and too “sensitive.” One respondent opted to close their argument by suggesting that “as a society, we have not reached that level yet” (Producer A, Female). Another female respondent explained “You really do not have any idea when the content becomes blasphemous, and you don’t want to be blasphemous as it entails serious consequences in our society” (Reporter D, Female). Here the interviewee was explaining how customary journalistic practices - such as driving value changes (Hanusch, 2019) - run the risk of presenting views that run counter to established religious positions such as those that give men sexual rights over women. If reporting were to be in direct opposition to Islamic

teachings and to the sanctity of marriage, they would then fall under the category of being blasphemous (Susila, 2013).

Even though male and female respondents were aware of the socio-cultural norms and beliefs that condoned marital rape, none identified it as a criminal and punishable offence in Pakistan. To provide some context for this, before 2006 Section 6 of The Offence of Zina (Enforcement of Hudood) Ordinance (1979) defined rape as “a man having sexual intercourse with a woman who is not his wife without her consent” (p. 5). However, in 2006, an amendment was made to the law and a new section (375) was added in the Penal Code of Pakistan, which says, “a man is said to commit rape who has sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent and there is penetration” (p. 422; Article 375). The discursive features encapsulating sexual abuse in laws enacted in the provinces of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa contradict laws promulgated in other provinces. For instance, according to clause 51(i) of the Sindh Bill, “compelling the wife to cohabit with anybody other than the husband” is classified as sexual abuse. This clause discursively and materially situates women and their sexuality as the property of the men with whom they share an intimate relationship.

Similarly, according to the definition of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence Bill (2018) “sexual abuse does not include ordinary and natural relationships amongst husband and wife so committed in accordance with injunctions of Islam” (p. 4). This rests on interpretation of the law on religion. This contradiction between provisional laws may have influenced journalists’ to be extremely wary of including marital rape within the scope of news reporting, or, indeed, to completely ignore it.

#### 3.4.1.3 - Violence against Domestic Helpers

In addition to physical violence against intimate partners and children, eight of the respondents (six males, two females) included the beating of domestic helpers under the

category of domestic violence. In Pakistan, child work is normalised. The majority of young workers are employed within an informal economy that falls outside labour laws (Khan, 2019), which renders them vulnerable to exploitation (Khaliq, n.d.).

Notably, five respondents discussed covering a news story of a female domestic helper who was abused by a judge and his wife. Not taking away from the gravity of abuse against domestic helpers in Pakistan, Pakistani journalists' tendency to classify this as domestic violence does not match how it has been defined in the federal and provincial laws, with the exception of one province of Pakistan, Balochistan (The Balochistan Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2014). The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act (2020) passed by the Pakistani national assembly, for example, states:

Domestic Violence shall mean all acts of physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and economic abuse committed by a respondent against women, children, vulnerable persons, or any other person with whom the respondent is in or has been in a domestic relationship that causes fear, physical or psychological harm to the aggrieved person (p. 3).

The act defines domestic relationships as relationships "... between persons who live, or have at any point in time lived, together in a household and are either related by consanguinity, marriage, kinship, adoption, or are family members living together" (p. 2).

### ***3.4.2 - Explanations for the Persistence of Domestic Violence in Pakistan***

Having outlined what participants identified as domestic violence we now turn to examine how journalists explain its continued prevalence in Pakistan. Socio-systemic discourses were prominent in journalists' responses, with the majority of participants stating that domestic violence is a product of a patriarchal society. They highlighted the role of familial, social, and institutional structures in explaining the lasting incidence of domestic violence. For example, seven journalists noted that families minimise its negative effects on a victim's well-being.

Families silence victims because they fear stigma and/or regard it as a private matter. One respondent stated:

It is so hard to get access to victims of violence, whether it is their homes or hospitals. Because families of victims tend to consider such incidents as a private matter, and hence, they tend to resist outside mediation and media's attention in that matter. Due to which, if a female victim is willing to say something, she cannot say that. (Reporter C, Female)

Most journalists pointed out that Pakistani society and its practices are structured in a way that maintains domestic abuse - marginalising females by not giving them equal educational and employment opportunities. They stated that women in general are disempowered, and they also fear losing their children, so they do not end abusive marriages. For example, one respondent commented:

In Pakistan, due to illiteracy and financial dependency, most women are suffering at the hands of their partners. Men feed their dependent women and in return, their women keep on suffering violence. As parents might not be able to afford having their daughters back. (Reporter B, Female)

Respondents spoke of how women are raised to rely on male members of their families and not to have determinations and aspirations of their own. For example, one participant stated that "women are groomed as submissive creatures. They are trained to tolerate man's anger and make sacrifices in life choices, especially when they get married" (News Controller, Male). Interestingly, two female and one male journalist contended that educated women are also especially vulnerable to domestic violence because they seek to avoid shame and stigma. One female interviewee stated that:

Sometimes, I think educated women ... would never speak up. They would always feel "why to wash out dirty linen in public? It is better to stay quiet." I know there are many women who just do not speak up out of fear and public shaming. (Reporter C, Female)

A male respondent provided a similar explanation as to why educated women would not want to disclose domestic violence “due to family and social pressures.” He stated: “There are many educated women, who get beaten up at night by their husbands, but in the daylight, they never reveal it to anyone” (Reporter A, Male). Thus, it goes unreported and undeterred due to the negative social consequences that speaking out about it can bring.

#### 3.4.2.1 - Journalistic Activism

As discussed earlier, another commonly offered explanation as to why domestic violence remains prevalent in Pakistan was linked to police corruption. Three male respondents talked about how police avoid registering cases of domestic violence, demand bribes from the victims, and allow perpetrators to settle disputes outside the court. Interestingly, journalistic pressure on authorities was cited as the main reason for covering domestic violence: “99% domestic violence stories are broadcasted ... so that authorities may act” (Director News D, Male). That is, journalists sought to provoke action from police by reporting domestic violence news stories that are not part of a formal criminal investigation. Journalists indicated that they do not wait for police to register the case before they put it on-air if they have enough circumstantial evidence. Discussion with journalists suggested that a core rationale behind much of domestic violence reportage is guided by a mode of activism that attempts to stimulate a socio systemic response. That is, the journalists expressed an appreciation for the difficulties victims of domestic violence face in getting their complaints registered.

Six of the respondents (including two female participants) held the view that female journalists were more sensitive and understanding of issues attached to domestic violence. In part, such comments served to query the conviction and suitability of some journalists that currently cover domestic abuse stories. Amongst these participants a need was expressed for more female voices covering this social issue, as it could likely result in a more nuanced understanding and account of domestic violence. One female participant was of the view that



while some male journalists can genuinely be concerned about domestic violence as a social problem, “generally they are not” and only report it as part of a work assignment. A Director of News confirmed: “domestic violence involving husband, wife and in-laws are not our priority” (Director News A). A female participant identified why some news channels give domestic violence a lower profile and importance status: “For instance, I do not want to name anyone, but some shift in-charges consider it [the] routine tantrum of women, and they do not want to run such stories” (Producer A, Female). This interviewee explained that women are typically seen as exaggerating such issues and ascribed traits such as being overly-sensitive. She further claimed that “in our office, many male journalists themselves are abusers” (Producer A, Female). It is worth noting that in Pakistan less than 5% of journalists are female. Research on this male-dominated profession and industry has highlighted the sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and discrimination faced by female journalists (Jamil, 2020; Nusrat, 2018).

Consistent with international research on domestic violence, our study also revealed instances of victim blaming in accounting for incidences of domestic violence in Pakistan. Five respondents (including three females) drew on victim blaming discourses, with one male respondent attempting to justify honour killing in response to adultery:

In some cases, husbands warned their wives before exercising extreme acts of violence which resulted in femicides. In some cases, parents have also done the same things with their daughters for the same reasons. Therefore, we need to obey, not only the law of our country, but also should follow social practices and cultural norms. (Reporter A, Male)

Such comments were expressed despite the Parliament of Pakistan having unanimously approved an anti-honour killing bill in 2016 after the death of the Pakistani model, Qandeel Baloch. Under the 2016 law relatives are no longer able to pardon the killer that person is sentenced to capital punishment.

### ***3.4.3 - Incident Based Reporting as Indirect Advocacy***

In contrast to some of the more nuanced accounts that journalists provided of their understanding of domestic violence, this level of thought did not seem to align with how they reported on the issue in newscasts. Most journalists stated that their reporting of domestic violence was largely incident based. For example, one participant noted that he had “never done an in-depth inquiry of this phenomenon of domestic violence...I do not think that anyone has gone the extra mile to do something about it.” (Director News B, Male).

However, the same participant went on to state that: “ideally speaking, every domestic violence story should cover [the] incident and [the] previous history of relationship as well.” Interestingly, whilst discussing domestic violence as a social problem related to social and cultural structures, several respondents stated that their coverage of incidents of domestic violence did educate the public and identified it as a social problem.

As stated, respondents indicated that in covering domestic violence stories they were at times attempting to pressurise the police to act in relation to the case. However, as one respondent added, journalists quickly move on and forget about individual stories and rarely follow up on judicial outcomes due to the enormity of their workload:

We forget about that news story after its police report gets registered. Because, we have always got a huge news flow to look after. And in most of the cases, abused and abuser reconcile and then perpetrator comes out of the jail. (Controller News, B)

This excerpt indicates the typical trajectory of domestic violence news coverage. Interestingly, the incident in which a domestic helper was abused by a judge and his wife constituted one of the most frequently recalled incidents of domestic violence by participants. In referring to this example, journalists tried to expose and criticise deep-rooted social and institutional power structures. One male journalist reported that he took ‘pride’ in covering stories on domestic helpers, stating that “they are beaten, burnt with iron and their wages are withheld” (Director News D). Given what the study revealed about the risks of challenging

patriarchal rights, systems and structures, journalists appeared to suggest that addressing the abuse of domestic helpers posed less of a risk as it went beyond the private confines of familial relationships.

#### ***3.4.4 - Sensationalism and Tabloidisation***

Eight interviewees, including four female journalists, reflected on an increasing level of tabloidisation of Pakistani television news media and the heightened levels of dramatisation and sensationalism within news reporting. Three Directors of News (A, B & C) addressed this, with one acknowledging: “Unfortunately, adding fiction into facts is the kind of sensationalism being committed by the majority of news channels in Pakistan, which is wrong ” (Director News A, Male). Another pointed to the insensitivity of broadcasting news in a dramatised manner to the point that it becomes entertaining and perhaps, fascinating to viewers; he gave an explicit warning in his comment:

If it is being sensationalised or glamourised, or instead of crime-deterrence, its coverage happens to motivate others, then it is problematic. Such intricacies around coverage of crime have been grossly overlooked in Pakistan (Director News C, Male).

A third Director of News attributed the pervasive nature of this approach across Pakistan television news channels as meeting audience needs. The sensational depiction of crime news and programmes “somehow [reflects how] we do have atrocious tendencies deep down in ourselves, which make us curious to watch and to know about shockingly cruel and inhumane incidents” (Director News B, Male). Similarly, two female reporters (B and D) described ‘ratings’ as the fundamental reason behind the sensationalised representation of crime and domestic violence news. While interviewees may have been concerned about how violence is reported and its possible effects, many felt under pressure to sensationalise stories: “such a sentimental display is adopted to arouse feelings in viewers. In addition to that,

emotional linguistic expressions are also used to capture the attention of viewers” (Producer A, Female).

A male Senior Producer criticised the use of adjectives in domestic violence news stories: “Instead of saying that a husband turned into a brutal animal and tortured his wife, we should simply say that a husband tortured his wife. I think by using adjectives, people might feel attracted to that. But for me, it would be very distasteful to hear something like this” (Senior Producer C, Male). Shamsi (2005) has argued that reporters emphasise the use of adjectives and adverbs over facts to make their stories more attractive. The use of name calling such as in the example given above - “brutal animal” - also privileges a medical pathology discourse on domestic violence (O’ Neill, 2000). In this discursive approach domestic violence is explained as perpetrated by someone who lost his ability to think and became an irrational monster. This then conveys to audiences that domestic violence is an aberration rather than a daily occurrence.

Given the socio-systemic foundations underpinning domestic violence, this research explored the expectation that news stories would seek to incorporate views of experts able to elucidate on the socio-cultural structures that need to be dismantled or reformed. However, participants stated that it is normal to only use testimonies from victims and their families, perpetrators, and police. On one hand, journalists showed concern with the corrupt practices of police, yet on the other, they overly relied on police sources when it came to reporting domestic violence. Voices from experts were only given space when the focus was on explaining the phenomenon of domestic violence to “educate viewers” (Producer B, Male) which, according to the respondents, only occurs in programmes produced specifically to commemorate special days such as Women’s Day. One respondent (Director News C, Male) did state that in circumstances where the violent perpetrator provides a religious justification,

then religious scholars are sometimes invited to provide their opinions. However, the practice is infrequent.

### **3.5 - Conclusion**

It was clear that the journalists interviewed for this research understand domestic violence as a crime that social and cultural structures largely condone. Physical abuse was the most frequently cited type of domestic abuse. While half of the participants also considered emotional manifestations of domestic violence, almost all the respondents were of the view that marital rape is a highly contentious topic in Pakistan due to religious perspectives and is, consequently, a topic to be avoided in news reporting. The majority of journalist participants admitted that reporting on domestic violence is not among their priorities despite the personal and societal consequences of the prevalence and persistence of this crime in Pakistan. Their hesitancy in reporting is likely to be linked to social and cultural ideologies that whatever happens between couples and families in the home is a private matter. Covering domestic violence, and especially marital rape, could put journalists at risk of being accused of violating the sanctity of marriage, the family and dominant religious beliefs.

Where journalists were motivated to report on domestic violence, sometimes they were attempting to put pressure on the police to act on domestic violence cases. However, the reporting was mostly incident based with limited follow-ups. This can best be described as indirect and inconsistent advocacy, which lacks real depth of effort to challenge existing patriarchal power structures. Providing limited understanding of the causes and consequences of domestic violence, these stories may only work to further discourage victim(s) of such violence from breaking their silence and coming forward to expose their victimisers and the social structures and beliefs that perpetuate this very common, often lethal, and always traumatising form of criminal violence.

In terms of the limitations of this study, there was large imbalance between the number of male and female respondents – though this does reflect the gendered nature of the journalism profession in Pakistan. In addition, we were not able to interview female journalists holding director news positions as the only female in such a role in Pakistan declined to participate in the study. Another limitation was that due to the fast-paced nature of Pakistani news businesses and their demanding schedules, a couple of participants holding senior positions provided rushed answers to questions. A final limitation is the number of respondents interviewed; a larger study might draw a larger range of responses to the research questions.

## **Chapter 4: Ethical Guidelines and Practices for Pakistani Television Journalists Reporting on Domestic Violence (Study 2)**

In the previous chapter, I conducted an inquiry into how Pakistani television news journalists represent domestic violence. I also explored television news reporters, newsroom producers, and news directors' understanding of domestic violence. I further attempted to understand whether and how their understanding of domestic violence guides *patterns* of reporting and representation on the issue. This chapter, which reports on Study 2, examines the *ethical* principles that guide the reportage of domestic violence in Pakistan.

This chapter was first submitted as a full paper proposal to the Journalism Studies Division of the 72<sup>nd</sup> *International Communication Association's Annual Conference*, held in May 2022 in Paris, France. The paper was accepted for presentation with some recommendations for revision from the reviewers. These revisions were duly made and, due to the first author's financial status and consequent inability to travel from New Zealand to France, the paper was presented at that conference by the Chief Supervisor of the thesis and the paper's second author, C. Kay Weaver. Following the conference presentation, further revisions were made to the manuscript and it was submitted to the *Journal Of Media Ethics* in July 2022. Following comments from two anonymous reviewers, the manuscript went through a further round of revisions and was resubmitted to the journal. The manuscript was accepted for publication in June 2023. It was subsequently published in the *Journal of Media Ethics*, volume 38, edition 3 (pp.146-16), in July 2023. Omer Nasir is the first author of this publication, C. Kay Weaver, the second, and Gareth Schott the third. Full details of the authorship contributions to this paper are provided in Appendix J.

#### **4.1 - Abstract**

This project investigates the ethical frameworks in place for Pakistani television news journalists reporting cases of domestic violence. It also examines the provision and structure of training for Pakistani media professionals to support accurate and balanced reporting of such violence. The research comprised in-depth semi-structured interviews with a small group of television journalists. The findings reveal that there was no formalized code of ethics guiding how journalists represent incidents of this crime, its victims, or perpetrators. Moreover, it was revealed that due to a paucity of formal professional development opportunities, journalists negotiate the challenges of reporting domestic violence on-the-job, resulting in instances of irresponsible reporting practices.

#### **4.2 - Introduction**

News reporting on violence against women raises awareness and can influence public perceptions and responses to a significant social problem (Easteal et al., 2018). The media can influence public opinion through what and how they report incidents of violence as news (Lynch, 2002; Taylor, 2009). In doing so, they are able to shape public discourse and stimulate action around gender issues (Berns, 2004; Silveirinha, 2007). The way violence against women is reported matters (Gillespie et al., 2013). This is especially so given that audiences have been found to rely on the media when they lack experience with and understanding of any social issue (Brossoie et al., 2012). Additionally, news discourses and visual representations of domestic violence can affect victims and perpetrators of violence against women as the framing of such violence can contribute to victim-blaming and stigmatization of the victim, and minimization of the abusive actions of perpetrators (Bullock, 2007; Lynch, 2002). Thus, ethical guidelines and practices in reporting domestic violence are an important domain of inquiry.



A broad definition of domestic violence includes physical, verbal, sexual, psychological, and/ or financially abusive actions that occur in domestic settings, which can also result in fatalities. Domestic violence can occur between intimate partners or among family and extended family members – for example between parents and their children (Cox, 2015; Sleep, 2019). In Pakistan, domestic violence was recognized as a criminal offense after 66 years of the country's inception, yet it remains prevalent with low conviction rates for perpetrators (Perveen-Rakhshinda, 2020). More than one-third (34%) of married women in Pakistan who participated in a national survey reported having experienced domestic abuse (National Institute of Population Studies, 2019). This included, but was not limited to physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence, threats to life, stalking, and cybercrime. A rich literature is available on representations of domestic violence in print and broadcast media especially as it presents in the Western world (Berns, 2017; Lloyd & Ramon, 2016; Meyers, 1996; Michelle & Weaver, 2003; Nettleton, 2011; Richards et al., 2014; Schlesinger et al., 1992). However, little research exists focusing on media producers or content creators in particular, including journalists and their perceptions of their reporting of violence against women, and none in Pakistan. The aim of this study is to begin to fill this gap by investigating Pakistani television journalists' ethical frameworks for approaching the reporting of domestic violence in Pakistan.

In the following sections, we first provide a scholarly account of media ethics, particularly the feminist media ethics approach applied in our research, before outlining codes of ethics that comprise best journalistic practices that the public might expect or assume are being applied in domestic violence news coverage practices. We then provide an overview of the state of crime news reporting in Pakistan, which is followed by details of existing ethical news reporting guidelines in that country. These sections are followed by an

explanation of the methods we used to investigate Pakistani journalists' ethical approaches to reporting domestic violence in television news and our research findings.

#### ***4.2.1 - Journalism Ethics and Domestic Violence Reporting***

Media ethics have been a significant focus of attention for media scholars, communication practitioners, and feminist scholars (Christians et al., 2020; Wilkins et al., 2020). Plaisance (2013) defines ethics as “a form of inquiry concerned with the process of finding rational justifications for our actions when the values that we hold come into conflict” (p. 10). Ward (2019) broadly emphasizes the same features stating that ethics involves the “analysis, evaluation and promotion of what constitutes correct conduct and virtuous character in light of the best available principles” (p. 295). For Ward (2019), media freedom can only occur when journalists are responsible for the consequences of their reporting.

Broad agreement exists on the basic guiding ethical principles for professional journalists working in media organizations. Principles include truth telling, objectivity, neutrality of reporting, accountability, independence, minimization of harm and protection and privacy of news sources (Detenber & Rosenthal, 2014; Plaisance & Skewes, 2003; Ross & Cormier, 2010). Ethical reporting of gendered issues can promote justice and socially/culturally admonish the subordination of females. The work of feminist media ethics scholars urges journalists to engage in news reporting on gendered issues in ways that are beneficial to society (Steiner, 2011; 2020) and which inspire a feeling of obligation in the audience (Steiner, 2020). Feminist media ethics calls on journalists to be self-reflective in their practice and to be mindful of their assumptions around the subject and their own assumed “authority” when interacting with those connected with a story and its reporting. Emphasis is placed on journalists listening carefully to victims, giving space to sources “who speak in the vocabulary of care” (Steiner, 2020, p. 445). While there is no desire to see journalists forgo accuracy, feminist scholars do warn that reliance on fact-based reporting and

objectivity can result in journalists avoiding the time-consuming process of considering context and incorporating multiple perspectives in news stories (Steiner & Okrusch, 2006). The claim is made that under-developed practices place marginalized individuals at a further risk because their stories are not fully presented (Steiner, 2020, Steiner & Okrusch, 2006).

Feminist media ethics scholars argue for a sense of communal obligation among journalists to withstand any pressures from their media organizations that compromise ethics (Bowers et al., 2004). There are multiple forces at play in media organizations which influence news reporting, including political and ideological preferences and the commercial interests of the corporate entity that journalist works for. Commercial pressures, for example, can result in sensationalist reporting of news, and particularly of crime and violence, to achieve or maintain high ratings (Callanan & Rosenberger, 2011; Vettehen et al., 2008; Weaver et al., 2013). Sensationalist depictions in news stories are particularly problematic because repeated use of violent imagery in news reporting can demobilize the audience by inducing compassion fatigue (Tester, 2001). In the next section, we identify some of the guidelines for domestic violence reporting used in different countries by media professions, and their purpose, before exploring the nature of crime news reporting in Pakistan.

#### ***4.2.2 - Existing Ethical Guidelines on Domestic Violence News Reporting***

To ensure responsible news coverage of domestic violence, media professionals, government regulatory bodies, international organizations, media councils, and news organizations across many countries have created specific ethical guidelines for journalists reporting on this issue (for some examples see Autonomous Women's Centre, 2016; Guajardo, 2012; McGuinness, 2007). For example, in New Zealand in 2007 the Ministry of Social Development launched a nationwide public communication campaign IT'S NOT OK aimed at raising awareness about domestic violence (Michelle & Weaver, 2003). The campaign also provided training for journalists across New Zealand and formulated ethical guidelines for sensitive and accurate

reporting that was designed to dispel myths about domestic violence (McGuinness, 2007).

Similarly, in 2010, the Australian government launched its national plan to reduce violence against women and children. One of its many aims was to help journalists deliver better news coverage of domestic violence (Guajardo, 2012).

Broadly, the purpose of these types of national guidelines rests on principles for encouraging responsible news coverage to prevent the perpetuation of myths and misconceptions around domestic violence and developing community intolerance against it (Edmond & Hann, n.d.). They also function to ensure that factual dissemination of information occurs in a manner that does not compromise the safety of victims (Sutherland et al., 2016). It is also a common recommendation that violence against women should be connected to its wider social context and that, therefore, statistics on the prevalence of such violence be included to convey the scope and extent of the problem (Ryan et al., 2006).

Research also shows that media portrayals of intimate partner violence that contextualize abuser responsibility can generate public support for victims and encourage victims of abuse to seek help (Carlyle et al., 2014). Palazzolo and Roberto (2011) argue that the addition of information that helps humanize victims of domestic violence in news may function to reduce victim blaming and produce public empathy. In contrast, reporting practices that dehumanize victims can serve to normalize violence and hinder attempts to stop it (Anastasio & Costa, 2004).

In the next section, we discuss literature related to crime news presentations in the Pakistani media. That is followed by an overview of legal guidelines for broadcast media pertaining to news and crime depictions formulated and monitored by government regulatory authorities in Pakistan. We also discuss the code of ethics regarding crime news coverage practiced by some of the television news channels and guidelines developed by professional journalists' bodies.

#### ***4.2.3 - Crime News Reporting in Pakistan***

A survey of Pakistani journalists showed that news media organizations tend to have an overrepresentation of young inexperienced news reporters with little to no training (Pintak & Nazir, 2013). This appears to be because such employees are cheaper to employ than more experienced journalists. Linked to this, a lack of professionalism has been cited as a major challenge for the Pakistani media industry (Pintak & Nazir, 2013). Indigenous literature shows a tendency toward sensationalist reporting in Pakistan. Arshad and Ashraf (2014) argue that due to a lack of organizational checks in the Pakistani media, news is not only dramatized but also designed to grab the audience's attention (Yousaf et al., 2019). Mezzera and Sial (2010) argue that the "Urdu media greatly relies on sensationalism . . . In the electronic media landscape, this trend of sensationalism can also be explained by the pressing need to be the first to deliver breaking news, thereby getting better ratings and winning popularity" (p. 39). Pakistani crime news and shows are especially presented in a way that makes it difficult to differentiate between entertainment and reality (Abdullah, 2017). Features such as the reenactment of events, fast-paced editing, eyewitness camera perspectives, and the use of music and voice-over narration are common (Hassan, 2018). In Pakistan, domestic violence is rarely covered but, when it is, the coverage is dramatic, reinforces sexist stereotypes, and encourages victim blaming (Fatima, 2017). The nature of the news reporting of such violence suggests that ethical guidelines are either under-formulated, not followed, or not regulated properly (Arshad & Ashraf, 2014).

A UNESCO and Media Action Against Rape report (Sreedharan & Thorsen, 2021) focusing on the neighbouring country of India revealed similar challenges regarding the lack of ethical guidelines for news reporting in that country. From the journalists' interviewed (N = 257) in India, around 14% said they did not have access to any kind of guidelines at all, while only 13% of respondents reported having access to written editorial guidelines. Verbal

instructions were regarded as editorial guidelines by 41% of respondents, whereas 14% had developed their own informal guidelines according to their professional experiences.

#### ***4.2.4 - Formalized Codes of Ethics in Pakistani News Media***

In 2002, the Pakistani government adopted a policy of supporting a relatively independent and liberalized media (Gul et al., 2017). Through the enactment of the Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002, two independent regulatory bodies were set up: The Press Council of Pakistan, and the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA). PEMRA was created to facilitate and regulate private media channels in Pakistan and has been mandated to monitor and ameliorate broadcasting standards of media broadcasters and cable television operators.

PEMRA has revised its code of ethics twice, first in 2009 and later in 2015. Despite these revisions, PEMRA has never provided specific guidance on reporting violence against women. Its code of ethics does, however, address portrayals of crime and violence in broad and generic perspectives. Table 4.1 details PEMRA rules pertaining to television news broadcast in relation to crime and violence.

**Table 4.1**

*Relevant Clauses in Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority's Code of Ethics (Ministry of Broadcasting and National Heritage, 2015)*

<b>Clause (Subclause)</b>	<b>PEMRA Guidelines on Television News</b>
4 (4)	News shall be clearly distinguished from commentary, opinion, and analysis.
4 (5)	Unnecessary details and footages [sic] of gory scenes including bloodshed and dead bodies shall not be aired.
8 (3)	Scenes with violence or suffering such as close-up shots of persons brutally tortured or killed shall not be shown.
8 (6)	Identity of any victim of rape, sexual abuse, terrorism or kidnapping or such victim's family shall not be revealed without prior permission of the victim or victim's guardian where victim is a minor.
8 (13)	Licensee shall provide necessary protection gear and training to its reporters, cameramen and other crew deployed for coverage of any crime incidents or conflict zone.
20 (2)	Licensee shall arrange for regular training of its employees that may be helpful in performing their duties better.

Besides the government regulatory body PEMRA, four major media organizations of Pakistan, namely Geo Television Network, Dunya TV, Dawn Media Group, and the Express Media Group, have codes of ethics detailed on their respective websites as a demonstration of their public responsibility in news coverage. However, these codes of ethics address the reporting of crime incidents in general and are not focused on domestic violence specifically. Professional journalist groups, such as the Federal Union of Journalists, the Pakistan Broadcasters Association, Coalition for Ethical Journalism, Press Foundation of Pakistan, Press Council of Pakistan, and Agahi (which translates into "awareness"), have established professional codes of ethics through consultation with journalists representing numerous media enterprises. They broadly cover professional integrity, unbiased and accurate reporting, working for public and state interests and crime reporting. Again, none of these codes of ethics are specifically concerned with the reporting of violence against women except for that

of the Pakistan Broadcasters Association (see Table 4.2). Table 4.2 below outlines the voluntarily established ethical guidelines related to crime reporting by one association, the Pakistan Broadcasters Association, and the four media groups: Geo Television Network, Dunya TV, Dawn Media Group and Express Media Group. Mostly, the emphasis in these is on not showing faces and revealing the names of victims of crime and violence.

**Table 4.2**

Ethical Guidelines Related to Crime and Violence Coverage in Pakistan

Pakistan Broadcaster Association (see Pakistan Broadcasters Association, n.d.)	<p>In reporting of violence (whether collective or individual) the act of violence must not be glamorized, because it may have a misleading and desensitizing impact on viewers.</p> <p>News channels will ensure that no woman or juvenile, who is a victim of sexual violence, aggression, trauma, or has been a witness to the same is shown on television without due effort taken to conceal the identity.</p> <p>In reporting all cases of sexual assault, or instances where the personal character or privacy of women are concerned, their names, pictures and other details will not be broadcast/divulged.</p>
Geo Television Network (see Geo TV Network, n.d.)	Violence in any form will be discouraged, or condemned, and where not possible to do both, we should rather be silent about propagating violence.
Dunya TV (see Dunya TV, n.d.).	<p>H(d) We will not use Dunya screen to create a traumatic, desensitizing or dehumanizing effect that could lead to psychological disorders or unsocial attitudes or behavior, particularly among minors.</p> <p>I(c) Close camera shots which focus on and highlight of gory images of bloodshed, corpses and human organs and severely injured persons, live and or edited will be avoided.</p>
Dawn Media Group (see Dawn, n.d.)	<p>A journalist shall not glorify the perpetrators of any illegitimate acts of violence committed under any grab or cause, including honour, and religion.</p> <p>A journalist shall not print or upload gory images of violence, mutilated bodies, and victims of any tragedy unless this is inevitable and in the public interest.</p>
The Express Tribune (Express Media Group) (see Express Tribune, n.d.)	The press must not identify victims of sexual assault or publish material likely to contribute to such identification unless there is adequate justification, and they are legally free to do so.



As detailed above, government and non-governmental media organizations and some media channels in Pakistan have developed codes of ethics that broadly cover the news reporting of crime. However, there is little to no research on the active application of these ethical codes in the course of Pakistani journalists' professional practice. Therefore, this study aims to examine whether or how ethical codes are translated or interpreted in professional practice when reporting domestic violence. The purpose of this project is not to contest the nature of ethical concerns that should underpin the reporting of domestic violence, but to understand Pakistani television journalists' ethical perceptions and practices in domestic violence reporting. This research investigates the following two research questions:

RQ1: What forms of professional ethics are followed by Pakistani television news journalists while reporting incidents of domestic violence?

RQ2: How are Pakistani television news journalists trained to report on cases of domestic violence to ensure factual, fair, and ethical representation of this social problem?

### **4.3 - Method**

As a first step, a preliminary content analysis of Pakistani television news stories of domestic violence was undertaken to determine the nature of reporting and ethical considerations. The findings from the content analysis informed the questions we posed to journalists in addressing our research questions. Content analysis examines the quantitative frequency of topics, sequence, and language and key themes along with qualitative aspects, such as the choice of images, language employed across words, captions, titles, etc (Graneheim et al., 2017; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; White & Marsh, 2006). To complete this stage of research, news archives were requested from two Pakistani news channels: Express News and Geo

News. Express News provided archived 9 p.m. news bulletins for the entire month of September 2019. Geo News supplied domestic violence news stories from various bulletins between January to October 2019. This material provided valuable insights into reporting practices in terms of what types of crime, content, sources, and visuals are used in domestic violence reporting stories on Pakistani television channels.

Reporting of domestic violence by the two television channels (see Table 4.3, below) revealed that more than 80% of news stories disclosed the identities of the victims and abusers. Furthermore, in more than half of the reports, full faces were shown and not disguised in any way. Only 3.2% of the news stories included information on sources of social support and only 22.5% outlined the legal aid available to victims of domestic violence. None of the stories included local or national statistics on domestic violence. In some cases, domestic violence news was reported only in the news headlines, with no further coverage given to the story in the rest of the news bulletin.

**Table 4.3**

*Ethical Issues in Domestic Violence News Reportage, 2019*

Ethical issues	Percentage of domestic violence news stories (N = 31)
Identity revealed	80.6
Victim only	0
Perpetrator only	12.9
Both victim and perpetrator	80.6
Mention of police report	90.3
Mention of court proceeding	67.7
No visuals blurred	51.6
Parental guidance advised	6.4
Mention of social support	3.2
Mention of legal support	22.5
Mention of medical report	29.0
Mention of DV statistics	0

We used the content analysis of Pakistani television news reporting to inform what we asked journalists about how they cover domestic violence news stories. We also asked for their views on the patterns of reporting we had identified.

The collection of primary data for this project was approved by our university's institutional ethics committee. The first author's experience as a television journalist in Pakistan from 2007 to 2017 and acquaintance with media professionals enabled a tentative list of interviewees to be identified. Interviewees were selected using a purposive sampling approach aimed at recruiting journalists working at different levels in news organizations including news directors, producers/shift in-charges, and crime/social reporters. This selection was guided by the professional experience of the first author that ethical and journalistic practices pertaining to news gathering and dissemination are formulated and enforced by news directors in their respective organizations, while producers and reporters have to follow the guidelines working in newsrooms and in the field.

The recruitment of journalists to participate in the research began with informal correspondence between the first author and Pakistani television news reporters in November 2019. Potential participants were contacted through emails and telephone with initial conversations outlining the research project and determining journalists' general willingness to participate (See Appendix B). The first author traveled from New Zealand to Pakistan to interview participants in person between February and April 2020. It should be noted that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic interfered with the research plans and made it extremely difficult to recruit and interview participants beyond this period due to increased pressure on news production routines.

Eleven journalists were recruited to participate in the project. While this is a smaller number than we had originally hoped for, it was judged adequate for the research goals as it surpasses the eight interviews that McCracken (1988, p. 17) deemed sufficient for long

interview studies. The sample included seven males and four females – a gender imbalance reflective of the over-representation of men in Pakistani journalism. Seven male and one female journalist belonged to six Pakistani national news channels. Three additional female journalist participants were affiliated with the British Broadcasting Company (BBC), and Voice of America. Participants were all between 33 and 55 years old and had between 13 years and 25 years' experience working in news.

To examine the ethical practices of Pakistani television journalists' in covering domestic violence, we developed a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix A). A semi-structured interview is useful in facilitating discussion between the interviewer and participant (Galletta, 2013), giving the interviewer flexibility to ask follow-up questions based on participants' responses (Kallio et al., 2016; Polit & Beck, 2010). The interview schedule comprised 18 questions covering journalistic codes of ethics, news presentation, and the representation of domestic violence, reporters' views on domestic violence as a social issue, and the effect of gender on reporting, as well as asking the journalists to give their recommendations for improving coverage of domestic violence. We should add that this study is part of a larger research project that examines domestic violence representations in Pakistani news media (see Nasir et al., in press) and the news values that dictate the selection of news stories in domestic violence reporting. In this paper, we specifically address issues of ethics around domestic violence news reporting in Pakistan.

Respondents were given a choice of being interviewed in Urdu (the national language of Pakistan) or English to aid their understanding and interpretation of the questions being asked. Seven interviews were recorded in the city of Lahore and four in the capital of Pakistan, Islamabad – all in the journalists' offices. The interviews were audio recorded with the participants' permission, and each was fully translated from Urdu to English and transcribed, producing 117 pages of transcripts.

To identify key themes from the interview transcripts, a thematic analysis was employed and undertaken both manually using pen and paper and using the computer software NVIVO 12 Plus. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting the central themes emerging through qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It focuses on anything that carries meaning, including textual and visual material (Silverman, 2020). The transcribed interviews were read multiple times to gain familiarity with the wider underlying meaning. Then, after an initial coding, refined codes were developed, which were further collated to generate the thematic findings from the research. After comparing, and refining eight themes related to ethics, we progressed to name, define, and explore the underlying meaning emerging from the interviews. In the next section, we discuss the findings of the study.

#### **4.4 - Findings and Discussion**

The analysis identified five dominant themes and two sub-themes related to the ethics of domestic violence reporting on Pakistani television news channels: editorial guidelines and codes of ethics; journalist's professional training; the impact of existing reporting practices; sources, statistics; experts; and avenues of support for victims of domestic violence. In presenting the findings, we explore each theme by quoting excerpts from the interviews and then unpacking them.

##### ***4.4.1 - Editorial Guidelines and Code of Ethics***

When asked about ethical guidelines, eight participants from the national news channels were not able to identify any written rules and/or established principles that covered domestic violence reporting. There were some contradictions in their responses, however, especially relating to the matters of revealing or concealing the identities of victims and/or perpetrators. For instance, one male participant explained that “we do not have any carefully drafted

ethical guidelines . . . Usually, we do not disclose victims' names and avoid showing their faces as it may put them at further disadvantage or in risky situations" (Senior Producer B, Male). However, one female interviewee revealed that "in domestic violence stories, victim's name and face are shown to establish torture" (Producer A, Female). This interviewee explained that this meant victims' faces are shown to highlight physical injuries and to alert the audience to the intensity of the abuse, and that this results in the visual identity of the victim being revealed. A male participant presented a different view stating: "we don't hide names but if bruises on body parts are shown in visuals, then we blur it, and in case of blood, we turn the footage into black and white" (News Controller A, Male). However, another respondent (Reporter B, Female) stated that "in most of the cases, victims' faces are easily recognizable even in blurred footage," while agreeing that revealing the names of victims is normal practice.

This is also in line with the findings of our preliminary content analysis of domestic violence news stories from Pakistani news broadcasts. That analysis found that the identities of both the victim and perpetrator were revealed in more than 80% of news reports and that their faces were shown in full in more than half of the news stories (see Table 3 above). While showing bodily injuries can establish the intensity of abuse, repeated exposure to such imagery can also result in compassion fatigue on the part of the audience (Kinnick et al., 1996; Tester, 2001). In addition, revealing the identities of domestic violence victims can put their life at risk as the perpetrator may be able to locate them and/or cause their further stigmatization (Driskell, 2009). Specifically, in a traditional conservative society such as Pakistan, revealing the identities of domestic violence victims can lead to a backlash from their families. It can also hurt their prospects in terms of marriage and employment. Interestingly, participants mentioned instances when journalists' decisions were overridden by their supervisors in relation to ethical reporting practices. One interviewee explained:

I do consult and try to convince my seniors . . . not [to] reveal . . . names and faces of victims of domestic violence. Sometimes, they do agree with me and sometimes they do not. So, there are no written ethical guidelines that exist in black and white. Therefore, it depends on person to person and varies from organization to organization. (Senior Producer B, Male)

This interviewee did not elaborate on the circumstances under which his managers would decide to reveal the identity of the victim. However, it can be speculated based on the interviews that media organizations are more concerned about not revealing the identities of victims of sex crimes such as rape, sexual abuse, or kidnapping compared to victims of domestic violence as there are clear legal guidelines from PEMRA (Ministry of Broadcasting and National Heritage, 2015) concerning such cases.

It is common for higher management in Pakistani media organizations to have the final say in how news is presented (Bowers et al., 2004). In Pakistan, the lack of formalized guidelines regarding reporting domestic violence stories in national news channels leaves it ambiguous as to whether the identities of victims of domestic violence should be revealed. Ultimately this decision falls to the discretion of the media organization. A female journalist, who had experience working for both national and international media organizations was critical of this lack of ethical guidelines in national news channels. She said:

In national television news media of Pakistan, ethics are only discussed in debates but not practiced. They vary from news to news and event to event. And ethics can also be moulded as per one's convenience. There are just [a] couple of basic understandings that bloody visuals will not be shown. Or if someone's nose is cut off, then visuals will get blurred. Otherwise, no ethics are followed. (Reporter B, Female)

Unlike journalists working in national news channels, the three interviewees affiliated with international broadcasting networks were comparatively better informed about their organizational guidelines and code of ethics. However, they did not have a set of journalistic ethical guidelines specific to domestic violence reportage. Rather, they have some broadly

defined principles to guide them through the coverage of familial matters and issues concerning minors. A female reporter from the BBC stated:

We have editorial guidelines which are available on Google as well. It is a big fat book, sort of a public document around 700 to 800 pages. So, in [the] BBC, editorial guidelines are reinforced consistently. Although, they are not directly related to domestic violence, rather they revolve around [a] range of issues like how to cover rape cases, and how to work with families and children. These guidelines guide us through almost all sorts of things. (Reporter D, Female)

In summary, like the neighbouring country of India (Sreedharan & Thorsen, 2021), the responses of interviewees working in Pakistani national news channels demonstrate a lack of concrete professional guidelines to refer to when covering domestic violence. This is likely to influence their journalistic practices and contribute to incident-based reporting and sensationalist representations (Edmond & Hann, n.d.; Sutherland et al., 2016). What is often considered a basic code of conduct of not revealing identities (Steiner, 2020) is also sometimes ignored by Pakistani journalists. This research also identified differences of understanding between journalists associated with national and international news organizations in terms of domestic violence reportage. In the next section, the focus is on the sub-theme of consent that was significant in the findings by its absence.

#### 4.4.1.1 - Consent

Asking for consent before reporting on domestic violence cases from victims did not appear to be a priority among eight interviewees representing Pakistan's national news media. Only two female reporters who were working for international media organizations described the importance of consent in their work practices. One of these respondents stated that “In [the] BBC, first, we ask for consent. Because in [the] BBC, we must work according to international journalistic standards as consent is very important for filming, featuring, or profiling someone’s story” (Reporter D, Female). Another female participant who had



worked in a range of national news channels also reflected on the lack of any practice of asking for consent while reporting on domestic violence incidents. She commented:

If I took the consent before reporting an incident of domestic violence, another reporter from a different news channel who is in hurry and could not contact the victim or his family to ask for consent is likely to rely on my report and pass it on to his news channel. This can be damaging for them [reporters and/or victims] sometimes. (Reporter C, Female)

From this interviewee's response, it was evident that some reporters do not see the need to gain consent from those involved in a domestic violence incident before it is reported. This is contrary to the recommended ethics of care (Vanacker & Breslin, 2006) that requires taking informed consent from a victim before reporting their stories. That is, journalists should inform victims about the consequences of making their stories available to the media and engage the victim in a dialog to determine what is in their best interests (Vanacker & Breslin, 2006). Awad (2006) argues that journalists' objectivity and understanding of their jobs as transmitters of facts can impair their sense of ethical responsibility. It causes journalists to view "communication as transmission of messages rather than of constitution of the social world" (Awad, 2006, p. 935). In our study, two interviewees stated that if a victim of domestic violence has shared their story with one reporter, then it might be shared with or picked up by other media organizations as well, and in most cases, without the victim's consent. This leaves victims with no control over the sharing of their stories. The reporters to whom the stories are relayed do not interview the victim(s) and/or affected families to gather information about the case and simply pass the details to their own news channels. Not only are these practices unethical, but they also fail to give victims a chance to tell their own stories as they have experienced them. In addition, the opportunity to present the incident within the broader social context is lost as minimal background information is gathered about the case. One respondent stated of this practice:

This is a very serious issue. Only if people from [a] newsroom push reporters to go out [into the field] and find something then they might do it and bring hidden angle on the surface. Otherwise, the whole coverage will be limited to that incident only. (Controller News, Male)

This practice of using content gathered by another reporter in a news story is referred to as journalistic plagiarism. We discuss this in more detail in the next section.

#### 4.4.1.2 - Journalistic Plagiarism

In the interviews, Pakistani crime reporters in general were criticized by senior newsroom staff members for what they described as journalistic plagiarism. Journalists were accused of using the same content and visuals of domestic violence stories in their reporting which had been gathered by other reporters, sometimes without the source news channel's consent and acknowledgment. For example, one interviewee stated, "crime reporters have made WhatsApp groups on their smartphones, and they share stories on these groups. That is why every other channel is showing the same content and visuals of crime stories" (News Director B, Male).

Interestingly, when interviewees talked about these practices, their concern primarily related to not seeking another media channel's consent to reproduce content; they did not focus on how it might be unethical to share stories of victims with other channels *without the consent of the victims themselves*. Nor did they comment on how victims could be distressed to find their personal stories being shared across multiple news platforms and how this could lead to increasing feelings of shame and vulnerability on the part of those victims.

In terms of international journalistic practices, journalistic plagiarism is considered a serious violation of journalistic ethics and fundamental principles (Wasserman, 2006). However, from the accounts of two respondents, it is evident that information gathering and sharing through smartphones, other digital devices and messaging apps is frowned upon but not penalized or regulated in Pakistan. This might be due to a lack of will, as one respondent

suggested: “Frankly speaking, reporters don’t go to the place of incident. They remain in [their] offices and file news stories from there” (Controller News A, Male). It could also be that lack of proper editorial guidelines and deficiencies in training opportunities are implicitly encouraging such news gathering and dissemination practices. We explore the issue of training in the next section.

#### ***4.4.2 - Professional Training for Journalists***

Section 20 and Clause 2 of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) code of conduct (Ministry of Broadcasting and National Heritage, 2015) states, that the “licensee shall arrange for regular training of its employees that may be helpful in performing their duties better” (p. 8). However, eight of our 11 interviewees said that they had not received any kind of professional training from their respective news organizations during their journalistic careers. One interviewee (News Director A, Male) described such training as a “luxury.” Another (News Director D, Male) described this lack of training as a “sad part” of Pakistani journalism. It was also stated that the normal training for a newly hired journalist is typically on-the-job learning regardless of whether individuals have been hired as a reporter or to serve in the newsroom. One respondent stated, “I do not know if any news channel has arranged professional training for its employees” (Senior Producer C, Male).

Similar experiences were shared by a female reporter:

I have worked in two national news channels for years. I can assertively tell that no initial training courses were organized there. It is quite rare . . . for news organizations to train reporting staff through seminars, workshops, or refresher courses, unless they have received funding from somewhere else, which is highly unlikely. (Reporter B, Female)

This is in line with a previous study which concluded that Pakistani news channels have an over-representation of untrained and inexperienced staff (Pintak & Nazir, 2013). Contrary to the experiences of those of our interviewees working for national news channels, three female participants who were working for international news organizations stated that

the BBC and the Voice of America offer a variety of skills development and career enhancement training courses to all employees relevant to their specialization. They explained that they had spent several hours in paid professional development training courses. A female reporter put it this way:

In Voice of America, we must enroll ourselves into various online training programmes, which are counted as our normal working hours. These training programmes are online because our head office is in Washington, and we are scattered in different parts of the world. Training topics are wide ranging, from copyright issues to ethics and around ongoing and unfolding happenings. (Reporter C, Female)

These contrasting accounts of journalists working in national and international news media illustrate the discrepancy in the quality of journalism practices in Pakistan. Despite the national media regulatory body PEMRA's clear instructions for arranging regular staff trainings, from what the interviewees state in this research, this legal obligation has been grossly overlooked. In the next section, we discuss how this lack of journalistic training, together with unfamiliarity with a professional code of ethics, can lead to problems in how domestic violence is reported.

#### ***4.4.3 -The Impact of Existing Reporting Practices***

Some of our research interviewees did reflect on how a lack of training and understanding of news reporting ethics could lead to irresponsible practices that can put the lives of people at risk who reach out to the media for support. For example, a director of news recounted an incident in which identity disclosure in news reporting led to the murder of a couple:

A young couple got married out of love against the will of their elders and spent three years in hiding from one place to another because of life threats. Then they came to media and news channels gave them coverage but also disclosed their identities. As a result, the couple got police protection and [apparently] reconciled with their threatening families. Not ten days had gone by when both the husband and wife were shot dead. In this case, in my opinion, media and the couple, both were responsible for whatever happened. (News Director B, Male).

This tragic example reflects the consequences of journalists and news organizations not considering societal norms while reporting domestic violence. In this case, the couple had been receiving threats to their lives before they approached the media for help. However, discounting threats to the couple, and ignoring the fact that love marriages are considered a transgression against family honour by some conservative sections of Pakistani society, their identities and whereabouts were broadcast on national news.

In another example, a female interviewee from the Voice of America recounted how she had been forced by the newsroom of a national news channel to invade the privacy of the victims of domestic violence in hospitals:

On multiple occasions, when victims were lying on hospital beds in extremely vulnerable conditions and their family members were in shock, I was directed to talk to victims and their families. I was even forced to get undercover to gain information from hospitals. These are not ethics but insensitive demands of newsrooms. (Reporter B, Female)

This example highlights the gaps in understanding the severity of domestic violence and sensitivity needed to cover it, not only among reporters but among wider newsroom staff in relatively senior decision-making positions. Such information gathering practises revictimise the victim, making them feel not heard (Tandon, 2007). Such practice also sets the wrong precedent for reporters to follow in the future.

In relation to insensitive reporting, another female reporter from the BBC who had previously worked for a national news channel stated:

Due to lack of ethical practices in our local news channels, this kind of coverage can be expected. Because media persons are very insensitive, and they are quite unaware about that. They think that they are helping victims by raising their voices . . . Being insensitive, they overlook its social impact on [the] victim as if the person is not even a human being. All they ... care about is the story. (Reporter D, Female)

These examples show that sometimes newsrooms push reporters to get involved in unethical and irresponsible journalistic practices. Reporters may also make irresponsible

decisions independently. This is not to imply that the journalists' intentions are bad, rather they can be misguided because they lack training in how to appropriately collect information and report domestic violence news. Another interviewee recalled a harrowing incident of intimate partner violence that was insensitively reported:

I can never forget the way we broadcasted visuals of a burnt wife who gave [a] statement to police [from her] hospital bed [stating] that it was her husband who did this to her. Ignoring all precautions, we did air that visual statement of a burnt woman as it is. That incident was very unfortunate as the woman could not survive and expired in the same hospital bed. (Director News D, Male)

Previous research has also documented sensationalist crime news reporting styles on Pakistani news channels (Abdullah, 2017; Hassan, 2018; Mezzera & Sial, 2010). None of the research participants were able to recall instances where journalists faced consequences for ethical violations. In the next section, I explain the circumstances that might influence Pakistani journalists' practice of ignoring authorized and authentic sources, and instead, relying on their own journalistic instincts.

#### ***4.4.4 - Sources***

As domestic violence incidents usually occur in private settings, journalists are extremely unlikely to witness these incidents. Apart from interviewing victims, their relatives, or neighbours, journalists may require evidential factual confirmation gained through the police, hospitals, or the courts about the incident. However, in Pakistan, where the police are reluctant to register cases of domestic abuse, and sometimes even ask for a bribe from victims to register the case (Sattar et al., 2022), journalists tend to initially report these stories based on their own investigation of circumstantial evidence. Nine of our interviewees confirmed that they reported domestic violence incidents without engaging with authorities such as hospitals, police, or the courts. For instance, one stated:

In some cases, if bruises on victim's body and circumstantial evidence is clearly seen then reporter(s) may take the lead to report the incidents even without waiting for

police to get involved and register the case in the first instance. In such a situation, any other news channel would also be doing the same thing. (News Director B, Male)

This quote demonstrates the pressure to be the first to report a crime story. This raises the question of how and why such reporting practices are not viewed as unethical by Pakistani journalists. The answer appears to lie at the intersection of wanting to be the first channel to report the incident and wanting to pressure police into action. One respondent shared his reflections on this thus:

We act swiftly and try to report such incidents even before police . . . media criticism brings police under pressure and sometimes courts will take *Suo Moto* [on its own motion] notices on such cases. I think due to [the] media, many police reports have been registered and victim women got the justice they deserved. (Producer A, Female)

Here, it appeared as if the journalists' perception of ethical coverage of domestic violence is positioned within the concept of exposing the violence and drawing police attention to it. This could be considered a form of media activism, which has its own set of ethical guidelines. Interestingly, such media activism may hold a different meaning for some journalists due to the absence of concrete journalistic codes of ethics. For some, interrogating the police department was seen as a form of ethical media activism, though others might view it as interference in police business. One interviewee stated:

In most cases police do not register cases; either they demand a bribe from the victim, or they try to settle the matter by dealing with an influential perpetrator. And quite frankly, it happens most of the time and then we forget about that news story after its police report gets registered because we have always got a huge news flow to look after. (News Controller A, Male).

In this excerpt, the interviewee is highlighting corruption in the criminal justice system and disclosing his news channel's inconsistent patterns of not following up on domestic violence stories. Such inconsistent approaches may contradict the principle of media activism that would ideally involve an ongoing focus on the case.

#### ***4.4.5 - Statistics, Experts, and Avenues of Victim Support***

Seven interviewees discussed ignoring the inclusion of the latest statistics (regional and/or national) and avenues of support for victims while reporting domestic violence stories. They also reflected on the practice of ignoring the opinion of experts to help contextualize such incidents. As a result, domestic violence is very rarely presented in its broader social and cultural context in Pakistani television news reporting. One interviewee stated that it is “unfortunate that neither media organizations provide such information, nor do we have any research about it” (News Director D, Male). Another interviewee recounted: “we don’t mention these details in all stories as [a] domestic violence story is usually [only] 30 seconds long” (Producer A, Female).

Our preliminary content analysis of television news coverage of domestic violence found no mention of domestic violence statistics in any reporting, while avenues of support and the use of experts to contextualize the violence were included in less than 5% of the domestic violence news stories (see Table 3 above). However, one respondent mentioned the possibility of incorporating these details by saying, “Yes, we do it only when we do have time, and we want to project and highlight some issue then we do add this information in content” (News Controller A, Male). The practices reported by those working in international news channels were very different. For example, one stated:

In Voice of America, we do include these elements. That is the reason, we frequently talk to Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and Punjab Commission on the status of women to get [the] latest statistics and figures for our reports. Punjab government has also launched 1043 free helpline for women. We also include legal information such as relevant laws and applicable clauses in such news stories. (Reporter C, Female)

In summary, local journalists are far more likely *not* to provide contextualizing statistics, incorporate expert opinion, or provide information about support available to victims in reporting on domestic violence, unless they were planning a special report on the



issue. Yet these are standard reporting practices for media practitioners from international news organizations operating in Pakistan. Including perspectives from experts helps the audience understand the socio-cultural factors that contribute toward violence against women (Steiner, 2020) and should be encouraged.

#### **4.5 - Conclusion and Recommendations**

The use of ethical reporting practices when covering violence against women can help prevent further marginalization of victims and encourage audiences to engage with the story in ways that promote criminal and social justice (Steiner, 2011; 2020). It is clear from the responses of research participants that domestic violence news stories are normally reported in Pakistan with barely any ethical considerations. At most, the emphasis is on hiding identities, blurring faces, and not showing graphic images, though these practices were generally not consistently followed across news channels. Pakistani television journalists working for national news channels do not have clear guidelines to follow. As a result, ethical decisions involved in reporting domestic violence also fall on the discretion of the higher management in news organizations. This prevents best practices from being established such as of listening to the victim, ensuring their well-being, including multiple perspectives, and non-sensational coverage (Bowers et al., 2004, Steiner, 2020, Steiner & Okrusch, 2006, Tester, 2001). Training is mostly on-the-job and the lack of training opportunities and limited formalized ethical guidelines regarding the reporting of violence against women not only hampers journalists' understanding of how best to report domestic violence, but also leads to irresponsible and insensitive reporting practices.

The widespread lack of adherence to a code of ethics around news gathering and reporting of domestic violence in Pakistani national news channels can have serious consequences. Not gaining the consent of domestic violence victims before covering their

stories, intruding into their private spaces, broadcasting sensitive information, and sharing their stories with reporters from other news channels without permission, can further endanger already vulnerable and at-risk individuals. This goes against a feminist media ethics of reporting on gender issues that calls for victims to be treated with care and to benefit the society (Steiner, 2011; 2020). The failure to provide information on support services may further isolate and marginalize victims. Additionally, with many journalists having cultivated a “journalistic tradition” of not including regional and/or national statistics, and expert opinion in their reporting, domestic violence is not contextualized as a significant social issue. Consequently, the reporting of domestic violence tends to reinforce stereotypical narratives, negating any effort to promote intolerance against this endemic problem and help-seeking behaviours among victims and their families.

We must acknowledge that this study is limited to the responses of 11 Pakistani television journalists and that further studies are needed that would include a greater number of participants to produce more generalizable results. Future research might also include print media journalists; this could provide a broader understanding of how domestic violence is reported across the news media in Pakistan. To address the ethical issues identified in this research around domestic violence, PEMRA should emphasize developing specific guidelines around reporting of violence against women. This may encourage news channels to allocate resources for staff professional development training and to develop their own code of ethics for more ethical and responsible journalism practices especially in relation to the reporting of domestic violence.

## **Chapter 5: Journalistic Imperatives Involved in Television News Reporting of Domestic Violence in Pakistan (Study 3)**

### **5.1 - Introduction**

The previous two chapters focused on how Pakistani television journalists represent domestic violence news stories, and what principles and ethical guidelines influence their reporting of domestic violence. The findings highlighted that Pakistani television news journalists engage in sensationally depicting domestic violence, often overlooking the need to put the crime into perspective and follow up on the story. Lack of training opportunities for media professionals and scarcity of an overarching code of ethics have been contributing to these reporting practices. In this chapter, I expand the scope of the research to examine another crucial element of journalistic practice: the values that govern the selection of domestic violence news stories in Pakistani news media. This chapter has not been presented at a conference or submitted for publication. It therefore follows a standard format for a thesis chapter.

The mass media is an effective tool in shaping public understanding of social issues such as domestic violence (McLaren, 2010). Editorially, news has the power to summarise or select what are key events and issues. However, it may choose to report certain stories and ignore others (Palmer, 2000). Within stories selected, the news media is also likely to highlight certain voices and perspectives while ignoring others, and include or exclude contextual information, which may have an impact on how audiences perceive an issue (Barker-Plummer, 2013). Media critics have argued that, historically, journalism has been a profession drawn towards violence, giving rise to the journalistic cliché of if it bleeds, it leads (Hunt, 2014). As Hartley (2000, p.40) states, “truth is violence, reality is war, news is conflict... journalism is combat”. That is, the media tends to prioritise stories of violence.

In the journalistic process, news values dominate practice, strongly influencing what stories get selected for reporting (O'Neill & Harcup, 2009). Harrison (2008, p. 136) describes news values as “a form of content-based research which makes judgments about the production process by attempting to identify the way in which a property of an event increases its chance of becoming news”. Apart from being governed by a general set of news values, news selection and reporting may also have a “subjective” element to it, with journalists taking directions for reporting from superiors and colleagues (Allern, 2002; Meadows & Ewart, 2001).

Significance attached to a news story by the journalists, nature of coverage or exclusion of certain stories from the broadcast will have an impact on viewers' understanding and attitudes about domestic violence (Sutherland et al., 2016, 2017). Lately, there has been a rise in the scholarly examination of the media's positionality in the prevention of violence against women and impact of reporting (Breen et al., 2017; Comas d'Argemir, 2015; Gius & Lalli, 2014; Michelle & Weaver, 2003). News coverage that gives space to stories about domestic violence, avoids episodic framing, contextualises abuse, discusses contributing factors, and tells how and where to get help from, is beneficial in combating domestic violence (Breen et al., 2017; Sutherland et al., 2017). Some media scholars think that constructive coverage of domestic violence is rare as it is not aligned with the news values of journalists (Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Sutherland et al., 2016).

Pakistan is an important site of inquiry into news coverage of domestic violence. It is a country struggling with endemic domestic violence and has a large news media industry with statistics suggesting that 44% of television viewers watch news regularly (Gillani Research Foundation, 2017). The Global Gender Gap 2023 index ranked Pakistan 142<sup>nd</sup> out of 146 countries in terms of gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2023). A national survey conducted in 2017-18 in Pakistan found that every third woman between the age

15-49 who had been married had experienced physical and/or sexual violence at least once (National Institute of Population Studies, 2019). A Gallup Pakistan (2017) survey reported that 31% of males think that they are entitled to beat their wives, and 20% of women endorse a man's right to do so. Research has shown that most Pakistani media organisations lack any policy and ethical guidelines for the reporting of domestic violence, while journalists receive little if any professional training on how to report on this significant social issue (see Chapter 3).

Since the role of journalists is important in the coverage of domestic violence (Simons & Morgan, 2018), the primary objective of this chapter is to investigate how Pakistani television journalists select domestic violence news stories to report on. Broadly, research has shown that stories on violence against women are more likely to be selected in broadcast when public figures are involved (Byerly, 2019). Other news values include, but are not limited to: unusualness, impact, conflict, the number of people affected, and titillation (Harcup & O' Neill, 2001; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; McGregor, 2002). In the following sections, we provide a brief overview of the literature on news values and then review research literature that examines news reporting of domestic violence and intimate partner violence. This is followed by an explanation of our research method and the discussion of the research findings before, finally, making recommendations for future research.

### ***5.1.1 - Journalism and News Values***

In journalism literature, news values are considered to exist external to the text of the news story. They exist: in the minds of journalists (Donsbach, 2004; Salgado & Stromback, 2012); as ideological constructs (Hall, 2019; Herman & Chomsky, 2010); as “routine and highly regulated procedures” (Golding & Elliot, 1979, p. 114); and as criteria central in the decision making process as to what will or will not be selected as news (Palmer, 2000). “News stories must generally satisfy one or more of the following requirements to be selected” (Harcup &

O'Neill, 2001, p. 278). Walter Lippmann (1922) was the first person who suggested attributes for news selection. However, the most cited work on news values has been produced by Galtung and Ruge (1965) in the form of a list of twelve interdependent factors determining news selection: frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, personification, and negativity. They argued the more an incident meets these criteria, the more it is likely to be reported as news.

The list of news values included in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication* has been increasing, “many of which overlap with each other in terms of the aspects of newsworthiness they deal with and only differ in their labeling/naming practices” (Caple, 2018, p. 10). McGregor (2002) states that the presence or absence of visuals, or pictures of an event may determine its selection as news. McGregor also contends that celebrification of journalism means that if a story is covered by a renowned journalist, then it is more likely to be broadcast as news. This is linked to the commercial motivations of news organizations as this is one of the ways “television networks have branded themselves through journalistic ownership and identity” (p. 7). Several other sets of news values have been proposed. For example, Conley and Lambie (2006) identified eight news value criteria: conflict, currency, impact, prominence, proximity, usual and the human interest. Harcup and O'Neill (2001) proposed their own set of news values: the power elite, entertainment, celebrity, surprise, good and bad news, relevance, magnitude, follow-up, and agenda. Next, I review the literature on news values that govern coverage of domestic violence stories.

#### 5.1.1.1 - Fatal Incidents

Although media coverage can be effective and impactful without being violence-centric and sensationalised, in domestic violence news coverage, research points to the tendency of reporting to predominantly feature incidents involving fatalities and homicides (Carlyle at al.,

2008; Simeunovic-Patic, 2018). Carlyle et al. (2008) analysed 395 news stories involving IPV published in a sample of newspapers in the USA. They found that relatively more coverage was given to incidents of domestic violence resulting in fatalities, which, they argued, caused other forms of domestic violence, such as emotional and verbal, to go underrepresented. The researchers claimed that this emphasis on domestic violence homicides could discourage victims from seeking help fearing that doing so would endanger their lives. In Middle Eastern countries such as Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, domestic violence fatalities have found to be reported in such a way that encourages sympathy with male perpetrators who kill women in the name of honour (Halim & Meyers, 2010). Carll (2003), in her analysis of news stories involving homicides in the USA from 1995 to 1996, found that stories involving female perpetrators were given more coverage and were more likely to be published on the front page, while incidents with male murderers were covered less extensively. Considered more transgressive, deviant, and thought provoking than violence of males (Naylor, 2001), violence inflicted by women fitted with the value of novelty in news (Anastasio & Costa, 2004; Carll, 2003; Eastal et al., 2015). Giving more coverage to homicides committed by women belies epidemiological reports and prevents domestic violence from being recognised as a gender issue with a socio-systematic basis (Carll, 2003).

Other researchers have found that news of domestic violence is often reported from the police perspective where the focus is on 'facts' (McManus & Dorfman, 2005), and the perspectives of victims, their families and/or advocates are ignored. In Canada, domestic violence coverage often portrays domestic violence as an isolated event rather than detailing what preceded the incident and/or the history of abuse in the relationship (Lee & Wong, 2020).

### 5.1.1.2 - Incidents Involving Celebrities

Research has found that journalists are more likely to report cases of femicide where the victims or perpetrators are celebrities or famous personalities (Hayes & Kwiatkowski, 2015; Heuva, 2016). This reflects “the commodification of crime (femicide) and the exploitation of celebrity fame” (Heuva, 2016, p. 1) which has the potential to increase viewership and, with that, profits for the news organisations. It also fits with the news value of reference to elite people (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). The victims and/or perpetrators are powerful and rich but still not immune to domestic abuse (Pepin, 2016). Manganello (2008) contends that young people are more likely to construct their views about IPV through celebrity news, as compared to general reporting on domestic violence. With the pervasive reach and importance given to celebrities, these cases may have an impact on public perception regarding IPV. That is, the audience presence may be left with the impression that domestic violence is not commonplace and occurs only in families who are famous (Hayes & Kwiatkowski, 2015).

### 5.1.1.3 - Social Media Influence on Mainstream News Selection

Journalists and their professional practices have also been influenced by digital advancements of the past decade (Skogerbø et al., 2015). Social media is now integral to journalism (Nordheim et al., 2018). The reach of social media enables the rapid dissemination of information. Stories are picked up from social media and stories running on mainstream media are disseminated through social media (Whiting et al., 2019). Victims advocate organisations are also using social media platforms to disseminate their messages and different perspectives on news (Crocket, 2017). These online voices may also bring about subtle complexities regarding matters of violence, which might otherwise be represented in mainstream news as one episode of violence and/or a private matter between partners or between perpetrator and victim (Cravens et al., 2015). It is argued that it is a powerful public



platform to hold perpetrators accountable (Crocket, 2017, Rentschler, 2014) for example in the case of the #MeToo movement where perpetrators were named and shamed online (Hillstrom, 2018). Having considered factors that may influence selection of domestic violence news stories, in the next section we discuss underrepresentation of female perspectives in news media.

### ***5.1.2 - General Underrepresentation of Female Perspectives in News Media***

Although women are three times more likely than men to be featured as victims of violence and/or discrimination in news stories, the Global Media Monitoring Project (2015) found that across all media, women were the central focus of just 10% of news stories. This could also be related to the underrepresentation of women in the journalism profession (Byerly, 2011; Gallagher, 2014). Feminist media scholarship also indicates that, typically, news presents a masculine narrative and undermines women-centered and pro-feminist ones, as these might be taken as a challenge to the system of male supremacy (Erdem, 2022; Nettleton, 2011). For instance, it has been argued that in television news stories female sources are only used to report the problem, but not to offer opinions or solutions from a woman's perspective (Rakow & Kranich, 1991). Research on media structures also shows that women are rarely given opportunities to hold powerful decision-making positions in news and entertainment media (Byerly, 2011), and few women make it to influential positions in large digital media conglomerates (Byerly, 2014).

### ***5.1.3 - Research on Media and Domestic Violence in Pakistan***

Several Pakistani studies have addressed news coverage of domestic violence in Pakistan. Ahmed (2012) conducted a comparative analysis of English (*Daily News*) and Urdu (*Daily Khabrain*) newspapers from 1993 to 2003 using a systematic sampling technique. The results showed that incidents of sexual harassment were reported the most followed by those of physical violence against women. On the other hand, content analysis of the regional

Sindhi (a language spoken in Sindh – a province of Pakistan) newspaper conducted over a span of 6 months (January to June 2016) found that among 70 incidents of domestic violence reported, those of honour killings were reported the most, followed by physical violence, rape, and kidnapping (Agha, 2018). Ahmed (2012) raised concerns that Pakistani newspapers are providing less news coverage about violation of women's rights than other crime news and that the stories were reported negatively. She did not go into the details of how stories were negatively reported. Similar concerns were raised following the same author's (2014) analysis of two television news channels - *Dawn News* and *Express News* - from January to April 2013. In line with her previous findings (Ahmed, 2012), sexual harassment was reported the most within the context of violence against women, followed by physical violence and honour killings. Ali and Khalid (2021) analysed print media articles published in Pakistan during the COVID-19 lockdown, and Mirani et al. (2021) examined social media users' experiences during the pandemic. Both studies identified a spike in domestic violence cases and the government's failure to do anything to prevent such escalation during the pandemic.

While researchers have explored coverage of violence against women in Pakistani news, none have explicitly explored the imperatives behind journalists and news organisations' selection criteria in the reporting of domestic violence. The current chapter seeks to fill this gap in the literature and make an important contribution to our understanding of news reporting of domestic violence in Pakistan. It investigates the question: How do Pakistani television news journalists select domestic violence news stories? The next section provides an account of the method used to collect data for this research.

## 5.2 - Method

To investigate Pakistani television journalists' imperatives regarding domestic violence reporting, a qualitative inquiry was used to gain an in-depth understanding of how journalists select, or elect not to select, such stories to present as news (Schultze & Avital, 2011; Schwandt, 2001). To “enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 2002, p. 341) and build “thick descriptions of a given social world, analyzed for cultural patterns and themes” (Warren, 2002, p. 85), semi-structured interviews were used (see Appendix A). More than just information gathering, semi-structured interviews facilitate making sense of the meaning interviewees attach to their experiences (Mahama & Khalifa, 2017). Before developing the semi-structured interview schedules for the research, we conducted a preliminary content analysis of two Pakistani news channels - *Geo News* and *Express News*. Our aim in doing this was to identify some common and contrasting features in primetime news reporting of domestic violence that we could explore in the interviews with journalists. In the content analysis, we found unusually lengthy headlines (16.24 minutes long on average) and long commercial breaks (18.81 minutes long on average) in an hour long bulletin. Therefore, we incorporated questions into the interviews about the rationale for the long headline segments and the lengthy commercial breaks.

Email correspondence aimed at recruiting Pakistani television news journalists began in 2019. We recruited television journalists due to the high proportion of television news viewership in Pakistan (Gillani Research Foundation, 2017). The correspondence for recruiting interviewees was initiated by the first author, who is a Pakistani national with 10 years experience as a television news journalist. In the first phase, 35 Pakistani male and female television news journalists were approached via email and phone calls/texts. Only fifteen participants, including five female journalists, showed interest in the study. All potential participants were formally contacted again in February 2020 and invited for an

interview when the first author flew to Pakistan. Consent forms were shared before talking to the interviewees who were informed about their rights when participating in the project, including their right to withdraw from the study (see Appendix C).

Eleven Pakistani television journalists (seven males and four females) finally participated in the research study. Four participants were Head of News/ Director of News, four crime reporters and three newsroom producers which included one participant with the designation of controller news. Eight of these participants, including one female journalist, were from six national Pakistani news organisations: *Geo News*, *Express News*, *Samaa TV*, *Dawn News*, *GNN News* and *Neo News*. Three more female participants were working with international news organisations based in Pakistan. At the time of interview, two of the female participants were associated with the BBC, and one with the *Voice of America* (VOA). All participants had a minimum of 13 years of professional journalism experience and all held university degrees in journalism and mass communication studies. All interviewees had reported on domestic violence incidents during their journalism careers.

The interviews took place between March and April 2020, and were conducted face to face. Seven interviews took place in Lahore and four in Islamabad. Ten were conducted at participants' respective news channels and bureau offices, one interview was conducted at the interviewee's house. The interview schedule consisted of 18 questions inquiring about a range of issues related to domestic violence reporting. One of the main priorities was to ask journalists to identify if they had any specific criteria for covering domestic violence news stories and what were these; when and why would they include domestic violence news in news bulletins; and when and how could such stories make the news headlines. Their answers would lead to other questions such as whether they covered domestic violence stories based on a specific area, city, or group of the population, and why or why not. All interviews were audio recorded with the participants consent. The participants switched between Urdu and

English to answer the questions. Responses given in Urdu were translated to English.

Transcription of the interviews generated 117 pages of data.

A thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview transcripts, initially using a pen and paper technique, and then the computer software programme NVIVO 12 Plus. Braun and Clark (2006) describe thematic analysis as a “constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society” (p. 81). The thematic analysis process enables researchers to move beyond simply restating the accounts of interviewees to offer themed interpretations of their expressions. To achieve this, the interview transcripts were read multiple times to detect key themes and issues brought up by the research participants. Sub-theme categories were developed as the analysis proceeded, allowing us to formulate an authentic analytical framework (Lobo & Cabecinhas, 2010) for the presentation of the findings. NVIVO 12 Plus was also used to create nodes and nodal groupings through the process of codification to illustrate and refine recurrent themes.

### **5.3 - Findings and Discussion**

Five dominant themes and three sub-themes arose from the thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. We elaborate on each of these separately below and critically evaluate similar and conflicting viewpoints around these themes. To increase the transparency of our data analysis and reporting of the findings, we have identified each participant through their position in the organisation, and a letter (A-K). Our aim in presenting our findings is to offer contextualised interpretations of Pakistani journalists practices with respect to their reporting of domestic violence news. The first theme focuses on the elements of shock, severity, and novelty that is likely to capture the attention of Pakistani television news journalists as they cover domestic violence.

### **5.3.1 - Shock, Severity and Novelty**

Shock, severity, and strangeness were the most common and convincing influences for television journalists and newsroom producers to report on and broadcast domestic violence stories. Six participants opined that the degree of shock value and strangeness of the crime provide the strongest determinant for a domestic violence incident to become a news story, headline, or both. One male respondent stated that “It depends on the severity of the report... and if severe incidents happen when victims are hospitalised, only then [do] we give attention to that. Otherwise, we do not” (Director News A, Male). Another interviewee shared his reflections that “heinous crime becomes part of a news bulletin. For example, if there is a novelty or strangeness involved in the crime, or incidents that may have resulted in a femicide” (News Controller, Male). This is in line with previous research which has found that domestic violence incidents involving fatalities are more likely to be reported (Carlyle et al., 2008; Simeunovic- Patic, 2018). The focus on fatalities skews the representation of risk and can also deter victims from seeking help and overestimating (Carlyle et al., 2008).

According to one male interviewee a “domestic violence incident can become news if it is shocking - if [a] crime has been committed” (Director News C, Male). One news director was of the view that “a story of abuse will automatically become [a] headline ... if it contains something very graphic or heinous in nature. Also, if there is any twist or deliberate negligence involved in the implementation of law to that crime” (Director News D, Male). Similar responses were expressed by the other respondents regarding strangeness, severity and shock as being crucial to the coverage of domestic violence. Clearly, Pakistani journalists conform to the standard and cliched norm of “if it bleeds, it leads” (Hunt, 2014). These news values of novelty, strangeness and shock are in line with traditional news values identified by different theorists (Harcup & O’ Neill, 2001; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; McGregor, 2002). There is expectedly no space for stories of low and continuous domestic violence, which is

the dominant manifestation of domestic violence. This approach to reporting, however, frames the perpetrator as a social outsider and deviant individual, creating impressions that their abusive actions are rare and not part of a widespread social problem (Easteal et al., 2015). In the next section, we explore celebrity status and fame factors, which are considered important to media coverage of domestic violence.

### ***5.3.2 - Celebrity Status and Fame***

Four interviewees explained the significance of celebrity status and fame factor in their news reporting and coverage of domestic violence incidents. One male respondent was of the view that “a story of abuse will automatically become headline if it involves a well-known person” (Director News D, Male). He further stated that “if a domestic violence incident gets reported in a house of a senior politician, then its news value will be higher as compared to domestic violence case of an unknown person” (Director News D, Male). Another respondent stressed this trend across the Pakistani broadcast media stating “if they are important figures such as politicians, singers, or cricketers, then such incidents will definitely become headlines due to news value attached with these people. And such incidents have happened in the past in Pakistan” (News Controller, Male). One senior broadcast journalist came up with an interesting question about how the Pakistani media might cover news of domestic abuse implicating the former Prime Minister of Pakistan. When invited to respond to his own question, the interviewee predicted the response of media in these words:

If Imran Khan [Former Prime Minister of Pakistan] is accused of domestic violence by Reham Khan [his ex-wife], then all news channels would dedicatedly and exclusively focus only on this issue, by analysing all angles and aspects. So, if a domestic violence story revolves around a political or celebrity marriage, it is highlighted. Otherwise, simple reporting is enough to cover such incidents (Director News C, Male).

In short, this approach to news reporting translates to “extraordinary coverage for extraordinary people; ordinary coverage for ordinary people”. A female interviewee endorsed

this perspective but took it a step further in explaining that such cases are so high in the news value matrix that they would not even warrant fact checking before being broadcast. She stated that “if it involves a celebrity, then there is no need [for] police investigation or to wait for official confirmation of the story prior to reporting it” (Reporter C, Female). She also quoted an example to illustrate her point:

Exactly the same happened in [the] ‘me too’ campaign between male singer Ali Zafar and a female singer Meesha Shafi. Both individuals accused each other on social media and mainstream media highlighted the incidents from every aspect without checking its authenticity and waiting for police to intervene (Reporter C, Female).

Here, the sensational opportunity to include news about celebrities and conflict between celebrities and the rush to report such stories overrides any journalistic professional expectation for meaningful reporting. Indeed, the emphasis placed on ‘scooping’ a celebrity story seems to override other news value of unambiguity, indicative of the priority ‘celebrity’ has taken in news selection. Here, the celebrity angle of a story is what made it newsworthy coupled with domestic violence, rather than domestic violence having any news value alone. This finding corroborates past research which states that news involving celebrities is prioritised (Hayes & Kwiatkowski, 2015; Heuva, 2016). Prioritising domestic violence stories involving celebrities can communicate to the audiences that domestic violence only occurs in households with famous people. In addition, it highlights the lack of importance given to experiences of common people (Hayes & Kwiatkowski, 2015). While the news values of celebrities dominate the reporting in relation to domestic violence news, social media was also a prominent theme of discussion among our interviewees. It is this, which we turn to in the next section.

### ***5.3.3 - Social Media Influence on Mainstream Media***

Whether reporters are searching for stories, or producers are looking for ways to come up with creative news agendas, their reliance on and monitoring of social media has become an



integral part of the journalistic function. Perhaps that is why five interviewees drew attention to the ever-increasing domestic violence related content being produced on social media and its growing influence on Pakistan's mainstream media. One interviewee explained that "before social media, when reporters would go out, they would hardly find such stories, unless an NGO would give them information about any domestic violence incident" (Reporter D, Female). Another interviewee stated that "now victims themselves upload their stories on social media and on Facebook, and mainstream media can pick it up from there and start a debate over it. And it has been happening quite often now" (Director News B, Male).

The effect of social media trending is also having a significant influence on television news priorities in Pakistan. A female respondent explained this phenomenon thus: "these days, we are experiencing [a] new trend on Pakistani television news media that if any domestic violence incident or story is trending on social media, then we will take it into headline" (Producer A, Female). Another female respondent stated "if an ordinary female is victimised then we might run her story for once. But, if an incident of domestic violence is setting trends on social media or it involves a celebrity then it will be covered extensively" (Reporter C, Female). An example multiple respondents gave was of a famous Pakistani couple, Fatema Suhail and her husband, which was covered and followed-up extensively on social media and mainstream news media. The popularity of the story on social media kept this issue alive on mainstream media.

Indeed, social media has emerged as an important news source in the past decade or so. (Schifferes et al., 2014). If a news story is trending on a social media platform, it means people are interested in it so mainstream news media also picks it up to leverage that interest (Hanusch & Tandoc Jr, 2019) In the next section, we discuss how domestic violence reporting is driven by commercial imperatives.

### 5.3.4 - *Commercial Imperatives*

All eleven participants in this research agreed that they must align their news reporting priorities with the commercial interests of the media organisation they work for. In relation to this, they spoke about the use of lengthy headlines and excessive use of breaking news.

#### 5.3.4.1 - Lengthy Headlines and Commercials

A phenomenon has developed in Pakistani television news broadcasts where news programmes will feature long headline bulletin segments, but many of these bulletined stories will not feature in the subsequent extended news reports. These headline stories are either skipped entirely or assigned to later news bulletins. Consequently, contextualisation of the news story, including domestic violence stories, through investigation from different angles and in-depth analysis is entirely absent. All the participants in this research study commented on this practice. One respondent openly criticised it stating:

Span of headlines can be 20 to 22 minutes and normally, we do have 23 minutes [of] commercials in primetime bulletin which makes almost 43 minutes in total. Now you tell me how we can possibly cover the entire Pakistan in just 17 minutes? (Director News B, Male).

Ten of the interviewees were critical of this use of long headline bulletins, describing it as “bad planning and cheating with viewers” (Director News C, Male) and a “senseless herd race” (Director News B, Male). Nevertheless, they could not risk shifting away from this model because of commercial imperatives associated with it. One respondent referred to market research statistics that indicated a positive link between the length of headlines and the increase in television rating points (TRPs):

It was started by *Geo News* and then we all followed it one by one... Upon further inquiry and narrowing it down by a rating company, it was made clear that [the] majority of the viewers only watch headlines and then they switch the channel. So, this was the idea to grab the attention of viewers by extending the duration of headlines. (Controller News, Male)

Nine respondents expressed staunch opposition to the lengthy use of news headlines and cited it as a potential cause for the decrease in coverage of social issues including domestic violence. On average, the headline segment in a primetime news bulletin of the *Express News* channel was 16.24 minutes for the month of September 2019. In the words of a female respondent “with overly stretched headlines and abundance of advertisements, social issues coverage has been further marginalised and compromised” (Producer A, Female). However, two interviewees regarded it as a reflection of viewer preference. One stated “It is beneficial for the people who do not have time to watch news after the first commercial break. Our headlines give them a breakdown of important events and social stories are also included in headlines” (Director News A, Male). A female journalist offered an interesting explanation of the long news headlines:

They present it with music, and it is more direct which helps it in getting registered - you know a lot of drama. Now, they usually try to give [the] story in three to four lines. Which is a good way of giving more information in less time (Reporter C, Female).

In Pakistan, an hour long primetime news broadcast is filled with advertisements, which, according to one interviewee, “makes it even more difficult to broadcast social news and packages” (Director News C, Male). Dropping the commercials seems out of the question unless newsroom decision makers are asked to do so by the owner of the media organisation. Therefore, under such circumstances the remaining news stories either get skipped or placed in the waiting queue for upcoming bulletins. This is how one respondent explained this complex situation:

Normally, we have 22 to 23 minutes of advertisements to run in [the] 9pm bulletin. Now if you add headlines and commercials ... It takes around 40 minutes, and we are left with only 20 minutes. Now tell me, in those 20 minutes, how much news can be broadcast? (News Controller, Male).

Next, we discuss how producers manage to deal with tricky scenarios when domestic violence content must go in limited airtime.

#### 5.3.4.2 - Breaking Stories of Domestic Violence

All interviewees reflected on the excessive use of breaking news for showing domestic violence content because of the limited space for domestic violence news in the main news bulletin. One female journalist stated that “we create 15 seconds long breaking or news alerts of such issues and swing it on screen to get it registered to viewers” (Producer A, Female).

That is, the breaking news slide is presented on screen using fast-moving animations.

Although the span of breaking each news story is only a few seconds, the rapid pace at which this is done is designed to grab the viewer’s attention. One male senior producer described it as a tool for gaining maximum ratings simply by emphasising the immediacy of a story, even when there is no such immediacy. In this way the television news media are implicitly, though falsely, using immediacy as a news value and imperative to underpin reporting. He explained this thus:

Our media has grasped this tradition of breaking news to get maximum ratings which is true by the way... You would watch many news stories which are not breaking news in any way. But still they will be shown to viewers as breaking news... After doing so, we think that we have done our work and the person (reporter/news source) also feels happy that his/her story has been flashed (Senior Producer C, Male).

Undoubtedly, increasing viewer attention and ratings drives television news priorities and the excessive use of breaking news reporting in Pakistan. In these terms a female reporter stated that even “domestic violence coverage is ratings driven” (Reporter C, Female). A male interviewee confirmed that “domestic violence incidents and crime stories are sensationally represented which produce[s] ratings” (Director News B, Male). He went on to use the typical Pakistani newsroom jargon of the ‘Phata’ - a word that substitutes for ‘breaking news’. The interviewee verbalised it exactly the way it is stated in Pakistani newsrooms that “Phatta mar kay nikal jao” (Director News B, Male) which translates to ‘show swinging

breaking news on screen and then get out of it' . Shown in this way, the news headlines clips are brief and provide no explanation or context for any crimes included. This episodic coverage is problematic as it not only limits understanding of the true nature of the social issue of domestic violence, but also makes viewers less likely to hold authorities accountable for the existence of the problem or its resolution (Meyers, 1994).

### ***5.3.5 - Gender Imperatives in the News Reporting of Domestic Violence***

Eight participants including five males were of the view that domestic violence reporting could probably be one of the few things on which female journalists are preferred over males in Pakistan, without relegating it to being a “female issue”. Sometimes this dependency exceeds to the extent that news organisations tend to call female journalists back from their homes to cover such incidents. One female reporter explained the reason behind this reliance on female staff:

Female reporters are preferred over male reporters when it comes to covering an incident of domestic violence. Reason being to make it more feminine, emotional, and sentimental... If something happens in [the] evening shift with no female reporters around, then they would be called back from home and forced to be present at the crime scene (Reporter C, Female).

Male interviewees also acknowledged the vital role of Pakistani female journalists in covering domestic violence. One interviewee stated that “feminine sensitivity is very crucial to treat these stories. Mind of a male or a female reporter is very important for the coverage of domestic violence incidents” (Director News A, Male). That is, the interviewee was of the opinion that women and men think and respond differently to situations especially those involving women - with women reporters handling the coverage with more sensitivity. Another Director News also attributed some good coverage skills to female reporters by saying that “it is also quite possible that a female reporter might make a good and detailed news package out of an incident of domestic violence, covering all human angles, as compared to a male reporter” (Director News C, Male). One respondent identified that

“female crime reporters might have an edge in terms of talking and getting information from female victims” (Director News D, Male). Another reflected on the same argument by saying that “because women tend to hesitate meeting stranger males rather than females” (Producer B, Male).

Pointing to the socially constructed gendered beliefs, norms and expectations of Pakistani society, one journalist opined that “the kind of norms and traditions that we have in Pakistan, in such a society, if [a] female becomes the victim of domestic violence, then a female reporter may cover the incident way better than male reporters” (News Controller, Male). Despite the expression of support and recognition for female journalists, specifically in relation to domestic violence coverage, subtle critique was also made by one male reporter that “female reporters sometimes become extremely emotional and sentimental while covering incidents of violence. And to them, such incidents should be highlighted more than any other incident” (Reporter A, Male).

Some respondents were confident in asserting that Pakistani female journalists have shifted the focus of mainstream media toward more social issues - including domestic violence. Three interviewees specifically said that they would favour having a female head of news - which is uncommon in the Pakistani mainstream media. One interviewee said that “I think females are more compassionate than males and they can feel much more than males can... And I think having more females in newsrooms can result in better coverage of domestic violence” (News Controller, Male). Another male respondent was of the view that “the more women hold decision making positions in media houses, the more sensitised and sympathetic coverage of domestic abuse will be” (Director News D, Male). He not only criticised the tendency of hiring fewer Pakistani female staff but also described the situation as unfortunate as female journalists were rarely promoted to positions of influence in media organisations. On the other hand, a female journalist was of the opinion that it would not be

useful to promote women to senior positions because their decisions may not hold the same power and authority as their male counterparts. Her concern was that if females' opinions continued to be marginalised by dominant male colleagues “then you know it’s not going to help” (Reporter D, Female). Participants also expressed a desire to ensure justice and build wider public awareness about domestic violence. More details are explained in the next section.

### ***5.3.6 - Social Justice and Awareness (Advocacy Journalism)***

All participants described social justice, promoting public awareness, and advocacy journalism as their prime motivation behind the coverage of domestic violence news stories. This stands in contradiction to participants' arguments that their reporting practices are mostly ratings driven. One male participant said “99% of domestic violence stories get broadcast with [the] aim of bringing justice to victims. We air these stories so that authorities may act” (Director News C, Male). Another interviewee emphasised that domestic violence stories are broadcast “to ensure justice, raising voices, spreading awareness and to sensitise our viewers. By doing all this, we basically encourage silent victims of violence to come forward” (Director News A, Male). One interviewee suggested that “if 100 people watch such news stories, maybe ten out of them will understand the problem and they might self-correct themselves if they would be going in the same path” (News Controller, Male).

From the accounts of interviewees, there seemed a deep sense of agreement that domestic violence reportage should be aimed at bringing about social awareness and justice for the victims. Pakistani journalists' interviewees were aware of the pressures that victims may face in challenging their abusers. However, their statements were in contradiction to the findings of the content analysis. Results from the content analysis of domestic violence news stories (see Chapter Four) showed that in prime time news reports on domestic violence 80.6 percent of stories revealed the identities of victims and perpetrators while 51.6 percent were

broadcast with unblurred visuals. Also, parental guidance advice was only attached to 6.4 percent of stories. Such journalistic practices are sensational in nature. In addition, when domestic violence was covered, only 3.2 percent of stories mentioned avenues of social support and none reflected on the national or local statistics detailing the prevalence of violence against women or the punishment of abusers.

Philip and Gerrard (2020) found that journalists tend to see themselves as advocates of change. Generally, however, Simons and Morgan (2018) claim that domestic violence stories lack victim advocacy. Three respondents revealed some added pressures on journalists caused by owners of news organisations. One female interviewee stated that:

Our owners don't have a journalistic background. Even then, if you are broadcasting a news story related to 10 murdered women, for example, ... they will ask you to show[a] live speech of the prime minister, being "more important" news to him, and we must follow their orders. (Producer A, Female).

Similar stories were presented by two other respondents. This illustrates how journalists' news imperatives, values and priorities can collide with the demands of the owners of media organisations. With their agency compromised and editorial authority challenged, journalists are left with no choice but to comply with the news agendas and commercial and profit driven imperatives of their employers.

#### **5.4 - Conclusion & Recommendations**

In this chapter, we have shown how Pakistani male and female journalists follow particular news imperatives in how they select, report on - or indeed, not report on - and then broadcast domestic violence news stories. This study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on news values and imperatives that guide the decision making of Pakistani journalists.

Journalists explained that they are likely to follow up on a story if it has shock value or if the intensity of the crime is severe. This is problematic because extreme stories are likely to



pathologise the perpetrator and/or victim and can deter victims from seeking support out of fear that doing so might attract an even greater level of violence from their abuser. Pakistani journalists are also likely to report on incidents of domestic violence if it involves a celebrity. Social media was also highlighted as an important source of information for finding domestic violence news stories - and again, the greatest interest was in reporting those related to celebrities.

Primetime news broadcasts are a representation of a news channel's editorial positioning toward a range of subjects. Entire news bulletins on Pakistani news channels are designed and produced to support a channel's economic and commercial needs. Hence, news bulletins in Pakistan normally have long headlines and commercial breaks. In this regard, the research interviewees made it clear that reporting domestic violence is not one of their priorities unless the story is sensational enough, or involves known figures, to the extent that the item will help maintain ratings.

Discrepancies were found between the male journalists' reflections regarding their preconceived advocacy role ideals and their reporting practices. Contrary to their claims of advocating for domestic violence victims, male participants' accounts revealed that domestic violence mainstream coverage largely consists of episodic framing. More often domestic violence stories are restricted to headlines or flashed for a few seconds in a breaking news style without providing details or contextual background to the incident or the social norms that support such treatment of women. Most domestic violence news stories were reserved for the "next" news bulletins, and respondents disclosed how the expectations of news media owners interfered in the affairs of news reporting and created conflict between business and journalistic imperatives. This could also potentially limit journalists' creativity by introducing a culture of compliance in the newsroom, where journalists are not doing journalism but marching to the demands of media owners and tycoons.

There are clear limitations to this study. It included a sample of eleven television journalists from three metropolitan cities of Pakistan, representing eight broadcasting organisations (national and international). Moreover, only four female journalists participated in this research study. More journalists, especially female journalists, should be recruited in future studies to produce generalisable findings. In relation to the gender bias of our sample, however, almost all the participants acknowledged that Pakistani newsrooms are predominantly occupied by male journalists, and very few women make it to decision-making positions in newsrooms. Nevertheless, all participants did agree that if there were more females in news organisations, then coverage of social, feminine, and domestic violence related issues could be significantly improved.

**Chapter 6: Pakistani Women's Rights Activists Assessment of Mainstream News  
Reporting on Domestic Violence and Their Representations of Domestic Violence  
(Study 4)**

### **6.1 - Introduction**

This chapter addresses the research questions related to activists' views about mainstream news media representation of domestic violence and their own views about the prevalence and occurrence of domestic violence in Pakistan. This chapter has not been presented at a conference or submitted for publication. It therefore follows a standard format for a thesis chapter.

Women's rights activists have been at the forefront of the pursuit for equal rights and freedom for women from violence, suppression, and discrimination (Mohajan, 2022; Tax, 2022). Globally, feminists and women's rights activists have been actively utilising media platforms to highlight marginal voices and issues such as violence against women (Mahoney, 2022). In Pakistan, feminist campaigns and movements have been pushing the agenda of women's empowerment in one form or the other since the inception of the country in 1947 (Serez, 2017). They have been working to raise awareness of women's issues, creating networks of support for survivors and victims of gender-based violence, and demanding non-discriminatory legislation using different mediums such as mainstream media, social media, public protests and rallies, activity on legal front, etc (Mahoney, 2022).

Pakistan ranks sixth on the list of ten most dangerous countries for women to live in the world (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2018). Ever-increasing incidents of violence against women and cases of femicide at the hands of intimate partners have mobilised Pakistani women to fight for their human rights (Ali et al., 2020). Despite the work of women's rights and feminist movements, and legislation designed to protect women from violence, Pakistani

women continue to face the potential risk of harm (Gill et al., 2017). In 2022, a report demonstrating harrowing details of violence against Pakistani women between 2019 to 2021 was presented to the National Assembly. According to the report, based on police records, a total of 63,367 cases of violence against women were reported in this 3 year period. This included 3,987 femicides perpetrated in domestic household contexts and 1,025 honour killings. There were 5,171 cases of physical torture registered by women. It should be stressed that these statistics will not reflect the actual number of cases of violence against women in Pakistan as female victims often consider violence a private matter and tend to stay quiet and keep suffering instead of reporting the abuse due to shame, stigma, and fear of causing family breakdown and further retribution (Madhani et al., 2017). Moreover, because of the country's institutional patriarchy, law enforcement authorities and police tend to overlook domestic violence victims' experiences and complaints (Chowdhury, 2009; Khan, 2014).

Empirical evidence indicates that mainstream media representations are highly likely to influence and shape public perceptions regarding domestic violence (Maydell, 2018; Smith et al., 2019, Schlesinger et al, 1992). At the same time, women's rights campaigners may also be trying to influence attitudes – through the media and other activities - that represent domestic violence as unacceptable and damaging not only to its victims but families and wider communities (Mohajan, 2022; Tax, 2022). Some scholars also argue that since activists and protesters spend considerable effort strategising their media campaigns to target audiences, their perception of news media routines shapes their activism (Feigenbaum & McCurdy, 2015; Rohlinger, 2014).

One of the aims of this research is to understand how women's rights activists might see mainstream media as contributing to combating domestic violence or reinforcing its social acceptability. Therefore, this chapter seeks to explore: a) How do Pakistani women's

rights activists assess mainstream media reporting and the discourses used to explain domestic violence in Pakistan?; b) Do activists have alternative explanations for domestic violence in Pakistan than those represented by the mainstream media. If so, what are they?; and c) How do Pakistani women's rights activists communicate discourses of domestic violence aimed at reducing the prevalence of such violence in Pakistan?

Pakistan, a country of 229 million people, having a dynamic mediascape of more than a hundred television channels, and numerous women rights activists' and feminists' organisations represents a unique context to explore this phenomenon. In the next section, we provide a brief description of the state of women's rights and women's rights activism in Pakistan since its inception. This chapter draws on the literature regarding women's rights and feminist movements in Pakistan and the numerous challenges they face through media censorship, state oppression, prosecution, and threats (Masood, 2019; Moghadam & Sidiqi, 2006). It also offers an opportunity to see how feminists and activists have been engaging with media, specifically social media, to promote women rights.

### ***6.1.1 - Women Rights Activism in Pakistan***

Women's rights activism began with the inception of Pakistan. The formation of the All-Women's Pakistan Association in 1949 can be attributed to the beginning of a culture where it became acceptable to have women calling for their empowerment in Pakistan (Iqbal, 2021). Pakistani women were also politically active during the presidential election of 1965 (Hassan et al., 2021) when the military dictator, Ayub Khan, defeated Fatima Jinnah, sister of the founding father of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in a rigged election. This election demonstrated that the Pakistani nation was tolerant at least towards the political idea of being governed by a woman – even if she did lose the election. Eventually, a woman would be elected as Prime Minister in 1988 – Benazir Bhutto - who would lead the country for a total

of five years over two terms. On her return to Pakistan in 2007 from a decade long self-exile to contest the next year's elections, she was assassinated.

Before Benazir Bhutto came into power, the rule of the military dictator Zia (1977-1988) effectively positioned Pakistani women as second-class citizens with few rights as the country moved towards political Islamisation. Zia laid the foundation for the Council of Islamic Ideology, which formulated discriminatory and misogynistic legislation such as the Hudood Ordinance 1979 (Jamal, 2005), which later enforced the Law of Evidence in 1984 further marginalising Pakistani women socially, politically, and economically (Jamal, 2005). The Law of Evidence required women who made allegations of rape to produce four eyewitnesses. If the victim was not able to produce four witnesses, then she could be charged with committing adultery and become guilty of false accusations (Lau, 2007). To resist such legislation, The Women's Action Forum (WAF) was established in 1981 (Gardezi, 2008). Several commissions and review committees examined the Hudood Ordinance. The Law of Evidence was finally revoked in 2002 on recommendations from a committee constituted by the National Commission on the Status of Women (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, undated). However, the Council of Islamic Ideology continued to exercise power to restrict women and established laws to cease women's protests in public (Cheema, 2012).

### ***6.1.2 - Dominant Strands of Feminism in Pakistan***

Historically, Pakistan has been divided into two ideological camps: Islamic and secular (Cheema, 2012), which has given rise to two threads of feminism: Islamic feminism and secular feminism (Serez, 2017). Secular feminist theory tends to view feminism as a fundamental extension of basic human rights and demands for equal rights between men and women (Simga & Goker, 2017). They also advocate for separation between religious matters and state affairs (Modood, 2022). In contrast, modern Islamic feminism does not believe in equality and/or division of labour between men and women. Rather, it calls for the proper

care and treatment of women according to principles laid out in the Quran (Hebert, 1998). This form of feminism emphasises that women should be educated about their rights (Hebert, 1998), but without the eradication of gender roles or the institution of family. They want women to be neither modern nor anti-modern (Ozcetin, 2009). In general, the Pakistani population can be divided into three socioeconomic groups: upper, middle, and lower. Research shows that Islamic feminism holds higher appeal among lower and middle socioeconomic groups of Pakistani society, which forms by far the largest section of society (Cheema, 2012; Jamal, 2005). Only a handful women's rights organisations are purely secular in nature (Critelli & Willet, 2013).

Pakistani activists have identified social norms and state failure as prime reasons behind violence against women and specifically domestic violence. According to them, patriarchal norms along with uncertain economic conditions prevent women from leaving abusive families (Critelli, 2010; Critelli & Willet, 2013). Unstable political situations distract governments from taking concrete steps to address violence against women (Critelli & Willet, 2013). Pakistani activists have also expressed concerns that governmental women's welfare organisations in Pakistan function in ways that only work to extend patriarchal norms. For example, some women's shelters engage in custodial constraint rather than providing care and support. That is, women can come at will, but can only leave when shelters permit (Critelli, 2010).

### ***6.1.3 - Opposition to Women's Rights Activism in Pakistan***

There is substantial opposition towards women's rights activism in Pakistan, where growing religious fundamentalism and political instability disadvantage women and campaigns for their rights (Critelli, 2010; Critelli & Willet, 2013; Sahar, 2022). Alam (2021) critically analysed the content of opposition by anti-feminist bodies, religious parties, and men's rights groups against the annual Aurat March (Women's March) in 2019. She argues that those

against the march objected to the placards displaying messages such as “*Mera jism meri marzi*” (My body my choice); “*Khud khana garam kar lo*” (Warm your food for yourself); “*Mujhy kia maloom tumhara moza kahan hai*” (How should I know where your socks are?), and “Divorced and happy.” They described these messages as socially and morally inappropriate and an attack on traditional Pakistan Islamic values. Slogans used by the marchers were misinterpreted and distributed on Whatsapp by anti-marchers in attempts to incite public rage against the march. Such opposition attempts to delegitimise and divert attention away from the debate about women’s rights in Pakistan (Kamal, 2022; Masood, 2019).

The leaders of the Aurat March were targeted with online bullying, harassment, and even rape threats (Masood, 2019). Such online abuse of women works as a tool to silence and erase women’s voices from public debate (Beard, 2015; Greig et al., 2017; Franks, 2010) and is harmful to society and democratic norms (Jane, 2014). Like Pakistan, women’s rights activists and feminists in other Muslim countries such as Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Tunisia, are often accused of being “Western Puppets,” working to replace traditional and normative cultural values with western ideals of women’s rights (Alam, 2021; Gheyntanhi & Moghaddam, 2014; Jamal, 2005). The opposition to women’s rights activism can also have a knock-on effect of preventing women from reporting violence against them (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

#### ***6.1.4 - Use of Media in Women Rights Activism***

In Pakistan, human rights activists use the media to highlight various social issues by participating in news bulletins, special programmes, and content production (Jabeen, 2023; Khan, 2016; Rafi et al., 2015; Sahar, 2022; Shahid et al., 2023). They also have reservations about how social issues are represented in the media. Pakistani activists have also criticised the depiction of honour killing in the media for sensationalism (Huda & Kamal, 2017). The



group South Asian Women in Media has been working since 2014 to raise awareness regarding challenges confronting women working in the media and misrepresentations of women in media (Talib et al., 2012).

#### 6.1.4.1 - Social Media

There has been a proliferation in the use of social media for human rights activism globally (Carty, 2014; Weaver & Scacco, 2013) and social media platforms have proven to be effective across many campaigns (Carty, 2014). With regards to domestic violence, more than 90,000 Twitter users responded in a single day to a 2014 NFL domestic violence case involving Baltimore running back Ray Rice hitting his then-fiancée, Janay Palmer, in an elevator. Feminist scholars described this as “hashtag activism,” which has become widespread on social media in recent years (Gunn, 2015). Hashtag feminism has also been used to highlight oppressive discourses produced by news, entertainment, and commercial media (Clark, 2014; Horeck, 2014; Meyer, 2014).

Recognising the significance of this new phenomenon, feminist scholars assert that the discursive power of hashtag feminism is crucial for activism around violence against women (Bowles Eagle, 2015; Thrift, 2014; Williams, 2015). Shaw viewed the use of social media as a “mode of activism” (2012, p. 373) that can activate socio-political change with or without any collaborative action offline. Multiple social media movements have sprung up in Pakistan recently including *#GirlsatDhabas*, *#AuratMarch* and *#MeToo*. Their objective is to ensure safety and respectability for women in public and/or private spaces (Ansari, 2018; Bakht et al., 2021; Banerjee & Kankaria, 2022).

The previous sections provide a brief historical and contemporary overview about women rights activism in Pakistan and its political and cultural challenges to build a picture of contexts that Pakistani women rights activists operate in for the readers. In the next section, we discuss the methods used to examine Pakistan women rights activists’ assessment

of domestic violence representation in Pakistani electronic news media; the explanations they offer for domestic violence and the platforms they use for raising awareness about domestic violence.

## **6.2 - Method**

This study uses a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research works with a wide variety of data including verbal and visual data (Levitt et al., 2018). It allows for a comprehensive and contextualised picture of a social phenomenon to be developed (Coyle, 2007). A qualitative approach is particularly useful when investigating how women rights activists view domestic violence representations in news media, and the explanations they offer for domestic violence in Pakistan. The research draws on critical discourse analysis to explore women's rights activists' views of mainstream news representations of domestic violence, as well as how they attempt to portray such violence through alternative discursive lenses.

Critical discourse analysis concerns itself with “analysing non-visible and transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language” (Wodak, 2011; p. 2). The “critical” requires that the researcher contextualise the data, be politically committed and self-reflective in their work (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2002). Critical discourse theory argues that language not only describes phenomena; it is influenced by wider society and in turn, influences society (Wodak & Fairclough, 1997). The way an issue is described, that is, what is included and excluded in the description, influences community opinion (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994). Van Dijk (2015) positions language use at the micro-level of social order, while power and inequality belong to the macro-level and both form part of an interactive system. For example, while a speech in

parliament about women rights is an interactional event at the micro-level, it may be a reproduction of gender inequality at the macro-level.

### ***6.2.1 - Participants and their Recruitment***

Before data collection began, ethics approval for this study was sought and granted by the University of Waikato Research Ethics Committee. The first author interviewed five Pakistani activists who have been advocating for women rights in Pakistan on public forums such as through workshops, seminars, at rallies, and protests. The recruited activists were also members of organisations providing shelter and legal representation to disadvantaged women. They had also all made various mainstream news media appearances during special transmissions, panel discussions and/or news bulletins in recent years.

To arrange the interviews with the women activists, email and telephone correspondence began in November 2019. Attempts were made to establish contact with potential interviewees directly or indirectly through their office staff. During the initial contact, an information sheet was also shared with the participants (see Appendix E). If participants agreed to participate, a time and place was set for the meetings. One interview was recorded in the city of Lahore while two were undertaken in Islamabad. Another women rights' activist asked for the interview schedule when approached for participation. However, she declined to be interviewed in person, and instead sent written responses to questions on the schedule via email. Given that it did not align with the data collection strategy, which was to conduct interviews, either in person, or using online platforms, her responses were not included in the study. Similarly, another interview was not included in the analysis because of the brevity of her responses as the interview was only 12 minutes long. Hence, at this time, out of the four interviews, only two progressed to the data analysis stage. This occurred in 2020 when Covid-19 had spread around the globe including Pakistan. Due to strict enforcement of pandemic management restrictions, travel bans and health concerns;

conducting further interviews became challenging. At the same time, recruitment was also complicated by the fact that the interviewer was not known to the activists, potentially making them uncomfortable discussing a sensitive issue.

The remaining interviews could not be completed until September 2022. This long delay primarily occurred due to the commitments made by several activists who failed to respond to communications after requesting and receiving consent forms and information sheets for the interview. It is also worth mentioning that during this time, these activists had appeared on numerous occasions on Pakistani television news channels but did not respond to me. Therefore, to arrange more interviews, I sought the assistance of friends and acquaintances in the Pakistani television news industry. These journalists utilized their professional networks in connecting me with Pakistani women's rights' activists who might be willing to participate in this project. Then after establishing preliminary contacts with potential participants, information sheets and consent forms were set out and, subsequently, times were set for another three interviews that would be conducted via Zoom and over the phone. See Table 6.1 below for details regarding the five participants - four of whom were female, and one who was male.

Table 6.1

*Details of Participants Included in the Study*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Professional Expertise</b>	<b>Organisational/Professional Affiliations</b>
Activist A	Female	Sociologist & women rights activists	United Nations & Shirkat Gah (women rights organization)
Activist B	Female	Lawyer & human rights activists	Human Rights Commission of Pakistan & Dastak (women shelter)
Activist C	Female	Human rights activist and academic	Quaid-e-Azam University & Women Action Forum
Activist D	Female	Feminist and gender researcher	Women Democratic Front
Activist E	Male	Public policy expert	Salman Sufi Foundation (a social welfare organisation)

**6.2.2 - Interview Schedule**

To examine Pakistani women's rights' activists' views on mainstream media representation of domestic violence and their explanations about domestic violence, I developed a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix D). Since the 1990s, semi-structured interviewing has evolved as a comprehensive research strategy (McIntosh & Morse, 2015), and is now one of the most used data collection techniques in qualitative research (Taylor, 2005). Semi-structured interviews have the potential of generating in-depth information. (Galletta, 2013). They provide the interviewer with the flexibility to ask follow-up questions based on participants' responses (Kallio et al., 2016; Polit & Beck, 2010).

A broad range of questions were asked of all interviewees. The researcher inquired about their perceptions of representations of domestic violence in the television news media. Questions were asked relating to the underlying causes of domestic violence in Pakistan and how activists have been strategizing their campaigns to target this problem. While specific questions were posed, indirect, and follow up questions were also asked such as, "Could you

tell me something more about it?” These were framed to draw out complete narratives and to further probe the interviewees on their views. . The interviewees were given the option of being interviewed in Urdu or English. All five interviews were mainly conducted in English with some use of Urdu, which was translated to English. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. This produced around 24,000 words.

### ***6.2.3 - Analyses***

The study employed thematic analysis to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is “a method for systematically identifying, organizing and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set” (Braun & Clark, 2012, p. 57). To generate themes, the researcher engages in considerable analytical and interpretative work (Braun et al., 2014). Thematic analysis is a multi-phase process (Braun & Clark, 2006). The first step in thematic analysis is familiarization with data. In this phase, the transcriptions were read multiple times while noting initial observations both in relation to the individual interview and the entire dataset. In the next phase, codes were generated which captured important aspects of the data relevant to the research questions. Next, broader patterns of meanings (themes) across the codes were developed which were reviewed against the coded data and the entire dataset. After this, the scope and focus of each theme were defined and refined (Braun & Clark, 2006).

## **6.3 - Findings & Discussion**

### ***6.3.1 - Pakistani News Media is Not Interested in Domestic Violence***

All five interviewees agreed that domestic violence news reporting has not been the priority of the Pakistani electronic news media. First, all women’s rights’ activists struggled to recall domestic violence news broadcasts that they might have watched before the interview. After thinking for a bit, four of them were able to respond to the question. One female activist observed that “I don’t remember actually seeing any news media reporting etc, which would

focus on intimate partner violence” (Activist A, Female). She stated that when she would hold a press conference or gather a few journalists to raise domestic violence issues, she would get asked by journalists “What’s new in this all?”.

The male interviewee pointed out that “mostly, talk shows and news are about politics” (Activist E, Male). Another female legal rights activist also commented that “I don’t think mainstream media is even talking very much about domestic violence. When they talk about gender-based violence they are picking up incidents of rape, especially child rape” (Activist B, Female). This highlights the media’s endorsement of the social attitude that abuse that occurs at home is a private matter. They are more likely to show stories of rape because it normally involves a perpetrator who is not a family man.

Respondents attributed various other reasons for the limited coverage of domestic violence. The news media was described as a market-driven institution by the majority of interviewees: “I think newspapers and news media are driven by viewership” (Activist, Female). These trends of coverage were said to go against the requirements of the Pakistan Electronic and Media Regulatory Authority:

Looking at the PEMRA [Pakistan Electronic and Media Regulatory Authority] law, I think every channel is supposed to allocate 10% time to public interest issues. But nobody does that, and I think this [domestic violence] is part of the public interest issue. (Activist C, Female)

Connected to the market-driven approach of news media, a preference for sensationalism and generating controversy was identified by four activists.

### ***6.3.2 - Preference for Sensationalism and Controversy***

Three female and the male activist respondent criticised Pakistani television news channels’ inclination for sensational reporting of domestic violence incidents. One female activist stated that, “It’s just only sensationalized you know. Media continue to report violence cases in a very sensationalized manner” (Activist C, Female). She further added that “they will always

show the victims' faces and victims' names" (Activist C, Female). Two women's rights activists were of the view that media organizations and television producers tend to pursue news stories which manifest the severity of the crime and violence against women. One respondent stated that "If it is regular domestic violence, they really don't appear, so you're only talking about the most horrific cases that make it to the media in the first place" (Activist A, Female). This particular focus on horrific cases of domestic violence discursively frames perpetrators as deviant and an exception to the norm, rendering socio-systemic explanations of domestic violence invisible (Easteal et al., 2015).

Three interviewees also voiced concerns over the tendency to generate controversy in mainstream news media: "There's a tendency in our channels to have a lot of loud voices, which don't necessarily give you information about which are points of views that are bandied back and forth. So that... makes TV sell" (Activist A, Female). Four respondents expressed frustration and dissatisfaction for the insensitive handling of this complex issue and raised objections over the agendas of media organizations in Pakistan. According to them, news programme producers often want to create hype by generating unpleasant arguments between commentators on-air to attract more ratings. They accomplish this by inviting guests, normally women, with polarised views on women issues, which escalate into arguments. Such treatment of women's issues in television programmes can invalidate women who have experienced abuse and subjugation, making their concerns contestable and questionable, and thus, maintaining gendered power imbalances.

One of the respondents stated this as a reason for avoiding mainstream news media: "I don't want to sit and bring down another woman and let her tear me apart" (Activist D, Female). Another female activist also revealed that she has stopped going to television stations because "they would call you hurriedly and request for comments on news or participation in the programme without giving you a proper context" (Activist A, Female).



The male activist had a different experience of talk shows. According to him, the talk shows provided an opportunity to engage people who do not agree with them.

We try to engage them and answer their criticism on television, so they can also understand where we are coming from. Rather than becoming like an opposing thing, it becomes like a conversation and through conversation somebody achieves results. (Activist E, Male)

The male activist had worked with the government in the past, which can help in meaningful engagement with and use of media. This could be the reason behind this disconnect between his views and the female activists' views, though it might also be that his experience of working with the media was different because of his gender. Pakistani women's rights' activists were also critical of the incident-based reporting of domestic violence news which fails to build awareness about this issue, which I turn to discuss next.

### ***6.3.3 - Lack of Contextualisation of Domestic Violence***

Four participants reflected that media coverage tends to be incident-based in which “domestic violence is not framed as [a] violation of human rights and no context is given... focus is on that specific case” (Activist A, Female). Similarly, another respondent declared that the news media “will report it, but they are not interested in any kind of follow up... It's very challenging to keep the focus till the case of [a] woman gets justice. Because then people lose interest, especially [the] media lose interest” (Activist C, Female). The male interviewee offered his assessment on why the Pakistani media has been engaging in incident-based and sensational reporting of domestic violence, suggesting that how the media represent such violence is a reflection of dominant social discourses:

I think the media is only portraying what an average person sees or thinks when it comes to domestic violence or any sort of violence against women ... Most of the reporting and the news which becomes sensationalised... Because what I believe is that the government and media are the extraction of [the same] society. (Activist E, Male).

The interviewee is suggesting that the media portrays domestic violence incidents the way the society largely sees them – as isolated incidents with little connection to larger societal norms and gendered power structures. In line with their criticism of news media representations of domestic violence, the activists themselves contextualised this social issue by connecting it with wider political and socio-cultural structures.

#### ***6.3.4 - Socio-Systemic Explanations for Domestic Violence***

##### **6.3.4.1 - Cultural Norms and Religious Interpretation**

All five activists shared their thoughts regarding the interplay of patriarchal cultural practices and masculine religious interpretations that have not only been subjugating women, but also suppressing the voices that support women's rights in Pakistan. For example, one activist stated that the “patriarchy continues to shape women's life choices and to control them” (Activist C, Female). Interviewees attributed the maintenance of the patriarchy in Pakistan to socialisation - how male and female children are raised:

When a person grows up, especially a male child, he grows up with this idea that women are supposed to be answerable to him, women are supposed to be seeking permissions from him and he is supposed to control their lives. Because he is supposedly the protector of women. So, that is the number one issue that we face. (Activist E, Male)

According to the respondent, the problem lies in the way society cultivates children's understanding of gender and appropriate gender power relations. Through this socialisation process, male children are transformed into “protectors” of females. As a result, they feel entitled and privileged to control women's lives. Instead of becoming their companions, they become their masters. Three respondents also highlighted how a man's honour is attached to women. Therefore, if a man thinks “his wife should behave... in a culturally appropriate manner. Then [if she does not] it will be his honour which will be blamed and all that” (Activist C, Female). Therefore, any transgressions invite discipline from men in the form of culturally condoned violence. One female activist described this as “an underlying contempt

for women in this country and underlying misogyny that prevails in [the] social mindset...it seems that people don't even think this is in any way a condemnable practice" (Activist B, Female).

According to the four female activists, religious interpretations and misinterpretation keep the cycle of abuse going. One of them stated "Religion is also being used to say that men have the authority over women and men are the *Majazi Khuda* (God on earth) of the women" (Activist C, Female). From this perspective religious orthodoxy is silencing the articulation of discourses that could spread a better understanding of how and why violence against women is happening:

Another thing of course, is this whole question of censorship. When religion is brought up, what do you say on television? When there are blasphemy laws in this country, there are so many other things that it's not under the regulations you cannot say on the electronic media...These are some of the things - challenges that women face, when they are talking about it, campaigners face, especially younger ones. (Activist B, Female)

Here, the interviewee is referring to the perpetual pressures that women's rights activists and campaigners face not only in their own campaigns, but also on mainstream media. Whenever women's rights activists demand their legitimate, constitutional, and Islamic rights, often they are confronted with religiously motivated counterarguments and resistance that discursively align their movement and narrative with non-Islamic and immoral agendas. Hence, activists receive life threats and/or are accused of being Western agents by opponent forces or religious groups. Under such circumstances the state of Pakistan and the mainstream media effectively silence opposition to the social acceptance of domestic violence. This is discussed further in the context of the state in the next section.

#### 6.3.4.2 - Unresponsive State

All activists asserted that the foundations of the Pakistani state and society have been laid down on the principle of power imbalance. They highlighted the multiple manifestations of

patriarchy that have been embedded in state institutions. Respondents were critical of the state and its institutions' role in protecting the rights of women. They were of the view that these power dynamics always favour men with limited formal support structures available to victims of domestic violence. Women's rights movements have been systematically hindered to maintain their subjugation as one respondent stated "The big issue here is that there is absolutely zero state narrative that condemns domestic violence or violence of various sorts" (Activist A, Female). Another female activist similarly voiced her view that the:

State exercises oppression; institutions exercise oppression; and then families repeat the oppression because the state is already oppressive. There is impunity too. If [the] state is not saying that hitting women is wrong then why would not they [the family] hit women. (Activist D, Female)

The male activist framed his opinion thus:

Activists' campaigns have been there for a long time but unfortunately, [the] majority of them do not end in promising results...Because usually the people in power or the people who control the narrative, through governance or through politics, I see them as an opposing force. (Activist E, Male)

The male activist was highlighting how in Pakistan the state and institutional patriarchy are intertwined. Thus, the whole system has been intrinsically designed to function against women's rights as well as against activists and campaigns whenever it evolves as a challenge or threat to the existing social power structures.

#### *6.3.4.2.1 - Inadequacy of Response from Criminal Justice Systems*

All of the interviewees emphasised the limited nature of judicial and police support for domestic violence victims. They were critical of limited legislation on domestic violence which mostly positions what happens in the home as a private matter. A female legal rights activist opined:

The judiciary has not done what it was supposed to do in order to make sure that women's right to dignity is preserved in this country. Their right to liberty; their right to life; their right to personal security is not given the kind of seriousness that it deserved. (Activist B, Female)

According to this interviewee, the judiciary is limited by the society and their own social biases, but she also acknowledged that senior judges have shown progress in this regard. However, another activist critiqued the criminal justice system of Pakistan for its inability to protect and give justice to women:

First of all, legislation and then implementation issues you know. And that is a lot about sensitising the criminal justice system, which is very misogynist, very masculine, very patriarchal. It is not only that it's dominated by men, but it is dominated by a very masculine and misogynist mindset as well... So, I think what we are confronting in Pakistan, with regard to gender-based violence, is the implementation of protective laws which we already have. (Activist C, Female)

In the excerpt above, the respondent not only criticised the biased and abusive masculine power structure embedded within the legal justice system of Pakistan, but also identified it as a fundamental factor responsible for women's plight and suffering in the way of getting justice, fair treatment, and legitimate rights. That is why she stated further "Look at the conviction rate in this country in gender-based violence [which] is very insignificant. Like 0.5% conviction rate" (Activist C, Female). Another activist also pointed to the dysfunctionality of [the] legal justice system by highlighting the fact that "Only 37% of the women confronting violence ever shared this domestic violence with anyone...Less than 2% approach any kind of formal institution, whether it's the police, it's the lawyers, it's the civil society or anyone" (Activist A, Female).

#### *6.3.4.2.2 - State and Religion*

The relationship between the state and religious fundamentalists groups who consider women's rights activism a threat to Islam and culture was also brought up by interviewees. Four activists offered criticism of the fact that over the course of time, the connection between the state and religious groups has forged an alliance *against* women's rights activists and campaigners. Interviewees referred to those discriminatory legislations against women under the facade of "Islamisation". Most of these legislations were enacted in the 1980s

during the martial law of the military dictator Zia (Ahmad & Aman, 2021). The female legal rights activist was of the view that those legislations had put women at further disadvantage:

So, this whole Islamisation process: raising religious extremism, targeting those who think of a progressive change in the society, as against the religion of the majority of the people, provoking and inciting violence against the campaigners themselves-raising the religious lobbyist here as the opponents with a lot of hostility towards women campaigners. (Activist B, Female)

It is important to mention that under the dictatorial regime of Zia, women's social, political, and economic liberties were restricted through discriminatory laws such as the Hudood Ordinance and the Law of Evidence (Lau, 2007). This state narrative was crafted to encourage women to stay within the four-walls of the house and it was linked with the honour of the males in that house. This reinforced the rigid ideology of considering women as "property of the male" (Ahmad & Aman, 2021). One activist interviewee also highlighted the amalgamation of state, culture, and religion to marginalise Pakistani women as she argued, "We of course have a very non-responsive state that has made certain religious and cultural taboos and has raised these taboos as a part of the security policy of the country" (Activist B, Female). The activists were critical of the fact that the state has been avoiding responding to this social problem, and religious hardliners have been given a freehand to act on the state's behalf.

In summary, women rights activists offered socio-systemic explanations for domestic violence (see O'Neill, 1998; 2000). They showed a nuanced critical understanding of the multi-layered factors at familial, societal, and political levels involved in the perpetuation and maintenance of domestic violence in Pakistan. Keeping with their understanding of domestic violence, Pakistani women's rights activists engaged in different activities to raise awareness about domestic violence. From grassroots level activism to research to guide policy, holding street protests and marches to using digital platforms. Pakistani activists involve themselves on multiple fronts to push for social and legislative changes against domestic violence. This

activism and its discursive challenges to dominant understandings of domestic violence is discussed in the next section.

### ***6.3.5 - Nature of Activism in Line with Understanding of Domestic Violence***

#### **6.3.5.1 - Grassroots Level Initiatives to Bring About Socio-Cultural Change**

The four female respondents talked about how they have been campaigning at grassroots level to promote a gender-sensitive culture and provide assistance to women and working women's groups/associations on the ground. These activists go from one city to another to educate and train people with feminist concepts and to help them understand the benefits of having a violence-free and harmonious family. One activist stated that:

Well, I think we have used community-based platforms because we feel what you need is community embedded change... So, we run things like violence-free family campaigns ... We've been trying to train people on the ground in various districts. (Activists A, Female)

Another women's rights activist who has also been giving feminist-focused education to adult students responded, "We try to understand why violence happens and why there are no consequences for it...So, what we push for is, you know, in a way a collective change in a consciousness raising of the society at large" (Activist D, Female). Such steps to combat domestic violence effectively contextualise the issue as a pervasive social problem embedded in socio-cultural values and attitudes. Concerned about the lack of support for victims of domestic violence, a female activist has been providing victims with legal representation. The experience of working with victims made her aware of the other problems facing these victims so she started a refuge for them:

During the experiences that we gained in giving legal assistance we suddenly realised that women were not only suffering gender-based violence but because of gender-based violence, they had many other social issues that they faced. (Activist B, Female)

To reach wider audiences, activists also use social media platforms. In the next subsection, I provide brief details of activism as discussed by the respondents on such spaces.

#### *6.3.5.1.1 - Social Media for Activism*

All four female activists described social media platforms as crucial to their campaigning against domestic violence and violence against women across the country. One interviewee stated that, apart from voluntary activities, “social media is another space which we use a lot to raise issues and to build campaigns” (Activist C Female). Another female activist stated, “If it’s an individual case of injustice or violence, then we do Twitter campaigns. We come up with a hashtag and then we crowd that hashtag with tweets. We do campaigns online as well” (Activist D, Female). Two activists also stated that they let their younger colleagues run the social media campaigns as the young activists are acquainted with these media as one of them stated, “I am a complete dinosaur. I don’t get into that” (Activist A, Female).

Pakistani women’s rights activists were on the same page regarding the significance of employing social media to campaign against domestic violence alongside other platforms. According to them, the wide reach of social media enables them to raise awareness about domestic violence and also highlight individual cases. As one activist stated that they “build pressure through social media” (Activist C, Female). It is evident from the last comment that apart from raising awareness in the public, activists also understand the need to mobilise authorities to take notice of domestic violence cases.

#### *6.3.5.2 - Activism for Legal and Policy Reforms*

Two female activists and the male activist talked about the need for more legislative changes in favour of women’s rights in Pakistan. According to them, this can potentially lead to women’s empowerment. However, respondents raised concerns over the lack of implementation of such legislative modifications that would benefit women. In relation to this, activists talked about organising public protests and marches to mount pressure on



authorities for the eradication of discriminatory laws and to alter stereotypical perceptions of women that label their gender as lower and deserving of lesser rights.

Four interviewees viewed public protests, marches, and rallies as a means of making women's rights issues visible in Pakistan. One, whose activism has been centred around seeking justice for the victims of violence said that "We chose the forums where we are going to make the issues visible. So, it's either in the courts or in the streets when we protest" (Activist B, Female). A second interviewee recalled her days of activism back in the 1980s when she was part of the Women's Action Forum and stated, "We had rallies, we went out on the streets to protest" (Activist A, Female). A third activist opined that "public protests are becoming increasingly common, like not by NGOs but also by civil society. So, you give an open call and people come and they protest like violence against children, things like that. So, it's mostly non funded" (Activist C, Female). One activist referred to women's marches that have been taking place since 2018 on International Women's Day in Pakistan despite staunch opposition to them, especially from religious parties. She reflected that "Women marchers, organisers of this march have been prosecuted. They have all kinds of criminal charges against them, but they have overcome it. And this is a challenge that we are very willing to face and confront" (Activist B, Female). All female activists shared similar views and determination to move forward with their mission of promoting women's rights. According to them, unlike inexpensive platforms of social media, organising public rallies, staging protests, and holding marches have been a costly business. Despite that, they have been able to keep the issue of domestic violence alive in Pakistan. On the other hand, the male activist did not believe that marches and protests were effective tools for bringing about change. He blamed feminist movements for creating division between genders:

Most movements fail because they create division between genders. Because, the way the approach has been taken in Pakistan, mostly has been to show just one side, and not making a serious attempt in bridging the divide... We make men our allies and we make them our partner in establishing women rights across Pakistan. That is the

approach that helps us in getting the case through and getting to make sure that laws are passed and they are implemented. (Activist E, Male)

It is interesting to note how this male respondent discursively positions feminist attempts to highlight women's issues as only inhibiting the securing of rights for women, and for him, likely because of his gender, it is easier and more beneficial to work with other men. In the interview this respondent did not reflect on how his own gender might change the ways and means he has to discursively and materially conduct his own activism.

Two female and the male activists also talk about policy-oriented research that they have been carrying out to share the accurate, and factual findings with the relevant government bodies. One respondent commented, "We try to ensure that the policy responses are accurate and bring the voices of women from the grassroots through to the policymakers" (Activist A, Female). The activists described research as an effective and unbiased way to highlight the experiences of the public and highlight their needs with the aim of educating policies to safeguard women's interest.

#### **6.4 - Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed how Pakistani women's rights activists view domestic violence reportage on mainstream Pakistani media, their alternative explanations for domestic violence, and their use of different platforms for their campaigning to address this issue. Overall, the activists were of the view that domestic violence news reporting has not been the priority of Pakistani news channels unless the nature of abuse inflicted on women is intense and horrific. The news channels are market-driven and as a result prefer sensational content and controversy because it increases viewership. Mostly, coverage is largely incident based which does not work to discursively frame domestic violence as a social issue. These trends of coverage reinforce misconceptions about domestic violence.

The activists identified the macro power structures of socialisation, culture, religion, and state as responsible for the perpetuation and maintenance of domestic violence in Pakistan. These explanations are missing from coverage of domestic violence in the news media. A masculine interpretation of religion backed by the state coupled with misogynistic beliefs reinforces the widespread male domination and female suppression. With the silent support of the state, religious hardliners frame legitimate feminist demands as anti-state, and anti-Islamic propositions. Women's rights activists are also in a vulnerable position as their criticism is susceptible to accusations of blasphemy and they risk being classified as an anti-state agent, which can put their lives in danger.

Consistent with their understanding of domestic violence, women's rights activists engage in activities to change both social attitudes and Pakistan's legislation and policies. They raise awareness about domestic violence in public and provide support to its victims. Social media has also become a potent source of countering masculine narratives and anti-feminist viewpoints in their efforts to keep the issue of domestic violence and women's oppression alive in Pakistan. For legislative and policy reforms, they conduct research and register their dissatisfaction and pressurise authorities by holding protests, marches and highlighting specific cases on social media. While this study provides important information, the number of participating activists is a limitation of the research. That the research was conducted when Pakistan was in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic, and because speaking out against domestic violence and the researcher being not known to the activists may have been perceived as risky, could have contributed to the difficulties recruiting participants to the project.

## **Chapter 7: Pakistani Audience Responses to News Reporting and Women Rights’ Activists Content about Domestic Violence (Study 5)**

This thesis is built on the foundation that media has an effect on audience attitudes. The aim of the research presented in this chapter, Study 5, was to understand how Pakistani males and females from different socio-economic backgrounds understand and respond to domestic violence content from television news and activists’ campaign materials designed to spread awareness and prevent violence against women in Pakistan. I also want to clarify that my objective is not to offer, or claim to offer, a definitive understanding of Pakistani audience response to television news content or activists’ campaigns material on domestic violence, but to lay down a base from which future scholarship can flow and constructive discussions can draw on. This study uses data from four focus groups.

This chapter was first submitted as a full paper proposal to the Feminist Studies Division of the *73rd International Communication Association’s Annual Conference*, held in May 2023 in Toronto, Canada. The paper was accepted for presentation with some recommendations for revision from the reviewers. These revisions were duly made and, due to the first author’s financial constraints which prevented him from travelling from New Zealand to Toronto, the paper was presented at that conference by the Chief Supervisor of the thesis and the paper’s second author, C. Kay Weaver. Since the conference presentation, further revisions have been made to the contents of this chapter.

### **7.1 - Abstract**

This paper reports on an investigation into how Pakistani audiences make sense of domestic violence content broadcast by mainstream news media, as well as materials produced by social justice activists campaigning to end such violence. A qualitative investigation, the

findings are based on focus group research comprising two groups of women and two groups of men from different socioeconomic backgrounds living in Pakistan. The findings reflect differences in meaning making across these demographics, with socioeconomic background playing a dominant role in shaping responses. In general, research participants were frequently critical of misogynistic cultural practices in Pakistan and religious views that restrict women's rights. While a majority of participants critiqued the dramatisation of domestic violence in Pakistani television news reporting, they were more positive in how they responded to the social justice activist campaign materials. They considered this informative and a good platform for women to voice their concerns about domestic violence. Male participants of lower socioeconomic position were most likely to express conservative views and, in some instances, provided justifications for violence against women.

## **7.2 - Introduction**

News portrayals of domestic violence against women are often sensationalised and feature victim blaming, gendered stereotyping and limited contextual explanation of the event (Northcutt Bohmert et al., 2019; Moore, 2011; Slakoff & Brennan, 2019; Sutherland et al., 2016). Such reporting patterns have been identified across many countries including Australia (Sutherland et al., 2016), Canada (Gilchrist, 2010), the USA (Slakoff & Brennan, 2019), Turkey (Alat, 2006), and Saudi Arabia (Halim & Meyers, 2010). This has led to calls by scholars to change how the media represent domestic violence to aid better audience understanding of its causes and consequences (Northcutt Bohmert et al., 2019; Moore, 2011; Slakoff & Brennan, 2019).

Media depictions can impact how the public perceive social issues (Green, 2004; Greenwood, 2007, 2010; Kellner, 2011; Slater et al., 2006) including violence against women (Comas-d'Argemir, 2016; Easteal et al., 2015; Lapsansky & Chatterjee, 2013). Depending

how they are framed, depictions can enhance public knowledge about violence against women and its active prevention, as well as influence the development of policy related to its prevention (Carll, 2003; Slater et al., 2006). Indeed, evidence exists that the media can be effective in redefining masculinities and changing patriarchal attitudes through not only fact-based reporting, but also through entertainment-based education (Lapsansky & Chatterjee, 2013). In addition, some evidence suggests that access to the media has been associated with increased awareness of women's rights (Chatterjee & Pillai, 2018; Dasgupta, 2019; Fazal, 2009).

In Pakistan, domestic violence is prevalent and largely considered a private matter (Amir-ud-Din et al., 2021). It is seldom reported to the police by its victims as the burden of making a marriage work generally lies on women (Khan & Hussain, 2008). Women may suffer abuse in silence due to their economic dependence on men and the stigma attached to divorce (Bibi et al., 2014). A lack of familiarity with legal systems such as the police and judiciary, concern for their children's custody, and fear of their abuser contribute to the likelihood that they will not report violence committed against them (Yoshihama et al., 2011). Furthermore, in Pakistan customs and traditions do not allow women to live on their own (Khan & Hussain, 2008; Yoshihama et al., 2011). In some cases, when women want to leave abusive relationships, it can also result in their homicide/honour killing (Zafar & Ali, 2020). Indeed, there is evidence that Pakistani men and women do not consider violence against them as crime and may not be aware of it because of the religious, cultural, and social context in which they live (Amir-ud-Din et al., 2021; Buriro et al., 2020; Niaz, 2004; Zakar et al., 2013).

In Pakistan, media reporting of domestic violence has been identified as inadequate, and journalists have been found to lack training in how to cover it sensitively (Cheema, 2016; see Chapter 3). Yet we know little of how audiences engage with domestic violence content

on either mainstream news media or in social justice campaigns. Research focused on Pakistani television audience responses to any mediated materials about domestic violence is rare. Therefore, this study sought to explore how Pakistani audiences respond to television news reporting of domestic violence, as well as to social justice activist campaign materials. We sought to examine if, and how, media content is encouraging particular cultural and ideological understandings of domestic violence against women, and what it may, or may not be doing to support the rights of its victims.

Media audience research is designed to ask, “basic questions about how we make sense of the [media] and what [it] means[s] in our lives” (Jenkins, 2000, p. 8). Audiences are usually characterised as active social agents who are constantly producing meaning and discourses from their media exposure (Fiske, 2010). Fiske (2010), drawing on Hall’s seminal work on audience reception (1981; 2003), argues that audiences not only interpret media content but can also engage with it critically and take a negotiated or an oppositional stance in relation to its preferred dominant message. This research aims to contribute valuable insights to audience reception scholarship in the field of media communication and particularly into how audiences interpret and respond to content about domestic violence. Specifically, the study focused on how Pakistani men and women from different socioeconomic backgrounds perceive domestic violence media content presented in Pakistani television news and activist campaign materials.

In the next section, we review literature focusing on how audiences make sense of the mediated content, and especially news content about violence against women. We also consider literature related to the influence of the media on gender roles and women’s self-image to highlight the nature and degree of media’s impact within the domain of social attitudes. We then explain the methods used in conducting this investigation, and finally move to discuss the research findings.

### 7.2.1 - Literature Review

There is an existing body of scholarship that examines how audiences engage with media depictions of domestic violence and violence against women more broadly (e.g., Anastasio & Costa, 2004; Carlyle et al., 2014; Palazzolo & Roberto, 2011; Schlesinger et al, 1992). This research originates from a range of methodological approaches and adopts different central foci of concern. In two similar studies in the USA, undergraduate participants were randomly assigned to read news articles on intimate partner violence (Carlyle et al., 2014; Palazzolo & Roberto, 2011). Palazzolo and Roberto (2011) noted that including or excluding information about female victims and male perpetrators of physical abuse impacted participants' emotional responses and influenced their decisions about attribution of blame and punishment. Participants who were exposed to information intended to place *increased* responsibility on the perpetrator, by indicating he had been drinking and had a history of domestic violence, were more likely to attribute responsibility to the perpetrator and stress punishment by jailing (Palazzolo & Roberto, 2011). Such mediated messages were more likely to elicit feelings of sympathy for female victims of violence among the audience (Carlyle et al., 2014). On the other hand, participants who were exposed to less information regarding the victim and contextual information intended to *decrease* the perception of the perpetrator's responsibility such as lack of Argemirvisible injury and history of mental illness, were more likely to be sympathetic toward that perpetrator, less likely to attribute responsibility to them, and see less need for punishment (Carlyle et al., 2014; Palazzolo & Roberto, 2011).

Anastasio and Costa (2004) found that personalising news stories also influenced audience response. The authors found that if personal information such as the victim's personality traits, ethnicity, professional status or occupation, location of residence, family and friends, hobbies or interests was disclosed, the audience was less likely to attribute blame



to the victim and to have more empathy towards them. However, male victims were afforded more empathy regardless of the level of disclosure about their circumstances.

In the context of Pakistan and media portrayals of domestic violence, the research that does exist has largely focused on how that violence has been represented (Alat, 2006; Ali & Khalid, 2021; Amjad et al., 2021; Awais et al., 2021). For instance, Amjad et al. (2021) analysed television news clips of domestic violence, sexual harassment and workplace harassment against women and concluded that Pakistani mainstream media is prone to sensational portrayals which tend to blame women for their own victimisation. The use of sensational language is common (Ahmed, 2014; Alat, 2006; Comas-d'Argemir, 2014) and reenactments were included to dramatically depict events (Hassan, 2018; Raza et al., 2012). This can increase women's fear of becoming victims of violence and reduce the likelihood that they would report their abuse to the police (Carlyle et al., 2008).

Altheide (2010) argues that "fear is the most commonly used emotion in the media because it is an effective means of generating an emotional reaction in an audience" (p. 260), and over time, it can build tolerance in the audience (Potter, 2014). Previous research has also considered whether watching violence is linked with fear of crime (Callanan & Rosenberg, 2015; Dobash et al., 1998; Kort-Butler & Habecker, 2018; Weaver et al., 2000). Many people believe that violence in the media affects others but not themselves; it is argued that the audience form these beliefs to make them feel safe from crime (Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Potter, 2014). On the other hand, concern for crime has also been found to be associated with more exposure to the crime news rather than exposure to crime (Intravia et al., 2017; Lowry et al., 2003). Another study examined the representation of domestic violence in Pakistani newspapers during the COVID-19 lockdown (Ali & Khalid, 2021). In these representations women were portrayed as feeling scared and vulnerable and lacking in the ability to leave their homes.

While there is some research exploring how Pakistani audiences interpret current affairs media content (Hassan, 2018; Khan & Tahir, 2021), there is no research that specifically investigates how Pakistani audiences construct meaning out of, and respond to, representations of domestic violence. It is this issue that this research seeks to investigate and, in doing so, we aim to contribute to the growing feminist media literature on this matter of significant social concern. To fulfill this aim, we posed the following two research questions:

**RQ1:** How do Pakistani audiences respond to domestic violence news content on mainstream television news channels?

**RQ2:** How do Pakistani audiences respond to social justice activists campaign materials about domestic violence?

In the next section, we discuss the methods used to investigate these research questions.

### **7.3 - Method**

The research adopted a qualitative methodological approach which allowed us to examine how individuals make sense of social issues presented in the media (Creswell, 2009).

Qualitative research involves emerging questions and analysis of data that builds from specific to general themes and allows the researcher to make sense of the data. How individuals make sense of media content on domestic violence is a complicated process, in which their demographics, beliefs and prior experiences are implicated (Kellner, 2011), which is difficult to assess using close-ended questions. Therefore, qualitative methods were identified as appropriate for this research. Specifically, we decided to use a focus group method to collect the research data (see Appendix G).

Focus group research is “a technique involving the use of in-depth group interviews in which participants are selected because they are a purposive, although not necessarily

representative, sampling of a specific population, this group being focused on a given topic” (Thomas et al., 1995). Focus groups are said to “enable[.] diverse arguments and opinions to come to surface regarding the issue being discussed” (Rosenthal, 2016) and “have become a favored method among scholars engaged in reception analysis” (MacGregor & Morrison, 1995, p. 141). Focus groups also allow researchers to gain information from multiple participants in a single group interview (Rosenthal, 2016).

The study did not follow a particular theory of audience reception but was informed by Stuart Hall’s (1991) encoding/decoding model. This model theorises a process of encoded verbal and non-verbal messages and meanings created by the content producer (Shaw, 2017). It is the audience’s job to decode and interpret these messages, with research finding that demographic positionality can significantly influence this process and how the audience makes sense of the content they engage with (Shaw, 2017).

### ***7.3.1 - Selection of Content to Screen for Focus Group Participants***

To select news media content to screen to our research participants, archives were requested from two of the most watched news channels in Pakistan, *Geo News* and *Express News*. *Geo News* provided 42 news stories on domestic violence broadcasted in 2019 while *Express News* provided 9pm bulletins for the month of September 2019. A total of six new stories, approximately 9 minutes long, portraying physical and emotional violence were selected to be screened to the participants. The stories included a range of incidents including honour killings of a member of public and a celebrity, and violence due to dowry disputes. The activist material included four videos, around 12 minutes in total, produced by *BBC Urdu*, an Urdu language station of the *BBC*. These materials were part of a campaign called *BBCSHE* aimed at highlighting the problems Pakistani women face, which are available online on YouTube. *BBC Urdu* gave permission for our use of the materials for our research. One prominent feature of the *BBCSHE* campaign was that all the speakers were young and

educated females who spoke about a range of issues facing women in Pakistan including domestic violence.

### ***7.3.2 - Recruitment of Focus Group Research Participants***

We aimed to discover views from participants of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. In Pakistan, the wealth disparity is significant and continues to grow. An individual's low socioeconomic status in Pakistan can severely limit their opportunities (Burki et al., 2020) and has been found to affect social attitudes (Nasrullah et al., 2014). Therefore, we decided to form four focus groups: two female groups and two male focus groups with one of each gender group representing a different socioeconomic position.

Six females and five males belonging to the upper and middle socioeconomic groupings were recruited. These participants were all educated beyond high school and some of them had their own businesses. All of these participants were recruited through visits to corporate offices in different localities of the city of Lahore. Potential participants were told about the motivation behind the study and provided with information and consent forms to sign. Six males and five females belonging to the lower socioeconomic group with a comparatively lower level of education and professional skills were also recruited. Male participants in this group were recruited through local market visits. Snowball sampling led to the recruitment of the five female participants from the lower socioeconomic group. The age of participants varied from 25 to 50 years. Table 7.1 below provides a breakdown of the demographics of the focus group research participants.

Table 7.1

***Demographic Characteristics of Focus Groups Participants***

<b>Focus Group 1 (Female) Upper Socioeconomic Group</b>	<b>Age (yrs)</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Focus Group 2 (Male) Upper Socioeconomic Group</b>	<b>Age (yrs)</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Profession</b>
Participant A	39	Divorced	Corporate employee	Participant G	35	Married	Businessman
Participant B	28	Married	Housewife	Participant H	30	Married	Small-scale business owner
Participant C	50	Never married	Business Owner	Participant I	28	Never married	Businessman
Participant D	25	Never married	Private job	Participant K	45	Married	Businessman
Participant E	48	Married	Housewife	Participant L	35	Married	Unemployed
Participant F	30	Never married	Government officer				
<b>Focus Group 3 (Female) Lower Socioeconomic Group</b>				<b>Focus Group 4 (Male) Lower Socioeconomic Group</b>			
Participant M	44	Married	Casual worker	Participant R	45	Married	Watchman
Participant N	30	Married	Housewife	Participant S	44	Married	Clerk
Participant O	44	Married	Housewife	Participant T	38	Married	Clerk
Participant P	40	Married	Housewife	Participant U	38	Married	NGO worker
Participant Q	46	Married	Housewife	Participant V	43	Married	Fundraiser
				Participant W	35	Married	Fundraiser

***7.3.3 - Conducting the Focus Group Interviews***

Due to Pakistan's socio-cultural norms and the sensitivity of the research topic, male and female focus groups were conducted separately. This was designed to enable male and female participants to fully engage with the topic of domestic violence without feeling the need to censor how they talked about the topic. Single-gender groups are seen as facilitating better sharing of ideas and experiences (Hollander, 2004). The first author moderated the male focus groups. A female moderator with experience of conducting focus groups on sensitive

social topics, and who was thoroughly briefed about the aims and rationale of the current study, was hired to facilitate the female focus group discussions.

An unexpected challenge experienced while planning this research was the global outbreak of COVID-19 and the uncertainties this pandemic brought with it. As a result of such unprecedented circumstances, partial lockdowns were put in place in the city of Lahore - the location for the focus groups. All the arrangements of focus groups which had been finalised by this point had to be cancelled and reorganised.

When focus group participants arrived at the venue, they were introduced to each other and again briefed about the aims of the project. At the venue, all seats were placed at least two meters apart from each other. Interviewees were given free hand sanitiser, and face masks to comply with health and safety standards set by the Health Ministry of Pakistan. Health and hygiene standards were also taken into consideration while refreshments were served to participants. All interviewees were advised in advance to not to come to the venue if they were feeling unwell. It was explained that they would be watching six news stories on incidents of violence against women, which might be disturbing to some viewers. They were told that they could move to an adjoining room if they did not want to view the stories and/or withdraw from the study. After the screening of news stories, participants were asked a series of questions such as: how does the stories help them understand domestic violence as crime?; and what role, if any, is television news playing in curbing such violence? Questions regarding production elements were also asked such as whether such news stories hold any appeal for them, and what attracts people to watch it. In the second phase of the group discussion, after screening of the *BBCSHE* activist campaign content, similar questions were asked. Participants were offered free of cost counselling support should they need it and served with refreshments during the session.

To ensure the smooth flow of discussion, one ground rule was established - that there would be no time restriction on the focus group discussion. This was designed to avoid a scenario where one or more participants dominated or steered the discussion away from its intended topic and others left with no time or space to speak. Although, at times, respondents did stray from the focus of discussion, these digressions often introduced interesting frames of references in terms of how they were interpreting the materials screened to them.

Altogether, the four focus group interviews produced 9 hours and 31 minutes of audio recorded data. Participants delivered responses in Urdu (Pakistan's national language) which were later translated and then transcribed into English that produced around 45,000 words (118 pages) of data. Some participants expressed their views in English.

#### **7.3.4 - Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the focus group data. The focus of the analysis was on how the participants: 1) engaged with and interpreted the content of the news stories and activists' material; and 2) responded to production elements of the news content. In this study, we employed thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to understand how Pakistani audiences make sense of mainstream domestic violence news stories and of campaign material produced by *BBCSHE*. Thematic analysis involves analysing and interpreting emerging themes in qualitative data (Braun et al., 2022). It begins with data familiarisation, followed by initial coding and categorisation of emerging patterns in data. Then, through focused coding, recurring and relevant themes are identified that connect codes and categories. Thematic analysis is a deductive analysis, led by researcher's theoretical and analytical intentions (Clarke et al., 2015). In the next section I report on the findings of this research.

## 7.4 - Findings and Discussion

I present the findings from the analysis of the focus group discussions in two sections. The first section focuses on responses to the mainstream Pakistani news coverage of domestic violence. The second section deals with participants' responses to the *BBCSHE* activist campaign content.

### 7.4.1 - Responses to Domestic Violence News Stories

#### 7.4.1.1 - Social and Cultural Norms

The dominant response after the focus group viewing of the television news stories was the attribution of patriarchal social and cultural norms to the incidence of domestic violence in Pakistan. Since the news stories were mostly circumstantial accounts of incidents of domestic violence without mention of causes, the participants shifted their attention to focusing on what was the probable cause. In total, across the groups, 14 participants pointed to socio-cultural norms as implicated in these causes, with the two women's groups stressing this point more than the male groups. The tone of the participants' voices, especially of female participants, showed that they wanted things to change.

After viewing the mainstream television news stories, one female participant vehemently recounted the violence that women can face in Pakistani society:

If a woman desires to marry with her own choice, she gets killed by her brother. If a wife wants to visit her parents' house, she gets shot by her husband. Sometimes, women get killed for other reasons. What is this all? (Participant A, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group).

This quote identifies a hostile social environment where violence in different forms and of various degrees seems to be the fate of Pakistani women who exercise any form of freedom of choice. A male participant reflected on the social practices and expectations which contribute to acts of domestic violence:



If we talk about reasons of domestic violence described in these news stories which are related to dowry demands and seeking permission to visit mother's house - such matters have now become important in our social lives. It has now become an obvious fact that a girl would bring along dowry for the whole house after marriage. Later, such demands and practices around dowry would become [the] underlying cause of domestic violence (Participant I, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group).

After watching the news clips, another female participant reflected on the honour killing of women, stating that families use women as scapegoats to resolve legitimate or illegitimate desires or to settle feuds. She further stated that "If women are being killed in the name of honour, then men should also be killed for the same reason" (Participant C, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group). In the view of another respondent, "In Pakistan, our cultural values and social norms are structured on masculine beliefs and interpretations" (Participant N, Female, Lower Socioeconomic Group).

Similar views were shared by another female participant: "Some men would consider women as inferior as their slippers. Unfortunately, the prevalence of such a notion is very common among uneducated men" (Participant N, Female, Lower Socioeconomic Group). A male participant echoed similar sentiments, "Social prevailing norms and customs are to blame for this. We live in a patriarchal and male dominated society. If challenged by females, to satisfy male ego and legitimise its supremacy, physical force and violence is exercised to control" (Participant L, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group). Contradictory to the sentiments expressed by other participants, one female from the upper socioeconomic group blamed the life choices of Pakistani women:

Women like to be dependent on somebody in our culture. Why?... Because we like to be dependent, we tend to choose a powerful partner or a companion and then the price of that dependency that women pay is actually in the form of violence. So, violence is the price that women pay to men. This is the reason that women in our society are accepting it as part of our culture to some extent (Participant C, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group).

The participant was referring to what she perceived to be a common desire among Pakistani women to be intimately involved with a “powerful man” who will also be a “perfect man” for them in terms of happiness and security. To her, the desire to be protected by a man and enjoy the material security of a marriage causes women to compromise their safety. Similarly, a male participant from the lower socioeconomic group stressed that “we should endorse the idea of empowered and honorable women, and we must change the culture of our households which poses hindrances in the way of women to become strong and independent” (Participant H, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group). This participant was endorsing the idea of a woman who is financially independent and emotionally strong, being able to withstand challenging situations, but at the same time, adhering to religious and social norms.

Next, we talk about the inefficiency of the justice system in protecting women, which was another theme raised by many participants in response to the news reports on domestic violence.

#### 7.4.1.2 - Inadequacy of Justice System

Fourteen participants across the four focus groups responded to the news stories by criticising the justice system of Pakistan for its failure to prevent incidents of violence against women, its inability to protect victims, and its failure to bring culprits to justice. While none of the news stories provided reasons for the incidences of domestic violence in Pakistan, two news stories did report on failures by the police and judicial system to provide protection and justice to the victims of violence. This prompted the participants to highlight the inadequacy of the justice system. All five female participants in the lower socioeconomic focus group offered critical remarks in this regard. One of them commented “Despite facing abusive situations, victim women never get any support or justice for being abused from relevant state institutions. It is utterly depressing to watch the way these victim women had to prove that they were abused” (Participant M, Female, Lower Socioeconomic Group). Similar comments

were made by participants in other groups. According to one male participant, domestic violence incidents keep happening “because these abusers do not get the punishment that they deserve, and our system is willing to grant them bails” (Participant G, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group). Reflecting on the pattern of releasing domestic violence perpetrators from police or court custody, one female (Participant, C, Upper Socioeconomic Group) described it as “unintentional violence” on the part of those judges who grant bail to such culprits. Having the perpetrator on the loose was seen as undermining the victim’s safety and discouraging others from seeking help because they fear they may face reprisals from their partners after reporting them to the police.

Five participants described a bribe culture among police as contributing factors for judicial litigations, and filling of weak cases that favor abusers. After viewing the domestic violence news stories, two female participants stated that “instead of helping them out, police sought bribes from victims which is shameless” (Participant M, Female, Lower Socioeconomic Group); and “In all the news stories, including Qandeel Baloch murder case, one theme has been common that all female victims were shown to be struggling alone to get justice for themselves” (Participant Q, Female, Lower Socioeconomic Group). Participants demanded both reformation of the police department and the justice system dealing with cases of violence against women for the better care and safety of women victims of abuse. In addition, respondents shared their views about how the media covers incidents of domestic violence.

#### 7.4.1.3 - Insufficient Details and Lack of Contextualisation in News Reporting

Twelve respondents from across the four focus groups raised questions over the lack of in-depth and investigative reporting around domestic violence on Pakistani television news channels. Participants expressed their desire to watch detailed in-depth accounts of news on domestic violence which is a news piece that gives full information rather than simply stating

what happened. They identified the prevalent trend of skipping important details and non-contextualisation of the incident of domestic violence while reporting it to viewers. This is in line with previous research which states that news media tends to offer simplistic and inadequate portrayals of domestic violence (Carlyle et al., 2008; Gillespie et al., 2013). For example, one participant commented that “they do not properly cover stories from all angles and sides. They do not give many details and background” (Participant B, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group). To the participants, the reporting was mostly incident-based and an oversimplification of facts which left them wanting more information regarding the relationship history and socio-cultural basis of the problem. In reference to the lack of contextual background information in the news stories, a male respondent contested the idea of spontaneous violent acts in domestic settings by stating, “I do not think it is a one-time incident. It must have been going on for some time. I do not think such abusive episodes take place so abruptly or just like that” (Participant K, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group).

Similarly, one respondent raised doubts about the facts explained as a reason for violence in one of the news stories. By making his point that news media should produce more detailed and thoroughly investigated domestic violence news stories, he asked:

What kind of a man [are you] for beating your wife for not dancing in front [of] your male friends? In my opinion, these are not the actual and only reasons of violence which have been mentioned in scripts. There must have been some other reasons too which triggered this violence (Participant U, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group).

These responses show that some participants were cognisant about the fact that incidents of domestic violence do not happen out of the blue and are usually preceded by other acts of violence. Participants were not only critical of the fact the domestic violence reportage tended to be abrupt and episodic and lacking in background information, but they stated that it also often leaves the viewers curious about the fate of the victim(s), which

prevents viewers from learning that there can be accountability for domestic violence. They emphasised the need for follow-ups. For instance, a female respondent stated:

We see [the] media highlighting one issue or another, but we hardly get to see how that issue was concluded...As an audience and viewers, we deserve to watch good news too. For example, if a victim woman gets justice or any government protection...Media should address and follow up the root cause of issues as well. (Participant C, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group).

Besides asking for more detail to be included in domestic violence news stories, participants also reflected on domestic violence in the context of religion. Contrasting and comparing points were made to defend and question religious ideologies in the context of intimate relationships between men and women. We turn to this in the next section.

#### 7.4.1.4 - Domestic violence in the Context of Religion

Among the female participants in both the upper and lower socioeconomic groups, watching the television news stories prompted significant discussion about women's rights and freedoms in relation to religious expectations. They contrasted the lack of protection afforded to females by the police or law in Pakistani society, with the protection given to them by religion. All eleven female participants were eager to express their views on this so much so that they could not wait for their turn to speak; this is despite the news stories containing no mention of religion or comment from religious scholars.

One of the respondents said that "our religion states clearly that men are responsible for feeding and protecting their women" (Participant E, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group). This statement reflected the dominant viewpoint based in popular religious discourse in Pakistan that men should be the sole earner of the household and women should run the house rather than engaging in paid work.

Female respondents from both the upper and lower socioeconomic groups also emphasised that Islam does not advocate violence against women. They claimed that, instead, patriarchal beliefs and social customs are to blame for reinforcing violence against women.

Two male participants from the lower socioeconomic group also criticised the practice of the dowry as not being Islamic. One said “...dowry exchange is not permitted in Islam. But we still practice it because of our generations’ long exposure to Indian civilisation, as we have adopted their customs and traditions including the dowry one” (Participant V, Lower Socioeconomic Group). He further added that “we have failed to understand the status of women in Islam.” A female participant also reflected on the issue of misperceived religious beliefs:

We have been told through false religious interpretations that Islam advocates male dominance over women and rewards men with superior rights in contrast with women. Since men are raised with false religious doctrine to think of themselves as superior beings and women as inferior and subordinate creatures. This ill-perception of religion is causing a lot of problems for women (Participant N, Female, Lower Socioeconomic Group).

This participant also critiqued experts who interpret religion and impose it on people. She said “Religious scholars are always busy on television screens, promoting men and projecting their religious superiority over women. I wonder why these male religious scholars criticise women and glorify men?” (Participant N, Female, Lower Socioeconomic Group). It is a common observation that very vocal religious figures who have been offering consistent opposition to the struggle for women’s rights in Pakistan have perhaps been overrepresented in the Pakistani mainstream media (Biberman et al., 2016). Specifically, they have opposed the Women’s Protection Bill and Women’s March on news media (Mumtaz, 2019). We discuss such positions on violence against women in the next section.

#### 7.4.1.5 - Justifying Violence Against Women

Most male participants in the lower socioeconomic group presented several justifications in support of domestic violence as normal response to day-to-day stressors; these justifications were not present in the news stories. They also tended to rationalise domestic violence as an inevitable consequence of “feminine traits’. These justifications were

mostly left unchallenged by other participants in the group. According to them “If women do the right things, their men will never beat them” (Participant R, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group); “Language of women is the reason behind domestic violence” (Participant V, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group); “Women talk so loudly and argue so much in their houses. Because their mothers seem to have transferred these habits in their daughters and their fathers seem supportive of it” (Participant W, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group). The majority of male participants from the lower socioeconomic group expressed the view that poverty has made life difficult for men, and when they come home, women make demands which they are not able to fulfill, which can then escalate into violence.

Again, contrary to the responses of the men from the upper socioeconomic group, male participants from the lower socioeconomic group showed reluctance in allowing women in their family to pursue paid work, which in their view could also trigger a violent episode. They also classified intimate partner violence as something which is associated with rich people only, as one respondent argued: “domestic violence is a game of rich men. On the other hand, poor men try to look after their wives. Their arguments or fights are for very tiny things which are not even discussion worthy” (Participant V, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group). Three male respondents (Participants U, V & W) from the lower socioeconomic group also blamed victims for not leaving abusive partners, blamed their parents for not being able to find suitable matches for their daughters, and even criticised the trend of attaining higher education among Pakistani girls. These conservative comments showed limited awareness about various socio-cultural norms identified by other participants that prevent women from leaving abusive relationships and which maintain power imbalances between men and women. For instance, one respondent criticised women for staying in abusive relationships:

I do not understand why women tend to live with abusive partners. That sounds absurd to me...unlike illiterate women, educated women know their rights and they

can get separation or divorce from abusive partners, as nobody can stop them from taking this step. (Participant U, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group)

Specifically, two male respondents from the lower socioeconomic group (Participants V & W) associated the higher education of females as one of the causes of domestic violence. According to them, when women marry less educated men it can be problematic for the couple as both partners try to influence and resist and even violently respond to each other's domination. Quite strangely, for one male respondent in the lower socioeconomic group, intimate partner violence was a normalised expression of love as he put it: "physical torture happens because men consider their wives very special members of their family, and they are not afraid of sharing their problems with them" (Participant V, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group). This comment reflects the discourse of romantic expressive tension, which suggests the infliction of aggression and violence from one partner on another is an expression of passionate love (O'Neill & Morgan, 2001).

In the next section we consider the research participants' comments on the production values of the news stories they watched.

#### 7.4.1.6 - Production Elements of Domestic Violence News Stories

After watching domestic violence news stories from Pakistani mainstream television news channels, 20 participants including 10 women referred to domestic violence news content as dramatised, and often presented as entertainment. They were of the view that domestic violence news is designed to increase ratings for the news organisations. Participants were emphatic in these stances stating that "they are very dramatised" (Participant B, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group); "News channels use dramatisation to attract more audience" (Participant D, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group); "Basically, media tend to cover only those news stories and issues which reward ratings" (Participant D, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group); "News channels dramatise and exaggerate the simple facts, so that



they can create hype to attract more viewership” (Participant F, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group). In making these statements, the participants showed a good understanding of the commercial imperatives of media in Pakistan. Pakistani journalists have also emphasised that the media is ratings-driven (Chaudhary et al., 2023; Cheema, 2016; Meer et al., 2015; see Chapter 3). Journalists state that news is sensationalised to generate ratings (see Chapter 3). However, in the case of the participants in this study, it seemed to be having the opposite reaction as participants were critical of it.

Three female respondents from the upper socioeconomic group talked about fear inducing elements in mainstream domestic violence reporting. They expressed discomfort in watching news depictions of domestic violence on Pakistani television. One respondent remarked “very scary videos...I am surrounded with feelings of unhappiness and regret about how much support there is in our society for domestic violence” (Participant C, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group). They also acknowledged that “no doubt that such videos have a harsh impact on viewers - both physically and mentally...I feel blood rush” (Participant B, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group). Another respondent was of the view that domestic violence news “should not be getting on the nerves of viewers” (Participant E, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group). One respondent emphasised the point that “media outlets should focus on their content. They should be mindful of the fact that people from different age and sex groups watch television news channels at the same time” (Participant I, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group).

In relation to the cultivation of fear, two male respondents from the lower socioeconomic group were of the view that the dramatisation of domestic violence news stories might also discourage victims from seeking help. One participant commented: “When it comes to poor or mediocre neighborhoods, families, and parents do everything to resolve

the issue in privacy and under pressure as they do not wish their daughters and their lives to become part of television screens” (Participant T, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group).

Contrary to Pakistani journalists’ claims that by highlighting domestic violence news stories they are providing a social service ( see Chapter 3), four participants, including two females, blamed the Pakistani media for cultivating fear in women and promoting violence against them. They brought attention to the regulatory feature of the media in terms of how it shapes our perception of the world and behaviours in it (Kellner, 2011). For example, a female respondent shared her thoughts that “people also get encouragement from watching news on domestic violence. They think that the guy in [the] news just shot his wife and still nothing happened to him. In this way, they feel encouraged to do the same” (Participant E, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group). One male respondent highlighted a similar issue stating:

It is because these abusers do not get the punishment that they deserve, and our [criminal justice] system tends to provide them relaxation. As a result of it, other people develop some violent tendencies...By watching such content, they are not getting on [the] back foot from committing violence. This is the very reason that domestic violence incidents keep on happening as there is no system to stop it. (Participant G, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group).

From the perspective of the male and female interviewees in this research, Pakistani news depictions of domestic violence not only discourage victims from coming forward and seeking support, but also reinforce the perpetual cycle of abuse. Interviewees also offered suggestions for introducing changes in news reporting of domestic violence. We talk about those recommendations in the next section.

#### 7.4.1.7 - Viewers’ Recommendations to Mainstream News Media

Five male respondents from upper and lower socioeconomic groups criticised the practice of revealing victims’ identities in news stories. One participant commented that “In Pakistan, if [the] identities are revealed on media or social media, without [court] cases being concluded,

people will draw their own conclusions. You know what I believe, despite all the education and qualifications, females get zero-point-zero percent respect in Pakistan” (Participant V, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group). Another male respondent remarked that the “Media should not expose victims’ identities in any case. Their voices should be highlighted without compromising their dignity and respect. After all, victim women are also daughters, sisters, mothers, and wives. They should be treated with respect” (Participant G, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group).

Three interviewees strongly suggested that there should be no background music incorporated into news stories as they equated it with sensationalism. One respondent stated that “There should be no background music at all and with zero sensationalism” (Participant K, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group). Participants were of the view that by omitting background music, the degree of sensational portrayal can be minimised which is likely to improve the outlook and objectivity of domestic violence content.

#### ***7.4.2 - Responses to BBCSHE Social Justice Activist Campaign Material***

In the second half of the focus groups, the *BBCSHE* activist campaign material was screened to participants. Five themes and four sub-themes emerged from the discussions following the screening of this content. In these videos, a correspondent for BBC Urdu went to four universities in Pakistan and talked with female students regarding a range of issues, including domestic violence. Compared to the domestic violence news stories, the four campaign videos received minimal critique from the participants. We first turn to the dominant theme in the responses to these materials which relate to their awareness raising and educational impact.

##### ***7.4.2.1 - Activist Content and Awareness Raising***

All 22 participants including eleven females from four focus groups agreed that the *BBCSHE* campaign material was educative and sought to promote awareness regarding the situation of

women in Pakistan and the challenges they face throughout their lives. One male respondent from the lower socioeconomic group stated “I have never seen Pakistani media running such campaigns aiming to spread awareness and to raise [the] concept of women’s empowerment” (Participant I, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group). Another male respondent from the same group commented “I am a supporter of such campaigns. In fact, these campaigns should be running across the country. At least, it will raise our consciousness toward feminism” (Participant I, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group). Two participants from both the male and female lower socioeconomic groups endorsed this idea as they opined, “There must be a nationwide campaign aimed at spreading awareness among boys and girls regarding institution of marriage and family system at large” (Participant M, Female, Lower Socioeconomic Group), “I am in the favour of such campaigns. In fact, [the] reach and scope of such campaigns should be extended, and parents should also make best choices for their girls” (Participant S, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group). One male participant asserted that “I agree with pretty much everything I have seen on these *BBCSHE* campaign videos” (Participant L, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group). One male respondent commented that “issues like these do exist in my family, my neighborhood and in my relatives too. I think we should change it altogether” (Participant H, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group).

Unlike other participants, one female from the upper socioeconomic group negated the idea of empowerment in the campaign. She argued that “I do not think this campaign is aimed at empowering women. It is aiming at highlighting issues faced by women...This is creating awareness” (Participant C, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group). Two respondents from the male lower socioeconomic group agreed with the effectiveness of the campaign but criticised the clothing worn by female students in the video. One respondent said that “I have some objections to raise too. For instance, many girls in these videos were bare headed and they were wearing unreasonable clothes. They should be more conscious of their reputation

and impression that they are making on viewers through these campaign videos” (Participant U, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group). As is discussed in the next section, most participants regarded this campaign as an effective platform for women.

#### 7.4.2.2 - Providing a Supportive Platform for Content Focused on Pakistani Women

Twelve participants from the four focus groups endorsed the notion that *BBCSHE* has provided a supportive platform to Pakistani women where they could express their grievances, which was unlike anything they had seen before in the media. One respondent from the upper socioeconomic female group expressed her gratitude by saying: “I liked watching these videos, and glad to see that females are aware about their basic rights. At least, they are expressing it” (Participant B, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group). Another from the same group commented “It is not that far ago when women had no liberty to express themselves. But now they are speaking, and everybody is listening to them...By all standards, it is unprecedented in a society like Pakistan where females were raised as silent creatures” (Participant E, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group).

Two respondents from the upper socioeconomic male group fully supported the campaign by saying, “My thoughts are that in our society, females’ rights are not defined and that is the reason they do not get their due rights” (Participant G, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group), “I think all the issues that women have raised are genuine, realistic and they exist in our society” (Participant L, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group). On the contrary, one male participant from the lower socioeconomic group did not think that *BBCSHE* provided an appropriate platform: “This is not right. Girls are talking about boys and boys are talking about girls. I do not consider it appropriate” (Participant R, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group). He also recommended that instead of passing judgement on others, people should mind their own business. This comment is an example of how women are silenced in

Pakistani society by limiting the spaces they can express themselves by referencing religious and cultural norms (Zakar et al., 2013).

Nonetheless, most male participants were appreciative of the campaign. In the next section we talk about double standards, an issue raised in response to *BBCSHE* campaign material by female participants.

#### 7.4.2.3 - Identifying Double Standards in Pakistani Society

For the majority of female participants, the *BBCSHE* campaign content brought the double standards of the society into focus. For example, one female respondent from the upper socioeconomic group asked:

If me and my brother share the same rights, then why are we being treated differently? ... The fact is that this discrimination begins from our own homes. If we talk about female dress up [veil] and seclusion of which Muslim women have always been a soft target, then why do not we ever talk about male gaze? Isn't it the responsibility of a male to have control over his sight? There is something else which I would like to share here that instead limits its coverage to violence against women. (Participant F, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group)

Similar sentiments were reflected by another female participant from the upper socioeconomic group, who said, "... We need to cut down double standards from our society. As a female respondent in the video said that girls can be criticised for doing the same thing for which boys would be appreciated" (Participant D, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group). In a similar vein, a female participant questioned "why do males have freedom to choose a lifepartner? They are allowed to go anywhere at any time, but women are not?" (Participant N, Female, Lower Socioeconomic Group). Another female participant acknowledged that even though double standards exist in Pakistani society: "Our holy book Quran gives equal status and rights to both men and women" (Participant M, Female, Lower Socioeconomic Group).

While double standards were one of the central themes in the responses to the activist campaign materials, comparison of responses from male and female participants showed that these materials evoked more feelings of being discriminated against among female participants. Only two male participants (from the upper socioeconomic group) reflected on the issue of social double standards. However, one of them added, “sometimes, due to ambiguities or unfavorable conditions of society, females are not allowed to decide for themselves. Such restrictions are imposed on them for the sake of their own safety” (Participant K, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group). In another focus group, a female participant reflected on safety as being used as an excuse to not allow women to study:

I personally know many families who would not let their daughters study beyond matriculation. Their excuse would be that the environment is unsafe for females. Despite planning and policies to make the environment safer for girls and women, families would prefer to close the doors of education on them. (Participant P, Female, Lower Socioeconomic Group)

While reflecting on the appropriateness of campaigns for women’s rights, eight participants referred to the *Aurat March* (women’s march), large gatherings of Pakistani women being held on International Women’s Day in multiple cities, which have become quite controversial (Zia, 2022). Men from both the upper and lower socioeconomic groups largely opposed this trend of activism being employed by Pakistan women while a majority also agreed with the principle that women must be given their fundamental rights. Three male respondents from the upper socioeconomic group suggested that Pakistani women should follow a *BBCSHE* style of campaigning. For example, one commented, “Look at *BBCSHE*! It seems like a perfect way to launch an effective campaign for women’s rights. There must be more campaigns like this” (Participant H, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group). Another theme is response to the activist campaign material related to the need for social reform in Pakistani society, which is discussed below.

#### 7.4.2.4 - Reforms To Support Women's Equal Rights

##### 7.4.2.4.1 - *Social Reforms*

Nine participants from the four focus groups raised concerns about the discrimination and marginalisation of Pakistani women at every societal level. Male respondents from the upper socioeconomic group espoused the notion of giving women equal rights and opportunities as they considered it imperative for social progress. One participant stated that “Women are criticised for working outside their homes, but men are admired for doing the same jobs which is the narrow-mindedness of our society” (Participant G, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group). Another from the same group supported the concept of gender equality and elaborated that “We do not oppose their right to education, choice of marriage and career” (Participant K, Male, Upper Socioeconomic Group).

It is interesting to examine the responses of male participants representing the lower socioeconomic group. They opted for more individualistic improvements and changes in behaviour, instead of calling for social reforms to prevent violence against women. One of them stated that “Men and women both must learn to control their anger and improve their behaviour. Men must also learn to tolerate ‘no’ from their sisters and wives” (Participant S, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group). Another respondent added “Yes, we need to learn the art of politeness and patience to resolve our issues amiably and amicably” (Participant R, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group). It is important to understand that by patience, these participants were not encouraging the tolerance of abuse. They were referring to approaching the matter with reasoning and logic rather than aggression and confrontation. To learn self-control and the ability to handle issues calmly, education can be an effective tool. Next, we talk about educational reforms as raised and discussed by participants.



#### *7.4.2.4.2 - Educational Reforms*

Six participants described the educational system of Pakistan as flawed and linked to the suppression of women. One interviewee commented:

Our educational system has failed to address this problem [domestic violence]. Therefore, people are not aware about the effects and consequences of domestic violence. Even though educated men also beat their wives, it mostly happens in impoverished and underdeveloped areas such as villages (Participant O, Female, Lower Socioeconomic Group).

A male participant from the lower socioeconomic group introduced a focus on economic issues here by stating: “If parents cannot afford expenses of their daughter’s education and if they ask her to remain at home or do something else then it is also justifiable. As having a daughter to go to university depends on [the] financial capacity of parents” (Participant U, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group). Some participants had the idea that numbers of female victims of domestic violence have been increasing day by day because of Pakistan’s inadequate legal system.

#### *7.4.2.4.3 - Legal Reforms*

The subject of institutional reforms was deliberated by seven participants. They were of the view that the dowry, honour killings, forced marriages and other forms of suppression are major obstacles faced by Pakistani women. In criticising laws to protect women, a female interviewee exclaimed, “Governments have passed many legislations for women empowerment and to stop domestic violence, but those legislations are meaningless until executed and applied. [The] police sought bribes from the victims which is shameless. It reflects flaws in our justice system” (Participant N, Female, Lower Socioeconomic Group). Two male respondents also criticised the role of police, with one saying, “To ensure justice, first [the] police department must be transformed. So that culprits of domestic violence can be made an example for others” (Participant U, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group).

According to another respondent, “the biggest hurdle is the corrupt behaviour and practices of

police force” (Participant S, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group). One participant shared her feelings that “I have also seen how difficult it becomes for victim women to seek help from police and/ or courts because these public institutions are never willing to help women by filing their reports in the first instance” (Participant M, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group). As well as expressing grievances against the inadequacy of the justice system, participants also called for the transformation of the media, which we turn to next.

#### *7.4.2.4.4 -Media Reforms*

Eleven participants from across the four groups emphasised the need for media reforms to improve the reporting of domestic violence. They were of the view that instead of sensational depictions, the media must guide the audience and victims about where to seek help to escape from violent situations. One respondent stated, “Media outlets should consistently highlight such issues without any disruption and offer solutions as well rather than only putting only temporary focus on them” (Participant P, Female, Lower Socioeconomic Group). Another participant opined that the “Media should support them till the end. I think this will bring about a real change than portraying them as weak victims” (Participant Q, Female, Upper Socioeconomic Group). She further added that “there should be separate news channels which can solely focus on such issues and help support victims of domestic violence through its coverage. Instead of only asking for public opinion, [the] media should also ask people how they can help these women” (Participant Q, Female, Lower Socioeconomic Group). One male respondent suggested that campaigns such as that run by the *BBCSHE* must be shown on mainstream media platforms. He said, “Such campaigns on mainstream media give us ideas to tackle and handle situations that may arise in our lives too” (Participant S, Male, Lower Socioeconomic Group). Participants also stressed that besides reporting on domestic violence cases, the media should also promote stories to empower Pakistani women, so that

vulnerable women can gain inspiration and the audience at large can see them as independent and capable professionals rather than dependent victims.

### **7.5 - Conclusion**

In Pakistan, domestic violence is considered a private matter, leading to its normalisation and tolerance (Ali et al., 2020). Most female victims hesitate to report it due to social stigma (Madhani et al., 2017). We found that in this research the news stories that were screened to the participants operated more as prompts for the participants to express their views on domestic violence and their focus on individual new stories was limited. In response to the mainstream news stories on domestic violence, most participants identified the role of patriarchal social and cultural norms in contributing to the prevalence of domestic violence in Pakistan. They also responded to the stories by highlighting the inadequacies in legal/justice systems which makes it hard for women to report their victimisation and obtain justice. An incompleteness in the news stories was also identified, in which incidents were shown as one-off occurrences and with no follow-up reporting on the consequences of the violence for the perpetrators or victims. This was seen as potentially encouraging others to perpetrate such crimes because they had no fear of punishment.

While journalists produce sensational content to attract viewers (see Chapter 3), it seemed to be having the opposite effect as the critique for dramatisation of news stories was almost unanimous. For female participants belonging to the upper socioeconomic group, such depictions provoked fear among female viewers while for males belonging to lower socioeconomic groups, it prevented victims from seeking help. A majority from the male lower socioeconomic group also gave justifications for violence against women. They stated that women complain and taunt their husbands who are already under mental strain due to financial issues, which escalates into violence. In response to the *BBCSHE* campaign

material, their stance was less conservative. Most of them, like other participants from the other groups, appreciated the campaign as educative and a good platform for the airing of issues pertaining to women's rights.

Overall, participants made recommendations to the media to tone down the dramatisation of content, provide more contextual explanation for the violence, and protect identities when reporting its occurrence. They also pushed for social, educational, and legal reforms. Interestingly, in contradiction to their rather staunch point of view, males belonging to lower socioeconomic groups encouraged exercise of patience in intimate relationships.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

In countries like Pakistan, where patriarchal ideologies and traditional masculine beliefs are common, men are more likely to endorse and internalize such beliefs (Malik, 2021).

Male-centric political, economic, and religious structures define, maintain, and reinforce male supremacy over everything (Tabassum, 2016), especially women. Moreover, societal, and cultural factors including the institutions of the family also play a part in dictating the lives of women (Malik, 2021). In the context of Pakistan, diverse and multifaceted toxic masculinity functions both ways. On one hand, its central focus lies on keeping women marginalized and isolated in the social sphere. On the other hand, it also brings those men under hard scrutiny who represent physical and/or emotional fragility, lacking spousal control, and wife subordination, (Imtiaz & Kamal, 2023). Given the varied social and cultural complexities, some Pakistanis regard feminism as an assault on religion and culture instead of perceiving it as a resistance against patriarchal ideology, masculine beliefs, and violence against women (Chughtai, 2020). Therefore, feminism is often regarded as a Western construct with a foreign agenda (Khan et al., 1994), which is anti-religious, anti-male, and destructive to the family system and social moral codes (Akhter, 2020). In such a situation the media plays a crucial role in terms of how it represents women, violence against women, feminist concerns, and, indeed, masculinity.

In recent years, legislative bodies in Pakistan have paid extensive attention to the endemic nature of violence against women as a high priority public issue. Stringent legislations have been enacted across the country to protect women from various forms of violence. However, contrary to the popular belief that Pakistani people need to be more aware about the harmful effects of domestic violence, such interventions have proven to be ineffective in providing a safe and secure environment for women - half of the country's

population. Unchallenged cultural norms and reinforced patriarchal notions lie at the heart of this social issue. In such a situation, the media plays a crucial role in terms of how it represents women, violence against women, feminist concerns, and, indeed, masculinity.

Pakistani audiences and women's rights activists were highly critical of how television news channels report on and broadcast domestic violence content. Nonetheless, domestic violence incidents are neither prioritised nor classified as newsworthy subjects in Pakistani news transmission. Pakistani media practitioners - reporters, and newsroom producers' - practices usually align with the interests of their respective news broadcasting networks and organisations. As a result, political news dominates the mainstream news agenda around the clock, and especially during primetime hours whereas domestic violence may not feature even at the bottom of primetime television news.

Professional training is a foundation of quality journalism. However, Pakistani television news channels do not have structured training and skills development programmes in place. After completing tertiary education, the only pathway of learning practical journalism is on the job training. In comparison, skills enhancement through training is common in international broadcasting networks operating in Pakistan such as the BBC and Voice of America (VOA). Not only do these two international news organisations provide their employees with up-to-date and tailored professional training routinely, but also the time undertaken for those training sessions is counted as normal duty hours.

In conjunction with lack of training opportunities, Pakistani television news journalists also expressed concerns for not having a clearly defined and well-documented code of ethics to guide and support them while covering news of violence against women. The maximum emphasis is on not showing identities and graphic imagery. Under such circumstances, Pakistani television news journalists are largely left to their own devices when domestic violence stories are selected for broadcast, which tends to be infrequently. The

absence of appropriately designed frameworks for reporting domestic violence leads to serious issues with reporting such as muting the victims' experience, intrusion of their privacy, and the revealing of their identity to the extent of putting their lives into danger. None of the interviewees were able to recall any consequential actions ever taken against reporters or producers for irresponsible reporting practices.

Due to lack of professional training, a formalised code of ethics, and guidelines for appropriate coverage of domestic violence incidents, Pakistani television journalists often represent such stories in a sensational and dramatised manner. Related to this, journalists follow the news values of shock, novelty and celebrity when selecting stories of domestic violence for broadcast. In addition, when exposed to domestic violence stories with fatalities, victims can be discouraged from seeking help against it (Carlyle et al., 2008). They are also likely to pick up stories that are going viral on social media. Reporting on domestic violence has been overwhelmingly incident based, with limited background information and without contextualising and linking it with the broader social structure. Media scholars have warned that misrepresentation of domestic violence can contribute to victim blaming (Estes & Webber, 2017; Savage et al., 2017). Not only could it reduce the desired outcomes of spreading awareness about gendered crime, but it can also undermine the attempts and strategies to control, prevent and eliminate violence against women by reinforcing the existing patriarchal and stereotypical attitudes to this social, legal, and public health problem (Savage et al., 2017).

Even though domestic violence is not the priority of journalists, they are neither trained to report on it, nor do they include the perspectives of experts, or guide viewers towards avenues of support. Pakistani journalists at times conceived themselves as activists working to bring justice for domestic violence victims. Activism is a process intended to highlight and end social injustice through continuous efforts. It requires vigorous actions,

campaigning, and interventions along with prioritising the matter, which is not the case with Pakistani journalists nor the media organisations they work for. My research revealed that domestic violence stories are only covered when something shocking and horrible happens and/or someone famous is involved. The domestic violence stories that are covered normally appear in headlines for a few seconds and do not form a part of the news bulletin. Otherwise, it is quite rare for such stories to appear in primetime news broadcasts. The stories are seldom followed up. In addition, identities of victims were revealed in the majority of news stories with more than half the stories being broadcast with graphic visuals unblurred. In addition, avenues of social support were seldom presented. By imagining such reporting practices to be activism - Pakistani journalists fail to highlight the lacunas in the legal and judicial system, reinforcing discriminatory practices toward women. They deprive the audience from understanding the causes and normative practices embedded in the social relationship dynamics contributing to violence against women. Inconsistent reporting, fewer details, lack of follow up, and the absence of expert opinion is essentially framing the issue as a non-issue.

Pakistani women's rights activists' critique on television news reporting on domestic violence was also aligned with the issues identified with existing reporting practices. For Pakistani feminists, domestic violence is a socio-systemic issue and campaigning against domestic violence is a mission, whereas domestic violence incidents are nothing more than a piece of news for Pakistani television news channels, which they are more likely not to broadcast or broadcast in passing. Pakistani women's rights activists raised concerns about the censorship imposed on women's rights advocates in Pakistan and referred to it as the "security policy" of the state to keep the issue of women away from the public eye. That is why domestic violence and social justice campaigns of Pakistani women activists do not get coverage in news broadcasts.



The audience reception analysis about domestic violence also offered rare and distinctive insights into how viewers evaluate the content of mainstream news channels and activists' campaigns featured on social media. The majority of participants from varied socioeconomic backgrounds critiqued the dramatisation and sensational depictions of domestic violence on television news channels. The majority identified that more needed to be done by television news media in its coverage of domestic violence. At the same time, they admired the activists' campaigns for being more informative, and relevant to Pakistani women's experiences. In some instances, male participants from lower socioeconomic groups provided justifications for violence against women linking its incidence to fights that occur between couples because husbands are not able to fulfill their wives' wishes because of financial challenges which their wives do not take account of. This speaks of the need to improve the representations of domestic violence on the mass media to emphasise the social nature of this problem.

This thesis is the first inquiry into the representations of domestic violence on Pakistani television news channels. It addresses a gap in the current state of knowledge by incorporating views from the news producers and reporters, that is journalists, and from people who are actively working to combat domestic violence, that is women's rights activists. The research offers new insights into domestic violence news portrayals on television news media; ethics that guide the reporting and the process of selecting domestic violence news from the perspective of Pakistani journalists, while they also articulated their own understanding of domestic violence. This thesis documented how Pakistani activists try to prevent domestic violence, providing a point of reference to assess whether news media representations of domestic violence are reinforcing domestic violence or discouraging it. Since the thesis is grounded in the assumption that news media has an effect on viewers, this thesis also assessed Pakistani audience responses to domestic violence news stories and

activists' material, which has not been investigated before. The research relied on data from different professionals and members of the public collected using different methods: interviews and focus groups.

The findings of this study not only contribute to the existing literature on television news practices around domestic violence reporting, media representations, media ethics, and audience responses to domestic violence news on Pakistani television, they also provide potential scope for future research. More interviews/studies with a larger and more diverse group of Pakistani women's rights advocates could offer fascinating and insightful recommendations on how to best employ mainstream media strategies for spreading awareness about gender crimes and to their reduction. Knowing the on-going ideological polarisation between liberal feminists and Islamic feminists' conception of women's rights in Pakistan, and how best to ensure them, in-depth interviews and/or focus group discussions involving both sides should be considered. It would also be extremely valuable to explore how conceptions of masculinity and different masculinities in Pakistan, and their intersections with religion and family ideals feed into cultural perceptions of domestic violence, its representation, and its prevalence in the country.

This thesis focused on the code of ethics practiced by Pakistani journalists, which largely deals with minimum standards of practice in line with societal expectations. Feminist ethics of care extends the concept of ethics to more than just harm prevention. It calls on media practitioners to report in ways that are beneficial to the society and encourages the audience to work on the issue (Steiner, 2011; 2020). Feminist media ethics require journalists to account for contexts and allow voices of victims to reach the audience (Steiner, 2020). Since this thesis was the first study on the representations of domestic violence in Pakistani media, it concerned itself with exploring presence and nature of code of ethics at a basic level. It did not engage in analyses of domestic violence representations in terms of standards

set by feminist ethics of care. Future studies should engage in analyses of Pakistani new media using the framework of feminist ethics of care.

It should be acknowledged that there can be significant gaps between journalist's role perceptions and their role performance (Ryfe, 2020), that is, between what they say they do and what they actually do when reporting news. Ryfe (2020) argues that journalists may present their roles in socially desirable ways, or present what they do in terms of ideals, rather than giving an accurate picture of their actual practice. To overcome this, in future research the use of reconstruction interviews is advised, which invites journalists to explain the actual production process involved in their reporting of a particular story. Through this process they explain their reasoning behind reporting, stylistic and editorial decisions. This methodological approach can help in exploring various levels of influences - social, political, economic, and organisational - that impact on how journalists do their job (Brüggemann 2013). Future research should consider using this methodology to study the reporting of domestic violence by journalists.

Future research should also take print media journalists on board - first to make a distinction between print and electronic media reporting practices in relation to domestic violence, and then to advise the most ethical and appropriate reporting practices across media platforms including digital media. Mutually agreed conclusions can be shared with media organisations, non-governmental organisations, public service institutes, and lawmakers to formulate a comprehensive media policy that can transform the social perception towards this condemnable crime rather than leaving it to flexible interpretations.

## References

- Abdullah, M. (2017). *Exposure to television crime shows and crime learning behaviours among juvenile delinquents in Pakistan* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Universiti Utara Malaysia.
- Abdullah-Khan, N. (2019, April). *Changing gender norms by applying a relevant theoretical discourse for ending violence against women in Kuwait*. In *ICGR 2019 2nd International Conference on Gender Research* (p. 1). Academic Conferences and Publishing Limited.
- Abu Shaqah, A. H. (1994). Tahrir al mara' fi 'asr al-risalah: Dirasah jamiah linusus al Qur'an al-karim wa Sahih al Bukhari wa Muslim: Al jus' al khamis—makanat al mara' al muslimah fi al usrah [Women's liberation in the times of the message: A collection of Qur'anic verses, and Sahih al Bukhari and Muslim: Part five—The role of the Muslim woman in the family]. *Dar al qalam lilnashr wa al tawzi*.
- Achakzai, J. (2011, November 22). Pakistan: Newspapers fight for survival as sales plunge. *DW*.  
<https://www.dw.com/en/pakistans-newspapers-fight-for-survival-as-sales-plunge/a-63845118>
- Action, F. (2012). *Auckland Women Launch Campaign against Tui Beer's 'Retro-Sexist' Advertising*. Scoop.  
<https://auckland.scoop.co.nz/2012/02/campaignlaunched-against-tui-beer-ads>
- Adekoya, H. O., & Olaseinde-Fayomi, O. B. (2021). A textual analysis of audience responses to social media framing of domestic violence against men. *SAU Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 5(2), 213-221. Agha, N. (2018). Social security or

- cultural benefits: Why is son preference common in rural Pakistan? *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 46(1-2), 35-51. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685314-04601003>
- Agha, N., & Ahmed, Z. (2018). Prevalence and nature of violence against women in Pakistan: A six-month content analysis of a Pakistani newspaper. *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*, 10(1), 100-120.
- Agha, N., Syed, G. K., & Mirani, D. A. (2018). Exploring the representation of gender and identity: Patriarchal and citizenship perspectives from the primary level Sindhi textbooks in Pakistan. In *Women's Studies International Forum*, 66, 17-24. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2017.11.009>
- Ahmad, F. (2023). How do Pakistani drama serials discursively represent domestic violence? *Qualitative Research Journal*, 23(2), 145-163. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-11-2021-0119>
- Ahmad, I., & Aman, S. (2021). Women's rights in Pakistan: A study of religious and alternate discourses regarding women's participation in politics. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal*, 5(1), 123-138. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.lassij/5.1.9>
- Ahmad, S. (2023). Gender-based violence in Punjab: An analysis of Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act, 2016. *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies*, 23(01), 105-124. <https://doi.org/10.46568/pjgs.v23i01.642>
- Ahmad-Stout, F., Nath, S. R., Khoury, N. M., & Huang, H. (2021). Experiences of intimate partner violence: Findings from interviews with South Asian women in the United States. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 36(3-4), NP1941-1964NP. [ps://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517753850](https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517753850)
- Ahmed, N., Kamran, R., & Yasmin, T. (2022). Discursive representation of women in crime news stories of Pakistani English Print Media. *Harf-o-Sukhan*, 6(2), 147-161. Ahmed,

- P. (2014). Attitudes of ignorance - A consequence of media portrayal of Islam and Muslims. *Common Dreams News Center*.
- Ahmed, S. (2012). Violation of Woman Rights in Pakistan: A comparative study of News Reports of English and Urdu Newspapers. *Asian Women*, 2.
- Ahmed, S. (2014). Violence against women: Media representation of violent issues in the perspective of Pakistan. *Science International*, 26(1), 367-371.  
<http://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-004-5463-7>
- Ahmed, S., & Wahab, J. A. (2019). Paradox of women empowerment: The representations of women in television dramas in Pakistan. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 9(10), 1-21.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v9-i10/6443>
- Akhtar, A., Aziz, S., & Almas, N. (2021). The poetics of Pakistani patriarchy: A Critical analysis of the protest-signs in Women's March Pakistan 2019. *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, 18(18), 136-153. <https://doi.org/10.23860/jfs.2021.18.08>
- Akhter, M. (2017). *Fictionalizing a feminist self: Kishwar Naheed's Buri Aurat ki Katha'* [Unpublished Masters thesis, Tufts University]. Tufts Digital Library.  
<https://dl.tufts.edu/downloads/st74d326j?filename=2227n183m.pdf>
- Akhtar, N., & Metraux, D. A. (2013). Pakistan is a dangerous and insecure place for women. *International Journal on World Peace*, 30(2), 35.
- Alaghebandan, R., Lari, A. R., Joghataei, M. T., Islami, A., & Motavalian, A. (2011). A prospective population-based study of suicidal behavior by burns in the province of Ilam, Iran. *Burns*, 37(1), 164-169. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.burns.2010.04.010>
- Alam, Z. (2021). Violence against women in politics: The case of Pakistani women's activism. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict*, 9(1), 21-46.  
<https://doi.org/10.1075/jlac.00052.ala>

- Alat, Z. (2006). News coverage of violence against women: The Turkish case. *Feminist Media Studies*, 6(3), 295-314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680770600802041>
- Al-Banna, J., & Jadid III, N. F. (1998). al-Mar'ah al-Muslimah: Bayn Tahrir al-Qur'an wa Taqyid al-Fuqaha'. *Kairo: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi*.
- Ali, P. A., & Gavino, M. I. B. (2008). Violence against women in Pakistan: A framework for analysis. *Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association*, 58(4), 198.
- Ali, P. A., Naylor, P. B., Croot, E., & O'Cathain, A. (2015). Intimate partner violence in Pakistan: A systematic review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 16(3), 299-315. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1524838014526065>
- Ali, R., & Khalid, A. (2021). COVID-19 and domestic violence in Pakistan: An analysis of the media perspective. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 22(12), 98-114.
- Ali, S., & Pasha, S. (2022). News media representations of domestic violence against women in Pakistan. *Media and Communication Review*, 2(2), 1-22.
- Ali, T. S., & Khan, N. (2007). Strategies and recommendations for prevention and control of domestic violence against women in Pakistan. *Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association*, 57(1), 27.
- Ali, T. S., Farhan, R., & Ayub, M. (2020). Intimate partner violence against women in Pakistan: A review of qualitative research. *Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association*, 70(5), 892.
- Ali, T. S., Karmaliani, R., Khuwaja, H. M. A., Shah, N. Z., Wadani, Z. H., Aijaz, S., & Kulane, A. (2020). Community stakeholders' views on reducing violence against women in Pakistan. *BMC Women's Health*, 20, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-020-00961-3>
- Ali, T. S., Krantz, G., Gul, R., Asad, N., Johansson, E., & Mogren, I. (2011). Gender roles and their influence on life prospects for women in urban Karachi, Pakistan: A

qualitative study. *Global Health Action*, 4, 7448.

<https://doi.org/10.3402/gha.v4i0.7448>

- Allern, S. (2002). Journalistic and commercial news values. *Nordicom Review*, 23(1-2), 137-152.
- Alkhateeb, S. (1999). Ending domestic violence in Muslim families. *Journal of Religion & Abuse*, 1(4), 49-59. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J154v01n04\\_04](https://doi.org/10.1300/J154v01n04_04)
- Al-Qaradawi, Y. (1982): *The lawful and the prohibited in Islam*. American Trust Publications.
- Altheide, D. L. (2010). Creating fear: Transforming terrorist attacks into control and consumption. In K. Dovel, C. v. Scheve & E. A. Konjin (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of emotions and mass media* (pp. 273-286). Routledge.
- Amin, H., Ali, T., Ahmad, M., & Zafar, M. I. (2009). Participation level of rural women in agricultural activities. *Pakistan Journal of Agricultural Sciences*, 46(4), 294-301.
- Amir-ud-Din, R., Fatima, S., & Aziz, S. (2021). Is attitudinal acceptance of violence a risk factor? An analysis of domestic violence against women in Pakistan. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(7-8). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518787809>
- Amjad, S., Qasim, S., Alvi, U. F., & Amjad, F. (2021). The portrayal of violence against women in Pakistani electronic media. *Elementary Education Online*, 20(4), 2719-2719.
- Ammar, N. H. (2007). Wife battery in Islam: A comprehensive understanding of interpretations. *Violence Against Women*, 13(5), 516-526.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801207300658>
- Amnesty International. (2012). *Amnesty international report 2012. The state of the world's human rights*. [https://files.amnesty.org/air12/air\\_2012\\_full\\_en.pdf](https://files.amnesty.org/air12/air_2012_full_en.pdf)



- Anastasio, P. A., & Costa, D. M. (2004). Twice hurt: How newspaper coverage may reduce empathy and engender blame for female victims of crime. *Sex Roles, 51*(9-10), 535-542. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-004-5463-7>
- Andersson, N., Cockcroft, A., Ansari, U., Omer, K., Ansari, N. M., Khan, A., & Chaudhry, U. U. (2010). Barriers to disclosing and reporting violence among women in Pakistan: Findings from a national household survey and focus group discussions. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 25*(11), 1965-1985. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260509354512>
- Ansari, N. (2018). Girls at Dhabas: Challenging issues of safety, or ‘respectability’ in urban Pakistan? *OpenDemocracy*.
- Anwar, M. N., Ullah, R., Ahmad, N., & Ali, M. (2020). Critical discourse analysis of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s (11th August, 1947) speech in the first constituent assembly of Pakistan. *South Asian Studies, 30*(1).
- Arshad, S., & Ashraf, B. N. (2014). Journalism ethics: Evidence from the media industry of Pakistan. *Global Media Journal: Pakistan Edition, 7*(2), 25-36.
- Ashton, S. (2014). Researcher or nurse? Difficulties of undertaking semi-structured interviews on sensitive topics. *Nurse Researcher, 22*(1), 27–31. <https://doi.org/10.7748/nr.22.1.27.e1255>
- Australian Press Council. (2021). *Advisory guidelines on family and domestic violence reporting*. [https://presscouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Advisory\\_Guideline\\_on\\_Family\\_and\\_Domestic\\_Violence\\_Reporting\\_09072021\\_links.pdf](https://presscouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Advisory_Guideline_on_Family_and_Domestic_Violence_Reporting_09072021_links.pdf)
- AURORA. (2023). *TV viewership trends: FY 2021-22*. <https://aurora.dawn.com/news/1144667>

- Autonomous Women's Centre. (2016). *Guidelines for journalists - domestic violence*.  
[https://womenngo.org.rs/images/publikacije-dp/2016/Vodic\\_za\\_novinarke-nasilje\\_u\\_porodici-II\\_izdanje.pdf](https://womenngo.org.rs/images/publikacije-dp/2016/Vodic_za_novinarke-nasilje_u_porodici-II_izdanje.pdf)
- Awais, S., Ashraf, A., & Hassan, T. U. (2021). Violence against women treated as an act of violence or as a normal practice: A study of Pakistani TV drama serials. *Elementary Education Online*, 20(1), 3213-3213. <http://doi.org/10.17051/ilkonline.2021.01.362>
- Awan, S. Z. (2020). Role of civil society in empowering Pakistani women. *South Asian Studies*, 27(2), 439-458. Badawi, M. M. (1971). Islam in modern Egyptian literature. *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 154-177.
- Baig, M. A. M., Ali, S., & Tunio, N. A. (2020). Domestic violence amid COVID-19 pandemic: Pakistan's perspective. *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Health*, 32(8), 525-526. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1010539520962965>
- Bakht, K., Irshad, S., & Samad, A. (2021). #MeToo as a failed movement of women empowerment in Pakistan: A critical discourse analysis. *Research Journal of Social Sciences and Economics Review*, 2(1), 154-167.  
[https://doi.org/10.36902/rjsser-vol2-iss1-2021\(154-167\)](https://doi.org/10.36902/rjsser-vol2-iss1-2021(154-167))
- Banerjee, S., & Kankaria, L. (2022). Networking voices against violence: Online activism and transnational feminism in local-global contexts. *Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's & Gender Studies*, 24(1), 81-97.
- Barker-Plummer, B. (2013). Fixing Gwen: News and the mediation of (trans) gender challenges. *Feminist Media Studies*, 13(4), 710-724.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2012.679289>
- Barlas, A. (2019). *Believing women in Islam: Unreading patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an*. University of Texas Press.

- Barth, R. P. (2009). Preventing child abuse and neglect with parent training: Evidence and opportunities. *The Future of Children*, 19(2), 95-118. Batanchiev, T. (2008). *Entertainment or oppression: Media depiction of domestic abuse* [Unpublished senior honours thesis]. Boston College.
- Batool, S., Batool, F., Zia, A., & Saeed, R. (2018). The struggle for women rights: A study of emergence of feminism in Pakistan, (1947 to 2010). *Journal of the Punjab University Historical Society*, 31(1), 211-220.
- Batool, S., Hayat, A., Waqas, M., & Khurshid, A. (2023). Causes and impacts of forced marriages in Pakistan (a case study of district Mandi Bahauddin, Punjab, Pakistan). *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 7(5), 559-565.
- Beard, M. (2015). The public voice of women. *Women's History Review*, 24(5), 809-818. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1023023>
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1991). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Penguin.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1991). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Penguin UK.
- Berns, N. (1999). "My problem and how I solved it": Domestic violence in women's magazines. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 40(1), 85-108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.1999.tb02359.x>
- Berns, N. (2004). *Framing the victim: Domestic violence, media and social problems*. Routledge.
- Berns, N. (2017). *Framing the victim: Domestic violence, media, and social problems*. Routledge.

- Best, J. (2014, January 1). Twitter trolls jailed for sending abusive messages to feminist campaigner Caroline Criado-Perez. *Mirror*. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/twitter-trolls-jailed-sending-abusive-3058281>.
- Bhatti, A. A., Ali, H., & Hassan, A. (2016). The role of electronic media in political awareness among youth of district Okara in Pakistan. *International Journal for Social Studies*, 7(3), 539-541.
- Bhatti, M. A., & Hassan, A. A. U. (2014). Psychological effects of tv news violence on youth: A case study of the students of Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 34(1), 295-309.
- Bhatti, N., Jamali, M. B., Phulpoto, N. N., Mehmood, T., & Shaikh, F. M. (2011). Domestic violence against women: A case study of district Jacobabad, Sindh Pakistan. *Asian Social Science*, 7(12), 146. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v7n12p146>
- Biberman, Y., Gul, S., & Ocakli, F. (2016). Channeling Islam: Religious narratives on Pakistani television and their influence on Pakistani youth. *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, 43(3), 78-97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00927678.2016.1202712>
- Bibi, S., Ashfaq, S., Shaikh, F., & Qureshi, P. M. A. (2014). Prevalence instigating factors and help seeking behavior of physical domestic violence among married women of Hyderabad Sindh. *Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences*, 30(1), 122. <http://doi.org/10.12669/pjms.301.4533>
- Bird, S. E. (1992). Travels in nowhere land: Ethnography and the “impossible”; audience. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 9(3), 250-260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295039209366830>
- Bowers, P. J., Meyers, C., & Babbili, A. (2004). Power, ethics, and journalism: Toward an integrative approach. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 19(3-4), 223-246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08900523.2004.9679690>

- Bowles Eagle, R. (2015). Loitering, lingering, hashtagging: Women reclaiming public space via # BoardtheBus, # StopStreetHarassment, and the # EverydaySexism Project. *Feminist Media Studies*, 15(2), 350-353.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1008748>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper (Ed.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology* (vol.2) (pp. 57). American Psychological Association.
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., & Hayfield, N. (2022). 'A starting point for your journey, not a map': Nikki Hayfield in conversation with Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke about thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 19(2), 424-445.  
<http://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2019.1670765>
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., & Terry, G. (2014). Thematic analysis. In P. Rohleder & A. Lyons (Eds.) *Qualitative research in clinical and health psychology*. Palgrave MacMillan.
- Breen, M. D., Easteal, P., Holland, K., Sutherland, G., & Vaughan, C. (2017). Exploring Australian journalism discursive practices in reporting rape: The pitiful predator and the silent victim. *Discourse & Communication*, 11(3), 241-258.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481317697858>
- Brossoie, N., Roberto, K. A., & Barrow, K. M. (2012). Making sense of intimate partner violence in late life: Comments from online news readers. *Gerontologist*, 52(6), 792-801. <http://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gns046>
- Buckingham, D., & Sefton-Green, J. (1994). *Cultural studies goes to school: Reading and teaching popular media*. Taylor and Francis.

- Brüggemann, M. (2013). Transnational trigger constellations: Reconstructing the story behind the story. *Journalism*, 14(3), 401-418.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884912453284>
- Bullock, C. F. (2007). Framing domestic violence fatalities: Coverage by Utah newspapers. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 30(1), 34-63.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2007.10162504>
- Bullock, C. F. (2008). Official sources dominate domestic violence reporting. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 29(2), 6-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/073953290802900202>
- Bullock, C. F., & Cubert, J. (2002). Coverage of domestic violence fatalities by newspapers in Washington State. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 17(5), 475-499.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260502017005001>
- Buriro, A. A., Khoso, P .A. and Khatoon, Z. (2020). Men’s perception about domestic violence in rural Sindh, Pakistan. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal*, 4(2), 331-344. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.lassij/4.2.26>
- Burki, A. A., Hussain, A., & Khan, K. E. (2020). *Exploring the extent of selected dimensions of inequality in Pakistan*. Oxfam GB, Islamabad (in association with Chanan Development Association).
- Byerly, C. (2014). The long struggle of women in news. *Media and Gender: A Scholarly Agenda for Global Alliance on Media and Gender*, 34-36.
- Byerly, C. M. (2011). Behind the scenes of women's broadcast ownership. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 22(1), 24-42.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2011.546740>
- Byerly, C. M. (2019). Neoliberalism and women’s right to communicate: The politics of ownership and voice in media. In M. Meyers (Ed.), *Neoliberalism and the Media* (pp. 60-74). Routledge.

- Callanan, V. J., & Rosenberger, J. S. (2011). Media and public perceptions of the police: Examining the impact of race and personal experience. *Policing & Society, 21*(2), 167-189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2010.540655>
- Callanan, V., & Rosenberger, J. S. (2015). Media, gender, and fear of crime. *Criminal Justice Review, 40*(3), 322–339. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0734016815573308>
- Caple, H. (2018). News values and newsworthiness. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.85>
- Caringella-MacDonald, S. (1998). The relative visibility of rape cases in national popular magazines. *Violence Against Women, 4*(1), 62-80. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801298004001005>
- Carll, E. K. (2003). News portrayal of violence and women: Implications for public policy. *American Behavioral Scientist, 46*(12), 1601-1610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764203254616>
- Carll, E. K. (2003). News portrayal of violence and women: Implications for public policy. *American Behavioral Scientist, 46*(12), 1601-1610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764203254616>
- Carlyle, K. E., Orr, C., Savage, M. W., & Babin, E. A. (2014). News coverage of intimate partner violence: Impact on prosocial responses. *Media Psychology, 17*(4), 451-471. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2014.931812>
- Carlyle, K. E., Scarduzio, J. A., & Slater, M. D. (2014). Media portrayals of female perpetrators of intimate partner violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 29*(13), 2394-2417. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0886260513520231>
- Carlyle, K. E., Slater, M. D., & Chakroff, J. L. (2008). Newspaper coverage of intimate partner violence: Skewing representations of risk. *Journal of Communication, 58*(1), 168-186. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2007.00379.x>

- Carter, C., & Steiner, L. (2004). Introduction to critical readings: Media and gender. *Critical Readings: Media and Gender, 1*, 1-10.
- Carty, V. (2014). Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt: The impact of new media on contemporary social movements and challenges for social movement theory. *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology 51*(1), 51-80.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017). *Preventing intimate partner violence*.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipv-factsheet.pdf>
- Chatterjee, K., & Pillai, V. K. (2018). Media effects on gender child preference in India. *Journal of Research in Gender Studies, 8*, 108.
- Chaudhary, M. U., Usman, S., & Farooq, U. (2023). How prime-time news viewers feel about the rating system: a case study of Geo, Samaa, and Express news channels in pakistan. *Journal of Namibian Studies: History Politics Culture, 34*, 1623-1639.  
<https://doi.org/10.59670/jns.v34i.3021>
- Cheema, M. (2016). Producing domestic abuse in Pakistani television. In R. Moseley, H. Wheatley & H. Wood (Eds.), *Television for Women: New directions* (pp. 183-201). Routledge.
- Cheema, M. H. (2012). Beyond beliefs: Deconstructing the dominant narratives of the Islamization of Pakistan's law. *The American Journal of Comparative Law, 60*(4), 875-918. <https://doi.org/10.5131/AJCL.2012.0008>
- Chesney-Lind, M., & Chagnon, N. (2017). Media representations of domestic violence. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.013.103>
- Chowdhury, F. D. (2009). Theorising patriarchy: The Bangladesh context. *Asian Journal of Social Science, 37*(4), 599-622. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156853109X460200>



- Christians, C. G., Fackler, M., Richardson, K. B., & Kreshel, P. J. (2020). *Media ethics: Cases and moral reasoning*. Routledge.
- Chughtai, A. (2020, March 8). Pakistan's women's march: Shaking patriarchy 'to its core.' *AlJazeera*.  
<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/3/8/pakistans-womens-march-shaking-patriarchy-to-its-core>
- Clark, R. (2014). #NotBuyingIt: Hashtag feminists expand the commercial media conversation. *Feminist Media Studies*, 14(6), 1108-1110.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2014.975473>
- Clarke, V., Braun, V., & Hayfield, N. (2015). Thematic analysis. *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*, 222(2015), 248.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613>
- Cojocar, Ș. (2013). Rhetoric about vulnerabilities of childhood in family migration. Ad hoc research and methodological errors. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 92, 202-206. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.08.660>
- Comas-d'Argemir, D. (2015). News of partner femicides: The shift from private issue to public problem. *European Journal of Communication*, 30(2), 121-136.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323114544865>
- Conley, D. & Lamble, S. (2006). *The daily miracle: An introduction to journalism, 3rd edition*. Oxford University Press.
- Cox, P. & Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Ltd. (2015). Sexual assault and domestic violence in the context of co-occurrence and re-victimisation: State of knowledge paper / prepared by Peta Cox.  
<https://www.anrows.org.au/publications/landscapes-0/co-occurrence-and-re-victimisation>

- Coyle, A. (2007). Introduction to qualitative psychological research. In E. Lyons & A. Coyle (Eds.), *Analysing qualitative data in psychology* (pp. 9–29). Sage Publications Ltd.  
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446207536.d7>
- Cravens, J. D., Whiting, J. B., & Amar, R. O. (2015). Why I stayed/left: An analysis of voices of intimate partner violence on social media. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 37(4), 372-385. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591-015-9360-8>
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). Mapping the field of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 3(2), 95-108. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1558689808330883>
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Sage Publications.
- Criminal Laws Amendment Act, Act no. VI § 5, 2006 (Pakistan).  
<https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4db992cd2.pdf>
- Critelli, F. M. (2010). Women's rights= Human rights: Pakistani women against gender violence. *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 37, 135-160.
- Critelli, F. M., & Willett, J. (2013). Struggle and hope: Challenging gender violence in Pakistan. *Critical Sociology*, 39(2), 201-221.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920512438780>
- Crocket, M. J. (2017). Moral outrage in the digital age. *Nature Human Behavior*, 1, 769-771.  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-017-0213-3>
- Cuklanz, L. M. (2000). *Rape on prime time: Television, masculinity, and sexual violence*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Curry, K. (2001). Mediating Cops: An analysis of viewer reaction to reality TV. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 8(3), 169-185.

- Custers, K., & Van den Bulck, J. (2013). The cultivation of fear of sexual violence in women: Processes and moderators of the relationship between television and fear. *Communication Research*, 40(1), 96-124. [http://doi: 10.1177/0093650212440444](http://doi:10.1177/0093650212440444)
- Cyr, J. (2016). The pitfalls and promise of focus groups as a data collection method. *Sociological de*
- D'Lima, T., Solotaroff, J. L., & Pande, R. P. (2020). For the sake of family and tradition: Honour killings in India and Pakistan. *Indian Journal of Women and Social Change*, 5(1), 22-39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2455632719880852>
- Dalton, C., & Schneider, E. M. (2001). *Battered women and the law*. Foundation Press.
- Dasgupta, S. (2019). Impact of exposure to mass media on female empowerment: Evidence from India. *International Journal of Development Issues*, 18(2). <http://doi.org/10.1108/IJDI-10-2018-0156>
- Dawn. (n.d.). *Code of media ethics*. <https://www.dawn.com/code-of-ethics/>
- Dawn. (2003). Husband still free despite SC order: Zainab Noor torture case. <https://www.dawn.com/news/79552/husband-still-free-despite-sc-order-zainab-noor-torture-case>
- Dempsey, L., Dowling, M., Larkin, P., & Murphy, K. (2016). Sensitive interviewing in qualitative research. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 39(6), 480–490.
- Detenber, B. H., & Rosenthal, S. (2014). Changing views on media ethics and societal functions among students in Singapore. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 29(2), 108-125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08900523.2014.893776>
- Devries, K. M., Mak, J. Y., Bacchus, L. J., Child, J. C., Falder, G., Petzold, M., Astbury, J., & Watts, C. H. (2013). Intimate partner violence and incident depressive symptoms and suicide attempts: A systematic review of longitudinal studies. *PLOS Medicine*, 10(5). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001439>

- Devries, K., Watts, C., Yoshihama, M., Kiss, L., Schraiber, L. B., Deyessa, N., ... & WHO Multi-Country Study Team. (2011). Violence against women is strongly associated with suicide attempts: Evidence from the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women. *Social Science & Medicine*, 73(1), 79-86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.05.006>
- Driskell, K. M. (2009). Identity confidentiality for women fleeing domestic violence. *Hastings Women's Law Journal*, 20(6), 129-156.
- Thomas, L., MacMillan, J., McColl, E., Hale, C. & Bond, S. (1995). Comparison of focus group and individual interview methodology in examining patient satisfaction with nursing care. *Social Sciences in Health*, 1, 206–219.
- Dobash, R. E., & Dobash, R. (1979). *Violence against wives: A case against the patriarchy* (Vol. 15). Free Press.
- Donsbach, W. (2004). Psychology of news decisions: Factors behind journalists' professional behavior. *Journalism*, 5(2), 131-157. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146488490452002>
- Donsbach, W. (2008). Journalists' role perception. In *The International encyclopedia of communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecj010>
- Douki, S., Nacef, F., Belhadj, A., Bouasker, A., & Ghachem, R. (2003). Violence against women in Arab and Islamic countries. *Arch Womens Ment Health*, 6, 165–71.
- Doyle, G. (2006). Financial news journalism: A post-Enron analysis of approaches towards economic and financial news production in the UK. *Journalism*, 7(4), 433-452. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884906068361>
- Drula, G. (2015). Forms of media convergence and multimedia content – A Romanian perspective. *Comunicar. Media Education Research Journal*, 23(1), 131-140. <https://doi.org/10.3916/C44-2015-14>

- Dunya TV. (n.d.). *Internal code of conduct: Editorial guidelines and best practices*.  
<http://mediacredibilityindex.com/code-of-ethics/media-entities/dunya/>
- Dutoya, V. (2018). The New *Heroine*? Gender Representations in Contemporary Pakistani Dramas. In: Hussein, N. (eds) *Rethinking new womanhood*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67900-6\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67900-6_4)
- Easteal AM, P., Blatchford, A., Holland, K., & Sutherland, G. (2021). Teaching journalists about violence against women best reportage practices: An Australian case study. *Journalism Practice*, 1-17. <http://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1886866>
- Easteal, P., Bartels, L., Nelson, N., & Holland, K. (2015). How are women who kill portrayed in newspaper media? Connections with social values and the legal system. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 51, 31-41. Pergamon.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2015.04.003>
- Easteal, P., Holland, K., & Judd, K. (2015). Enduring themes and silences in media portrayals of violence against women. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 48, 103-113. Pergamon. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.10.015>
- Easteal, P., Holland, K., Breen, M. D., Vaughan, C., & Sutherland, G. (2018). Australian media messages: Critical discourse analysis of two intimate homicides involving domestic violence. *Violence against women*, 25(4), 441-462.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801218780364>
- Edmond, S., & Hann, S. (n.d.). *Putting Family Violence in Perspective – a project to promote better news reporting of family violence in New Zealand media*.  
[https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/fms/Colleges/College%20of%20Business/Communication%20and%20Journalism/JEANZ%202007/papers\\_abstracts/edmondsfinal.pdf](https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/fms/Colleges/College%20of%20Business/Communication%20and%20Journalism/JEANZ%202007/papers_abstracts/edmondsfinal.pdf)

- Edwards, L., Philip, F., & Gerrard, Y. (2020). Communicating feminist politics? The double-edged sword of using social media in a feminist organisation. *Feminist Media Studies*, 20(5), 605-622. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2019.1599036>
- Ellsberg, M., Jansen, H. A., Heise, L., Watts, C. H., & Garcia-Moreno, C. (2008). Intimate partner violence and women's physical and mental health in the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence: An observational study. *The Lancet*, 371(9619), 1165-1172. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(08\)60522-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(08)60522-X)
- End Violence Against Women Coalition. (2012). *Just the women*. EAVES
- Erdem, B. N. (2022). The construction of the social reality from the news narrative to transmedia storytelling: A research on the masculine violence and the social reflexes. In I. R. Management Association (Ed.), *Research anthology on child and domestic abuse and its prevention* (pp. 547-568). IGI Global.
- Estes, M. L., & Webber, G. R. (2017). "More closeted than gayness itself": The depiction of same-sex couple violence in newspaper media. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(1-2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517736271>.
- Fairclough, N. (1995) *Critical Discourse Analysis: the critical study of language*. Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (2001). Critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research. In R. Wodak & M. Meyers (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 121-138). Sage.
- Family Violence – It's Not OK! (n.d.). *Reporting domestic/ family violence guidelines for journalists*. <https://silo.tips/download/reporting-domestic-family-violence>
- Fatima, A. (2017). News as infotainment: A discourse analysis of top Pakistani cable news channels. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, 9, 127-138.
- Fatima, A. (2019). Representations of women's role in Pakistan: A critical analysis through drama serials. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 20(3), 3-16.

- Fazal, S. (2009). Emancipation or anchored individualism? Women and tv soaps in India. In K. Moti Gokulsing and W. Dissanayake (Eds.), *Popular culture in a globalized India* (pp. 41-52). Routledge.
- Feigenbaum, A., & McCurdy, P. (2015). Protest camps as media stages: A case study of activist media practices across three British social movements. In R. Figueiras & P. E. Santo (Eds), *Beyond the internet* (pp. 31-52). Routledge.
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5, 1–11.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500107>
- Fikree, F. F., Jafarey, S. N., Korejo, R., Afshan, A., & Durocher, J. M. (2006). Intimate partner violence before and during pregnancy: Experiences of postpartum women in Karachi, Pakistan. *Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association*. 56(6):252–257.
- Fikree, F. F., Razzak, J. A., & Durocher, J. (2005). Attitudes of Pakistani men to domestic violence: A study from Karachi, Pakistan. *The Journal of Men's Health and Gender*, 2(1). <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmhg.2005.01.004>
- Fiske, J. (2010). *Television culture*. Routledge.
- Flood, M., & Pease, B. (2009). Factors influencing attitudes to violence against women. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 10(2), 125-142.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838009334131>
- Foucault, M., (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. (C. Gordon, ed.). Pantheon Books.
- Franiuk, R., Coleman, J., & Apa, B. (2017). The influence of non-misogynous and mixed portrayals of intimate partner violence in music on beliefs about intimate partner

violence. *Violence Against Women*, 23(2), 243-257.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/107780121663747>

Freedom Network. (n.d.). *Media ownership monitor Pakistan 2018*.

[pakistan.mom-gmr.org/en/media/tv/](http://pakistan.mom-gmr.org/en/media/tv/)

Gallagher, M. (2014). Media and representation of gender. In C. L. Carter, L. Steiner & L.

McLaughlin (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to media and gender* (pp. 23–31).

Routledge Taylor & Francis.

Galletta, A. (2013). *Mastering the semi-structured interview and beyond: From research design to analysis and publication* (Vol. 18). New York University Press.

Gallup Pakistan. (2017). Television viewership in Pakistan.

<https://gallup.com.pk/television-viewership-in-pakistan-an-average-tv-viewer-spends-two-hours-daily-watching-television/>

Galtung, J., & Ruge, M. H. (1965). The structure of foreign news. *Journal of Peace Research*, 2(1), 64–91.

Gardezi, F. (2008). Islam, feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan: 1981-1991. In P. Banerjee (Ed.), *Women in peace politics* (pp. 97-111). Sage.

Geo TV Network. (n.d.). *Geoasool*. <https://asool.geo.tv/>

Ghafournia, N., & Easteal, P. (2021). Help-seeking experiences of immigrant domestic violence survivors in Australia: A snapshot of Muslim survivors. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(19-20), 9008-9034.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260519863722>

Ghamidi Centre of Islamic Learning. (2020, October 13). *Kya Islam me biwi Ko marna jaiz hai - Does the Quran condone domestic violence - Javed Ahmed Ghamidi* [Video].

YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESVBTnnUpbU>



- Gheyntanchi, E., & Moghadam, V. N. (2014). Women, social protests, and the new media activism in the Middle East and North Africa. *International Review of Modern Sociology, 40*(1), 1-26.
- Gilchrist, K. (2010). "Newsworthy" victims? Exploring differences in Canadian local press coverage of missing/murdered Aboriginal and White women. *Feminist media studies, 10*(4), 373-390. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2010.514110>
- Gill, F., Phull, G. M., & Chachar, A. A. (2017). Human rights violations of labour and women in Pakistan. *Grassroots, 51*(1), 228-236.
- Gillani Research Foundation. (2017). Opinion poll media television. <https://gallup.com.pk/television-viewership-44-pakistanis-claim-to-watch-news-channels-every-day/>
- Gillespie, L. K., Richards, T. N., Givens, E. M., & Smith, M. D. (2013). Framing deadly domestic violence: Why the media's spin matters in newspaper coverage of femicide. *Violence against women, 19*(2), 222-245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801213476457>
- Gius, C., & Lalli, P. (2014). 'I Loved Her so Much, But I Killed Her' Romantic Love as a Representational Frame for Intimate Partner Femicide in Three Italian Newspapers ('Je L'Aimais Tellement Que Je L' Ai Tuée'. L'Amour Romantique Comme Cadre De La Représentation Du Fémicide Par Le Partenaire Dans La Presse Italienne). *Journal for Communication Studies, 7*(2), 14.
- Global and regional estimates of violence against women (2013) *Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*. World Health Organization.
- Global Media Monitoring Project. (2015). *Who makes the news 2015 reports*. <http://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp/gmmp-reports/gmmp-2015-reports>

- Glynn, K. (2000). *Tabloid culture: Trash taste, popular power, and the transformation of American television*. Duke University Press.
- Golding, P., & Elliott, P. (1979). *Making the news*. Longman.
- Graneheim, U. H., Lindgren, B. M., & Lundman, B. (2017). Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper. *Nurse Education Today*, 56, 29-34.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2017.06.002>
- Green, M. C., Brock, T. C., & Kaufman, G. F. (2004). Understanding media enjoyment: The role of transportation into narrative worlds. *Communication theory*, 14(4), 311-327.  
<http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2004.tb00317.x>
- Greenwood, D. N. (2007). Are female action heroes risky role models? Character identification, idealization, and viewer aggression. *Sex Roles*, 57(9), 725-732.  
<http://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-007-9290-5>
- Greenwood, D. N., & Lippman, J. R. (2010). Gender and media: Content, uses, and impact. In J. C. Chrisler & D. R. McCreary (Eds.) *Handbook of gender research in psychology* (pp. 643-669). Springer.
- Gross, K., & Aday, S. (2003). The scary world in your living room and neighborhood: Using local broadcast news, neighborhood crime rates, and personal experience to test agenda setting and cultivation. *Journal of Communication*, 53(3), 411-426.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2003.tb02599.x>
- Guajardo, C. (2012). Council of Australian governments (2010) The national plan to reduce violence against women and their children 2010-2022. NSW Local Government Community Safety and Crime Prevention Officer Network.  
<http://ebookbrowse.com/federal-labor-s-national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children-pdf-d15236133>

- Gul, M., Obaid, Z., & Ali, S. (2017). Liberalization of media in Pakistan: A challenge to democracy. *The Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 25(1).
- Gunn, C. (2015). Hashtagging from the margins. In K. E. & Tassie and S. M. B. Givens (Eds.), *Women of color and social media multitasking: Blogs, timelines, feeds, and community* (pp. 21-34), Laxington Books.
- Halim, S., & Meyers, M. (2010). News coverage of violence against Muslim women: A view from the Arabian Gulf. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 3(1), 85-104.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-9137.2009.01059.x>
- Hall, S. W. (1980). Encoding/Decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies* (pp. 63-87).  
 Hutchinson.
- Hall, S. (2019). The determinations of news photographs (1973). In C. Greer (Ed.), *Crime and Media* (pp. 123-134). Routledge.
- Hamid, S., Stephenson, R., & Rubenson, B. (2011). Marriage decision making, spousal communication, and reproductive health among married youth in Pakistan. *Global Health Action*, 4(1), 5079.  
<https://doi.org/10.3402/gha.v4i0.5079>
- Hanan, M. A., Saleem, N., Ali, A., & Mukhtar, S. (2016). Role of media in strengthening democracy in Pakistan: Journalists' perception. *South Asian Studies*, 31(1).
- Hanif, I. (2016, February). PA approves bill for protection of women against violence. *Dawn*.  
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1241751>
- Hanusch, F. (2019). Journalistic roles and everyday life: An empirical account of lifestyle journalists' professional views. *Journalism Studies*, 20(2), 193-211.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1370977>

- Hanusch, F., & Tandoc Jr, E. C. (2019). Comments, analytics, and social media: The impact of audience feedback on journalists' market orientation. *Journalism*, 20(6), 695-713. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917720305>
- Haqqi, S., & Faizi, A. (2010). Prevalence of Domestic Violence and associated Depression in married women at a tertiary care hospital in Karachi. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 5, 1090-1097. <https://doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.07.241>
- Harcup, T., & O'Neill, D. (2001). What is news? Galtung and Ruge revisited. *Journalism Studies*, 2(2), 261-280. <https://10.1080/14616700118449>
- Harrison, J. (2008). Exploring news values: The ideal and the real. In J. Chapman & M. Kinsey (Eds.), *Broadcast journalism* (pp. 69-78). Routledge.
- Hassan, A. (2018). Language, media, and ideology: Critical discourse analysis of Pakistani news bulletin headlines and its impact on viewers. *Open*, 8(3), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018792612>
- Hassan, M., Jan, A., Khan, S. A., Munir, S., & Usama, M. (2021). Critical analysis of presidential election 1965 in Pakistan. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 18(08), 3068-3078.
- Hartley, J. (2000). Communicative democracy in a redactional society: The future of journalism studies. *Journalism*, 1(1), 39-48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146488490000100107>
- Hayes, R. M., & Kwiatkowski, N. (2015). Domestic violence, an isolated incident: How the media constructs domestic violence in the NFL. *American Society of Criminology*.
- Hébert, L. (1998). *A look at the status of women in Pakistan; conflict over the Islamic path* [Doctoral dissertation, Carleton University].
- Herkman, J. (Ed.). (2012). *Intermediality and media change*. University of Tampere.
- Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (1988). Manufacturing consent: A propaganda model. *Manufacturing Consent*. Pantheon.

- Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (2010). *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. Random House.
- Heuva, W. E. (2016). Commodification of celebrities' crimes: The "live" broadcasting of Oscar Pistorius' murder trial. *French Journal For Media Research*, 5, 1-31.
- Hillstrom, L. C. (2018). *The #metoo movement*. ABC-CLIO
- Hilton, N. Z. (1993). *Legal responses to wife assault: Current trends and evaluation*. Sage.
- Hodgetts, D. J., & O'Neil, D. (2001). Men's family violence: A comparative analysis of news reports and accounts of violent men. *Communication Journal of New Zealand Te Kohinga Korero* 2(1). 3-23
- Hollander, J. A. (2004). The social contexts of focus groups. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 33(5), 602-637. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0891241604266988>
- Holmes, L. A. (2015, April 1). If you want to write about feminism online, be ready to take on the haters. *The Guardian*.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/womensblog/2015/apr/01/if-you-want-write-about-feminism-online-be-ready-to-deal-with-the-haters>.
- Honour Based Violence Awareness Network. (n.d.) *Statistics & data*.  
[hbv-awareness.com/statistics-data/](http://hbv-awareness.com/statistics-data/)
- Hoog, N., & Verboon, P. (2020). Is the news making us unhappy? The influence of daily news exposure on emotional states. *British Journal of Psychology*, 111(2), 157-173.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/bjop.12389>
- Hooks, B. (1984). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. South End Press
- Horeck, T. (2014). # AskThicke: "Blurred Lines," rape culture, and the feminist hashtag takeover. *Feminist Media Studies*, 14(6), 1105-1107.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2014.975450>

- Huda, S., & Kamal, A. (2017). Professionals' perspective in portrayal of honour killings in Pakistani media. *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*, 9(1), 15.  
<http://www.pjcriminology.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2-6.pdf>
- Human Rights Watch. (2020). "I sleep in my own deathbed": *Violence against women and girls in Bangladesh: barriers to legal recourse and support*.  
[https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media\\_2020/10/bangladesh1020\\_web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2020/10/bangladesh1020_web.pdf).
- Hunt, P. (2014). Sensationalism: murder, mayhem, mudslinging, scandals, and disasters in 19th-century. *American Journalism*, 31(1), 136-137.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08821127.2014.875376>
- Ibn Kathir Abu 'l- Fida Ismail; Tafsiuru 'l- Qur'an 'l-Azim, Daru l- Kutubi 'l-'Arabiyah Cairo
- Imran, M., Chen, Y., Wei, X. M., & Akhtar, S. (2020). Veiled courage: Inside the women's resistance against violence through their writings. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 26(1), 74-93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.2020.1718392>
- Imtiaz, S., & Kamal, A. (2023). Masculinity Enactment in a Pakistani Culture: Role of Masculine Socialization. *Pakistan Journal of Applied Psychology*, 3(1), 266-283.  
<https://doi.org/10.52461/pjap.v3i1.1627>
- Intravia, J., Wolff, K., Paez, R., & Gibbs, B. (2017). Investigating the relationship between social media consumption and fear of crime: A partial analysis of mostly young adults. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 77, 158–168.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.08.047>
- Iqbal, M. A., Khan, H., & Javed, S. (2004). *Nonprofit sector in Pakistan: Historical background*. Social Policy and Development Centre, in collaboration with Aga Khan Foundation (Pakistan) and Center for Civil Society, Johns Hopkins University.
- Iqbal, N. (2021). State of the battlefield: Eempowerment and disempowerment-an assessment of resistance to women's rights in pakistan.

<https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/42611/1/Nismah%20Iqbal-%20MRP%20Final%20Draft.docx>

- Irfan, S. & Cowburn, M. (2004). Disciplining, chastisement and physical child abuse: Perceptions and attitudes of the British Pakistani community. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 24(1), 89-98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360200042000212151>
- Jabeen, N. (2023). The heart is not hopeless: Pakistani television drama, patriarchy, and activism. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 25(1), 6.
- Jabeen, S., Chaudhary, A. Q., & Omar, S. (2014). Gender discrimination in curriculum: A reflection from Punjab textbook board. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, 36(1), 55-77. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1210444.pdf>
- Jadoon, A. (2015). *Subalternity and representation: A feminist analysis of the issue of divorce in the selected novels (1990-2007)* [Doctoral dissertation, National University of Modern Languages Islamabad].  
<http://173.208.131.244:9060/xmlui/handle/123456789/3620>
- Jamal, A. (2005). Feminist 'selves' and feminism's 'others': Feminist representations of Jamaat-e-Islami women in Pakistan. *Feminist Review*, 81(1), 52-73.  
<https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400239>
- James, L., Brody, D., & Hamilton, Z. (2013). Risk factors for domestic violence during pregnancy: A meta-analytic review. *Violence and Victims*, 28(3), 359-380.  
<https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-12-00034>
- Jamil, S. (2020). Suffering in Silence: The resilience of Pakistan's female journalists to combat sexual harassment, threats and discrimination. *Journalism Practice*, 14(2), 150-170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1725599>
- Jamil, S., & Appiah-Adjei, G. (2019). Journalism in the era of mobile technology: The changing pattern of news production and the thriving culture of fake news in Pakistan

- and Ghana. *World of Media. Journal of Russian Media and Journalism Studies*, (3), 42-64. <https://doi:10.30547/worldofmedia.3.2019.2>
- Jane, E. A. (2014). "Your a ugly, whorish, slut" understanding e-bile. *Feminist Media Studies*, 14(4), 531-546. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2012.741073>
- Janks, H. (1997). Critical discourse analysis as a research tool. *Discourse: Studies In The Cultural Politics Of Education*, 18(3), 329-342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0159630970180302>
- Jenkins, H. (2000). Reception theory and audience research: The mystery of the vampire's kiss. na. In C. Gledhill & L. Williams (Eds.), *Reinventing film studies* (pp. 165-182). Arnold.
- Jones, H. G. (2017). *Harden up! Analysing soft news in New zealand's prime-time television news bulletins* [Doctoral dissertation, Auckland University of Technology]. <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/server/api/core/bitstreams/a488d166-0f2b-432a-bbf3-c8de8fbc8a4b/content>
- Jørgensen, M. W., & Phillips, L. J. (2002). *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. Sage.
- Jovanovski, N. (2023). Qualitative research in women's and gender studies: The 'radical focus group as feminist praxis. In Laimputtong (Ed.), *How To Conduct Qualitative Research in Social Science* (pp. 93-114). Elgar
- Juni, M. S., Kareem, J., Alam, M. K., Haider, I., & Ashraf, A. (2014). Impact of Pakistan Television (PTV) dramas on rural culture: A case study of district Layyah. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Academic Research*, 2(4), 1-13. <http://doi:10.17051/ilkonline.2021.04.338>
- Kalamar, D. (2016). Convergence of media and transformation of audience. *Informatologia*, 49(3-4), 190-202.



- Kallio, H., Pietilä, A. M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: Developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 72(12), 2954-2965.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13031>
- Kamal, D. R. (2022). Networked struggles: Placards at Pakistan's Aurat March. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 30(2), 219-233. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10691-021-09480-4>
- Kareem, S., Roshan, R., Qasim, Z., & Mehreen, K. (2021). Women and media: Stereotyping trends of women portrayal during 21 st Century (An analysis of female roles in Pakistani dramas during different political eras). *Elementary Education Online*, 20(4), 2960-2966.
- Karmaliani, R., Irfan, F., Bann, C. M., McClure, E. M., Moss, N., Pasha, O., & Goldenberg, R. L. (2008). Domestic violence prior to and during pregnancy among Pakistani women. *Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica*, 87(11), 1194-1201. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00016340802460263>
- Kellner, D. (2011). Cultural studies, multiculturalism, and media culture. In G. Dines & J. M. Humez (Eds.), *Gender, race, and class in media: A critical reader* (pp. 7-18). Sage.
- Khaliq, B. (n.d.). *International domestic workers day: The work of WISE in Pakistan*. Norwegian Human Rights Fund.  
<https://nhrf.no/article/2020/international-domestic-workers-day-the-work-of-our-grantee-organization-in-pakistan>
- Khan, A. R. (2014). Community perceptions and activisms regarding domestic violence against women: Perspectives from rural Bangladesh. *Journal of Community Positive Practices*, (3), 79-98.
- Khan, A., & Hussain, R. (2008). Violence against women in Pakistan: Perceptions and experiences of domestic violence. *Asian Studies Review*, 32(2), 239-253.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10357820802062181>

- Khan, A., & Tahir, S. N. (2021). Media talk shows in Pakistan and its impact on audience behavior. *Journal of Journalism, Media Science & Creative Arts*, 1(1), 65-83.
- Khan, F. A. (2016). Khwaja Sira activism: The politics of gender ambiguity in Pakistan. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 3(1-2), 158-164.  
<https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-3334331>
- Khan, H. U. (2019). How the victims in the Balochistan conflict were reported? Comparison of news reports of Dawn and News International (2016). *JPDC*, 3(2).  
<https://doi.org/10.36968/JPDC-V03-I02-03>
- Khan, M. E., Townsend, J. W., & Pelto, P. J. (Eds.). (2014). *Sexuality, gender roles, and domestic violence in South Asia*. Population Council. <http://doi.org/978-0-87834-130-6>
- Khan, M. M., Ali, R. S., Faisal, M., & Mithani, H. F. (2016). Today's News is tomorrow's history: Impact of yellow journalism, tabloids and paparazzi on the future of journalism and future history of Pakistan. *Journal of Mass Communication*, 14.  
<http://jmcd-uok.com/index.php/jmcd/article/view/46/49>
- Khan, N. S., Saigol, R., & Zia, A. S. (1995). A celebration of women: essays and abstracts from the women's studies conference March 1994. (*No Title*).
- Khan, Q., Sultana, N., Bughio, Q., & Naz, A. (2014). Role of language in gender identity formation in Pakistani school textbooks. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 21(1), 55-84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971521513511200>
- Khan, R. (2018). Attitudes towards 'honor' violence and killings in collectivist cultures. In J. L. Ireland, P. Birch & C. A. Ireland (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of human aggression: Current issues and perspectives* (pp. 181-192). Routledge
- Khan, S. K. (2019, August 13). Outrage in Pakistan over abuse of child domestic workers. *The Guardian*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/aug/13/trauma-child-domestic-workers-pakistan>

- Kinnick, K. N., Krugman, D. M., & Cameron, G. T. (1996). Compassion fatigue: Communication and burnout toward social problems. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73(3), 687-707.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/107769909607300314>
- Kirkland-Ives, M. (2021). Introduction: Audiences and reception: Readers, listeners, and viewers. In J. R. Decker & M. Kirkland-Ives (Eds.), *Audience and reception in the early modern period* (pp. 1-29). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003132141-1>
- Klarfeld, J. (2011). A striking disconnect: Marital rape law's failure to keep up with domestic violence law. *American Criminal Law Review*, 48, 1819.
- Koenig, M. A., Ahmed, S., Hossain, M. B., & Mozumder, A. K. A. (2003). Women's status and domestic violence in rural Bangladesh: Individual-and community-level effects. *Demography*, 40, 269-288. <https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.2003.0014>
- Kort-Butler, L. A., & Habecker, P. (2018). Framing and cultivating the story of crime: The effects of media use, victimization, and social networks on attitudes about crime. *Criminal Justice Review*, 43(2), 127-146. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734016817710696>
- Kozol, W. (1995). Fracturing domesticity: Media, nationalism, and the question of feminist influence. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 20(3), 646-667.
- Kulczycki, A., & Windle, S. (2011). Honor killings in the Middle East and North Africa: A systematic review of the literature. *Violence Against Women*, 17(11), 1442-1464.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012114341>
- Kunst, J., Bailey, A., Prendergas, C., & Gundersen, A. (2018). Sexism, rape myths and feminist identification explain gender differences in attitudes toward the #metoo

- social media campaign in two countries. *Media Psychology*, 22(5), 818-843.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2018.1532300>
- Lapsansky, C., & Chatterjee, J. S. (2013). Masculinity matters: Using entertainment education to engage men in ending violence against women in India. *Critical Arts*, 27(1), 36-55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02560046.2013.766972>
- Lari, M. Z. (2011). *A pilot study on 'honour killings' in Pakistan and compliance of law*. Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation.  
<https://archive.nyu.edu/handle/2451/33807>
- Lau, M. (2007). *The role of Islam in the legal system of Pakistan*. Brill Nijhoff.
- Lazenbatt, A., Taylor, J., & Cree, L. (2009). A healthy settings framework: An evaluation and comparison of midwives' responses to addressing domestic violence. *Midwifery*, 25(6), 622-636. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.midw.2007.11.001>
- Lee, C., & Wong, J. S. (2020). 99 reasons and he ain't one: A content analysis of domestic homicide news coverage. *Violence Against Women*, 26(2), 213-232. [https://DOI: 10.1177/1077801219832325](https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801219832325)
- Levitt, H. M. (2018). How to conduct a qualitative meta-analysis: Tailoring methods to enhance methodological integrity. *Psychotherapy Research*, 28(3), 367-378.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2018.1447708>
- Liamputtong, P. (2020). *Qualitative research methods*. Oxford University.
- Lindner, T., De Koster, W., & Van der Waal, J. (2022). Different understandings of welfare benefits among the Dutch public: A focus group study. *Social Policy & Administration*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12816>
- Lindsay-Brisbin, J., DePrince, A. P., & Welton-Mitchell, C. (2014). Missed opportunities: Newspaper reports of domestic violence. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 23(4), 383-399. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2014.896839>

- Lippmann, W. (1998). *Public Opinion*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers. (Original work published 1922).
- Lloyd, M., & Ramon, S. (2016). Blame the victim? Domestic violence as covered in The Sun and The Guardian. *The Conversation*.  
[https://uhra.herts.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/2299/17493/Blame\\_the\\_victim\\_The\\_Conversation\\_Nov\\_2016.pdf?sequence=3](https://uhra.herts.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/2299/17493/Blame_the_victim_The_Conversation_Nov_2016.pdf?sequence=3)
- Lloyd, M., & Ramon, S. (2017). Smoke and mirrors: UK newspaper representations of intimate partner domestic violence. *Violence Against Women*, 23(1), 114-139.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1077801216634468>
- Lobo, P., & Cabecinhas, R. (2010). The negotiation of meanings in the evening news. *International Communication Gazette*, 72(4-5), 339-358.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048510362611>
- Lowry, D. T., Nio, T. C. J., & Leitner, D. W. (2003). Setting the public fear agenda: A longitudinal analysis of network TV crime reporting, public perceptions of crime, and FBI crime statistics. *Journal of Communication*, 53(1), 61-73.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2003.tb03005.x>
- Lynch, K. L. (2002). *Children exposed to domestic violence: Resiliency and the mother-child relationship*. University of Montana.
- MacGregor, B., & Morrison, D. E. (1995). From focus groups to editing groups: A new method of reception analysis. *Media, Culture & Society*, 17(1), 141-150.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2020.101422>
- Madhani, F. I., Karmaliani, R., Patel, C., Bann, C. M., McClure, E. M., Pasha, O., & Goldenberg, R. L. (2017). Women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence: An observational study from Hyderabad, Pakistan. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 32(1), 76-100. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260515585533>

- Madianou, M. (2009). Audience reception and news in everyday life. In K. Wahl-Jorgensen & T. Hanitzsch (Eds.), *The handbook of journalism studies* (pp. 345-358). Routledge.
- Mahama, H., & Khalifa, R. (2017). Field interviews. In Z. Hoque, L. D. Parker, M. A. Covaleski, & K. Haynes (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to qualitative accounting research methods* (pp. 321–338). London: Routledge.
- Mahmood, F. (2019). Corporate influence on Pakistani news media: Journalists' perception. *Journal of Media Studies*, 33(1), 25-43.
- Mahoney, C. (2022). Is this what a feminist looks like? Curating the feminist self in the neoliberal visual economy of Instagrams. *Feminist Media Studies*, 22(3), 519-535.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2020.1810732>
- Majeed, F. (2014, March 15). The Problem with our drama industry and its depiction of Pakistani women. *The Express Tribune*.  
<https://tribune.com.pk/article/21387/the-problem-with-our-drama-industry-and-its-depiction-of-pakistani-women>
- Malik, M., Munir, N., Ghani, M. U., & Ahmad, N. (2021). Domestic violence and its relationship with depression, anxiety and quality of life: A hidden dilemma of Pakistani women. *Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences*, 37(1), 191. <https://doi.org/10.12669/pjms.37.1.2893>
- Malik, R. (2021). *Masculine Ideologies and Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Forman Christian College].
- Manganello, J. A. (2008). Teens, dating violence, and media use: A review of the literature and conceptual model for future research. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 9(1), 3-18.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838007309804>
- Manjoo, R. (2012). *Report of the special rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences*. United Nations General Assembly.

[https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/A.HRC.20.16\\_En.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/A.HRC.20.16_En.pdf)

Masood, T. (2019, March 19). Women are Battling a Spike in online threats after the Aurat March, but does anybody care? *Dawn Images, March19*.

<https://images.dawn.com/news/1182081>

Maydell, E. (2018). 'It just seemed like your normal domestic violence': Ethnic stereotypes in print media coverage of child abuse in New Zealand. *Media, Culture & Society*, 40(5), 707-724. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443717737610>

McCracken, G. (1988). *The long interview*. Sage.

[http://doi.org/10.4135/9781412986229\\_7](http://doi.org/10.4135/9781412986229_7).

McDonald, M. G. (1999). Unnecessary roughness: Gender and racial politics in domestic violence media events. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 16(2), 111-133.

<https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.16.2.111>

McGregor, J. (2002, July). Restating news values: Contemporary criteria for selecting the news. In *Refereed articles from the Proceedings of the ANZCA 2002 Conference, Coolangatta. Communication: Reconstructed for the 21st Century* (pp. 1-7).

MacGregor, B., & Morrison, D. E. (1995). From focus groups to editing groups: A new method of reception analysis. *Media, Culture & Society*, 17(1), 141-150.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/016344395017001009>

McGuinness, M. (2007). *Historical media report: Campaign for Action on family violence*. New Zealand Ministry of Social Development.

McIntosh, M. J., & Morse, J. M. (2015). Situating and constructing diversity in semi-structured interviews. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, 2.

<http://doi.org/10.1177/2333393615597674>

- McLaren, F. (2010). *Attitudes, values and beliefs about violence within families*. Ministry of Social Development. New Zealand: Centre for Social Research and Evaluation.  
<http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/research/campaign-action-violence-research/attitudes-values-and-beliefs-about-violence-within-families.pdf>.
- McManus, J. H. (1994). *Market-driven journalism: Let the citizen beware?* Sage.
- McManus, J., & Dorfman, L. (2005). Functional truth or sexist distortion? Assessing a feminist critique of intimate violence reporting. *Journalism*, 6(1), 43-65.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884905048952>
- McQuail, D. (2000). *Mass communication* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Meadows, M., & Ewart, J. (2001). More than skin-deep: Australia's Indigenous heritage. *Journalism Theory in Practice*, 115-30.
- Meer, A. S., Iftikhar, U., & Shahid, R. (2015). Effects of breaking news on the quality of Pakistani television news: A journalistic perspective. *Global Regional Review*, 5(1), 340-345. [http://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2020\(V-I\).3](http://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2020(V-I).3)
- Megarry, J. (2014). Online incivility or sexual harassment? Conceptualising women's experiences in the digital age. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 47, 46-55.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.07.012>
- Mellado, C., & Van Dalen, A. (2014). Between rhetoric and practice: Explaining the gap between role conception and performance in journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 15(6), 859-878. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2013.838046>
- Meltzer, C. E. (2023). Isolated incidents. Media reporting on violence against women in the German press. *Journalism Practice*, 1-20.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2022.2162952>



- Memon, B. A. (2011). *The role and status of journalists in Sindh province, Pakistan* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Leicester].
- Mendes, K., J. Ringrose, & J. Keller. (2018). #MeToo and the promise and pitfalls of challenging rape culture through digital feminist activism. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 25(2), 236–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1350506818765318>.
- Mernissi, F. (1999). *The veil and the male elite: A feminist interpretation of women's rights in Islam*. Perseus Books.
- Meyer, M. D. (2014). #Thevagenda's war on headlines: Feminist activism in the information age. *Feminist Media Studies*, 14(6), 1107-1108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2014.975451>
- Meyers, M. (1994). News of battering. *Journal of Communication*, 44(2), 47-63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1994.tb00676.x>
- Meyers, M. (1996). *News coverage of violence against women: Engendering blame*. Sage.
- Mezger, M., & Sial, S. (2010). *Media and governance in Pakistan: A controversial yet essential relationship*. Initiative for Peace Building. [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20101109\\_CRU\\_publicatie\\_mmezgera.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20101109_CRU_publicatie_mmezgera.pdf)
- Michelle, C., & Weaver, C. K. (2003). Discursive manoeuvres and hegemonic recuperations in New Zealand documentary representations of domestic violence. *Feminist Media Studies*, 3(3), 283-299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1468077032000166522>
- Mikton, C., & Butchart, A. (2009). Child maltreatment prevention: A systematic review of reviews. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 87, 353-361.
- Ministry of Broadcasting and National Heritage (2015). *Electronic media code of conduct – 2015*. <http://www.moib.gov.pk/MediaLaws/coc2015.pdf>

- Mirani, Q.A., Mirani, A.A., Memon, M.S., Chohan, R. and Qabulio, M., 2021. The role of social media during COVID–19 pandemic situation and domestic violence: Its impacts on Pakistan Society. *International Journal*, 10(3), 2029-2035.
- Modood, T. (2022). Multiculturalizing secularism. In J. Marko, M. Lakitsch, F. Winter, W. Weirer & K. Wonisch (Eds.), *Religious diversity, state, and law* (pp. 110-134). Brill Nijhoff.
- Moghadam, V. M., & Sadiqi, F. (2006). Women's activism and the public sphere: An introduction and overview. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 2(2), 1-7.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/jmw.2006.0020>
- Moghadam, M. V., & Sadiqi, F. (2006). Women and the Public Sphere in the Middle East and North Africa. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 2(2), 1-7.
- Mohajan, H. (2022). Four waves of feminism: A blessing for global humanity. *Studies in Social Science & Humanities*, 1(2), 1-8.
- Molana Tariq Jameel Bayan. (2020, April 9). *Hitting the wife's husband by Molana Tariq Jameel* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzR6rIxP1to>
- Moore, S. E. (2011). Tracing the life of a crime category: The shifting meaning of “date rape”. *Feminist Media Studies*, 11(4), 451-465.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2011.555966>
- Morley, D. (1992). Populism, revisionism and the ‘new audience research. *Poetics*, 21(4), 339-344.
- Morley, D. G. (1980). *The nationwide audience*. British Film Institute.
- Mumtaz, K. (2005). Advocacy for an end to poverty, inequality, and insecurity: Feminist social movements in Pakistan. *Gender & Development*, 13(3), 63-69.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13552070512331332298>

- Mumtaz, K. (2019). Identity politics and women: "fundamentalism" and women in Pakistan. In K. Mumtaz (Ed.), *Identity politics and women* (pp. 228-242). Routledge.
- Mwesige, P. G. (2004). Disseminators, advocates and watchdogs: A profile of Ugandan journalists in the new millennium. *Journalism*, 5(1), 69-96.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884904039556>
- Nadeem, M., & Malik, M. I. (2021). The role of social norm in acceptability attitude of women toward intimate partner violence in Punjab, Pakistan. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(21-22). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260519889942>
- Nasir, O. B., Weaver, K. C., & Schott, G. (in press). News of domestic violence: Journalistic imperatives in television news reporting of Pakistan. *Handbook of communication and media in global South*. Routledge.
- Nasrullah, M., Zakar, R., & Zakar, M. Z. (2014). Child marriage and its associations with controlling behaviors and spousal violence against adolescent and young women in Pakistan. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 55(6), 804-809.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.06.013>
- National Assembly of Pakistan. (2012). *The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan*. [https://na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1333523681\\_951.pdf](https://na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1333523681_951.pdf)
- National Institute of Population Studies. (2013). Pakistan demographic and health survey 2012-13. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/fr290/fr290.pdf>
- National Institute of Population Studies. (2019). *Pakistan demographic and health survey 2017-18*.  
<https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/pakistan-demographic-and-health-survey-2017-2018>

- Nawaz, S., Kiran, A., Shabbir, M. S., Koser, M., & Zamir, A. (2022). Does domestic violence affect the freedom of women life in Pakistan. *Journal of Public Value and Administrative Insight*, 5(2), 440-454. <https://doi.org/10.31580/jpvai.v5i2.2518>
- Naylor, B. (2001). Reporting violence in the British print media: Gendered stories. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 40(2), 180-194.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2311.00200>
- Nettleton, P. H. (2011). Domestic violence in men's and women's magazines: Women are guilty of choosing the wrong men, men are not guilty of hitting women. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 34(2), 139-160.  
<http://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2011.618240>
- Neuman, W. R. (1982). Television and American culture: The mass medium and the pluralist audience. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 46(4), 471-487.
- Niaz, U. (2003). Violence against women in South Asian countries. *Archives of women's Mental Health*, 6(3), 173-184. [https:// DOI 10.1007/s00737-003-0171-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00737-003-0171-9)
- Niaz, U. (2004). Women's mental health in Pakistan. *World Psychiatry*, 3(1), 60.
- Nisbett, R., & Ross, L. (1980). *Human inference: Strategies and shortcomings of social judgement*. Prentice-Hall.
- Northcutt Bohmert, M., Allison, K., & Ducate, C. (2019). “A rape was reported”: construction of crime in a university newspaper. *Feminist Media Studies*, 19(6), 873-889. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1509104>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Nusrat, R. (2018, July 13). The challenges for Pakistan's female journalists. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/07>.

- O'Neill, D. (1998). A post-structuralist review of the theoretical literature surrounding wife abuse. *Violence Against Women*, 4(4), 457-490.
- O'Neill, D. (2000). Domestically violent men speak: A post-structuralist critique. *New Zealand Sociology*, 15(1), 1-29.
- O'Neill, D., & Harcup, T. (2009). News values and selectivity. In K. Wahl-Jorgensen & T. Hanitzsch (Eds.), *The handbook of journalism studies* (pp. 181-194). Routledge.
- Olaseinde, O., & Ogwuche, P. O. (2022). Audience perception of television portrayal of domestic violence against men in Nigeria. *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research*, 6(3), 44-54.
- O'Neill, D., & Morgan, M. (2001). Pragmatic post-structuralism (I): Participant observation and discourse in evaluating violence intervention. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 11(4), 263-275. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.624>
- Ornebring, H., & Jonsson, A. M. (2004). Tabloid journalism and the public sphere: A historical perspective on tabloid journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 5(3), 283-295. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670042000246052>
- Owusu, D. A. (2016). Mute in pain: The power of silence in triggering domestic violence in Ghana. *Social Alternatives*, 35(1), 26-32.
- Ozcetin, H. (2009). 'Breaking the silence': The religious Muslim women's movement in Turkey. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 11(1), 106-119.
- Pakeeza, S. (2015). Domestic violence laws and practices in Pakistan. *VFAST Transactions on Education and Social Sciences*, 3(1), 46-49. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21015/vtess.v6i1.205>
- PakVoter. (2023). *The constitution of Pakistan*. <https://pakovoter.org/constitution-of-pakistan/>

- Pakistan Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. (2019). Information and Broadcasting Division. <http://www.moib.gov.pk/page.aspx?page=75>
- Palazzolo, K. E., & Roberto, A. J. (2011). Media representations of intimate partner violence and punishment preferences: Exploring the role of attributions and emotions. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 39(1), 1-18.  
<http://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2010.536843>
- Palmer, J. (2000). *Spinning into control: News values and source strategies*. A&C Black.
- Parvin, K., Sultana, N., Naved, R. T., & Amin, S. (2012). Spousal violence against women and help seeking behavior. *Growing up safe and healthy (SAFE): Baseline report on sexual and reproductive health and rights and violence against women and girls in Dhaka slums*.
- Patel, S., & Gadit, A. M. (2008). Karo-Kari: A form of honour killing in Pakistan. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 45(4), 683-694. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461508100790>
- Patmisari, E., & McLaren, H. (2022). Australian trends in academic literature concerned with family and domestic violence perpetrators: A bibliometric literature review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380221113786>
- Patterson, T.E. (1993) *Out of order*. Knopf
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice*, 1(3), 261–283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325002001003636>
- Peek-Asa, C., Wallis, A., Harland, K., Beyer, K., Dickey, P., & Saftlas, A. (2011). Rural disparity in domestic violence prevalence and access to resources. *Journal of Women's Health*, 20(11), 1743-1749. <https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2011.2891>

- Pepin, J. R. (2016). Nobody's business? White male privilege in media coverage of intimate partner violence. *Sociological Spectrum*, 36(3), 123-141.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02732173.2015.1108886>
- Perez-Vincent, S. M., & Carreras, E. (2022). Domestic violence reporting during the COVID-19 pandemic: evidence from Latin America. *Review of Economics of the Household*, 20, 1-32. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11150-022-09607-9>
- Perveen-Rakhshinda, R. P. (2020). *Violence against women & girls in the times of covid-19 pandemic*. Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation.  
<https://www.af.org.pk/PDF/VAW%20Reports%20AND%20PR/VAWG%20Report%202020.pdf?msclkid=cfb9a304b81411ec9121ea5831f4b39e>
- Perveen, R. (2010). Violence against women in Pakistan: A qualitative review of statistics for 2009. *Islamabad: Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation*.
- Phillips, L., & Jorgensen, M. (2002). *Discourse analysis: As theory and method*. Sage.
- Philo, G. (1990). Seeing is believing. *British Journalism Review*, 1(4), 58-64.
- Pintak, L., & Nazir, S. J. (2013). Pakistani journalism: At the crossroads of Muslim identity, national priorities, and journalistic culture. *Media, Culture & Society*, 35(5), 640-665.  
<http://doi.org/10.1177/0163443713483654>
- Plaisance, P. L. (2013). Media ethics. In L. C. Becker & C. B. Becker (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of ethics*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203952948>
- Plaisance, P. L., & Skewes, E. A. (2003). Personal and professional dimensions of news work: Exploring the link between journalists' values and roles. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 80(4), 833-848.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900308000406>

- Pokharel, B., Hegadoren, K., & Papathanassoglou, E. (2020). Factors influencing silencing of women who experience intimate partner violence: An integrative review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 52*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2020.101422>
- Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2010). Generalization in quantitative and qualitative research: Myths and strategies. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 47*(11), 1451-1458.
- Potter, W. J. (2014). *Media literacy (7th ed.)*. Sage.
- RAAH-e-HIDAYAT [Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza]. (2019, August 19). *Wife ko marna jaiz | Wife ka husband ko marna bhi jaiz hai | Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8pAdVtlKss>
- Rabbani, F., Qureshi, F., & Rizvi, N. (2008). Perspectives on domestic violence: Case study from Karachi, Pakistan. *EMHJ-Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal, 14*(2), 415-426. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/117454>
- Rafay, B., Habib, B., Tariq, U., & Ali, A. A. (2016). Analysis on the Social Legislation and Women Empowerment in Pakistan: Comparative study of Democratic governments and Dictatorship periods (1947-2012). *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan, 53*(1).
- Rafi, S., Ali, M., & Nawaz, I. (2015). Violence against women in Punjab: Prevalence, varying trends and efforts of media and civil society. *Pakistan Journal of Applied Social Sciences, 1*(1), 45-58. <https://doi.org/10.46568/pjass.v1i1.279>
- Rahimi, B. (2011). The agonistic social media: Cyberspace in the formation of dissent and consolidation of state power in postelection Iran. *The Communication Review, 14*(3), 158-178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2011.597240>
- Rakow, L. F., & Kranich, K. (1991). Woman as sign in television news. *Journal of Communication, 41*(1), 8-23.



- Rasul, S. (2014). Empowerment of Pakistani women: Perceptions and reality. *NDU Journal*, 28, 113-126.
- Rathore, M. A. (2015). Women's rights in Pakistan: The Zina ordinance & the need for reform. *School of Public Policy*.  
[https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1040&context=cppa\\_cap\\_stones](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1040&context=cppa_cap_stones)
- Rauf, B., Saleem, N., Clawson, R., Sanghera, M., & Marston, G. (2013). Forced marriage: Implications for mental health and intellectual disability services. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 19(2), 135-143. <http://doi.org/10.1192/apt.bp.111.009316>
- Rayner-Thomas, M., Dixon, R., Fanslow, J., & Tse, C. (2016). The impact of domestic violence on the workplace. *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations*, 41(1), 8-21.
- Raza, M. R., Jan, M., Sultan, K., & Aziz, F. (2012). Portrayal of war on terrorism in Pakistani print media exploring peace framing in daily nation and business recorder. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 1(4), 97-108. Raza, M. R., Sultan, K., & Jan, M. (2012). Sensationalism in Pakistani private Urdu news channels: Audience perception. *International Journal of Physical and Social Sciences*, 2(9), 539-553.
- Rentschler, C. A. (2014). Rape culture and the feminist politics of social media. *Girlhood Studies*, 7(1), 65-82.
- Report of the Select Committee of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence Against Women (Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2018 (Pakistan).
- Riaz, S., & Taj, S. (2017). Media ethics in Pakistan: Exploring stake holders' perceptions. *Global Media Journal*, 10(2), 1-29. Richards, T. N., Gillespie, L. K., & Smith, M. D. (2014). An examination of the media portrayal of femicide-suicides: An exploratory

frame analysis. *Feminist Criminology*, 9(1), 24-44.

<http://doi.org/10.1177/1557085113501221>

Richards, T. N., Kirkland Gillespie, L., & Dwayne Smith, M. (2011). Exploring news coverage of femicide: Does reporting the news add insult to injury?. *Feminist Criminology*, 6(3), 178-202. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1557085111409919>

Richardson, K., & Corner, J. (1986). Reading reception: Mediation and transparency in viewers' accounts of a TV programme. *Media, Culture & Society*, 8(4), 485-508. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443786008004007>

Rohlinger, D.A., Bunnage, L.A., Klein, J. (2014). Virtual power plays: Social movements, internet communication technology, and political parties. In: B. Grofman, A. Trechsel & M. Franklin (Eds). *The Internet and Democracy in Global Perspective. Studies in Public Choice*, 31. Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-04352-4\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-04352-4_6)

Romer, D., Jamieson, K. H., & Aday, S. (2006). Television news and the cultivation of fear of crime. *Journal of Communication*, 53(1), 88-104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2003.tb03007.x>

Rosenberger, J. S., & Callanan, V. J. (2011). The influence of media on penal attitudes. *Criminal Justice Review*, 36(4), 435-455. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734016811428779>

Rosenthal, M. (2016). Qualitative research methods: Why, when, and how to conduct interviews and focus groups in pharmacy research. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 8(4), 509-516. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2016.03.021>

Ross, R. D., & Cormier, S. C. (2010). *Handbook for citizen journalists*. National Association of Citizen Journalists. Routledge.

Rowe, L., & Kidd, M. R. (2007). Increasing violence in Australian general practice is a public health issue. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 187(2), 118-119. [https://www.mja.com.au/system/files/issues/187\\_02\\_160707/row10386\\_fm.pdf](https://www.mja.com.au/system/files/issues/187_02_160707/row10386_fm.pdf)

- Ryan, C., Anastario, M., & DaCunha, A. (2006). Changing coverage of domestic violence murders: A longitudinal experiment in participatory communication. *Journal of Interpersonal violence, 21*(2), 209-228. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260505282285>
- Sabir, S. (2020, September 13). A few most-publicised rape cases in Pakistan. The News. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/714237-a-few-most-publicised-rape-cases-in-pakistan>
- Ryfe, D. M. (2020). The role of self-reports in the study of news production. *Journalism, 21*(3), 349-364. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146488491880007>
- Sacco, V. F. (1995). Media constructions of crime. *The Annals of the American Academy Of Political and Social Science, 539*(1), 141-154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716295539001011>
- Sadia, S., Ahmed, W., & Riaz, A. (2022). Negative projection: A critical discourse analysis of women's portrayal in Pakistani news channel. *Annals of Human and Social Sciences, 3*(2), 225-234. [http://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2022\(3-II\)21](http://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2022(3-II)21)
- Sahar, N. (2022). Double bind of Muslim women's activism in Pakistan: Case of Malala Yousafzai and Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 24*(2), 14.
- Sahih Muslim* (N. al Khattab, trans.). (2007). Darussalam Publications.
- Saiyid, D. H. (2001). Women in politics-problems of participation: A case study of Pakistan. *Strategic Studies, 21*(3), 11-24.
- Salcioglu, E., Urhan, S., Pirinccioglu, T., & Aydin, S. (2017). Anticipatory fear and helplessness predict PTSD and depression in domestic violence survivors. *Psychological trauma: theory, research, practice, and policy, 9*(1), 117. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000200>

- Salgado, S., & Strömbäck, J. (2012). Interpretive journalism: A review of concepts, operationalizations and key findings. *Journalism*, 13(2), 144-161.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884911427797>
- Sarfraz, M. (2020, January 29). Pak anxiety: The modern woman. *The Telegraph Online*.  
<https://www.telegraphindia.com/opinion/pakistan-anxiety-the-modernwoman/cid/1740555/>
- Sattar, T., Ahmad, S., & Asim, M. (2022). Intimate partner violence against women in Southern Punjab, Pakistan: A phenomenological study. *BMC Women's Health*, 22(1), 505. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-022-02095-0>
- Savage, M. W., Scarduzio, J. A., Lockwood Harris, K., Carlyle, K. E., & Sheff, S. E. (2017). News stories of intimate partner violence: an experimental examination of participant sex, perpetrator sex, and violence severity on seriousness, sympathy, and punishment preferences. *Health Communication*, 32(6), 768–776. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2016.1217453>.
- Schelong, K. M. (1994). Domestic violence and the state: Response to and rationales for spousal battering, marital rape and stalking. *Marquette Law Review*, 78-79.
- Scheufele, D. A., & Tewksbury, D. (2007). Framing, agenda setting, and priming: The evolution of three media effects models. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 9-20.  
[https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00326\\_5.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00326_5.x)
- Schiffères, S., Newman, N., Thurman, N., Corney, D., Göker, A., & Martin, C. (2014). Identifying and verifying news through social media: Developing a user-centred tool for professional journalists. *Digital journalism*, 2(3), 406-418.
- Schiffrin, D., Tannen, D., & Ehernberger Hamilton, H. (2003). Introduction: What is discourse analysis. *The handbook of discourse analysis*. Blackwell.

- Schlesinger, P., Dobash, R. E., Dobash, R.P., & Weaver, C. K. (1992). *Women viewing violence*. British Film Institute.
- Schröder, K. C. (2019). Audience reception research in a post-broadcasting digital age. *Television & New Media, 20*(2), 155-169. DOI: 10.1177/1527476418811114
- Schultze, U., & Avital, M. (2011). Designing interviews to generate rich data for information systems research. *Information and Organization, 21*(1), 1–16.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2001). *Qualitative inquiry: A dictionary of terms* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Serez, A. (2017). Feminism in Pakistan: Dialogues between Pakistani feminists. *Laurier Undergraduate Journal of the Arts, 3*(1), 4.
- Shabir, G., Ashraf, A., & Rasool, F. (2020). Dependence of editorial independence, influence of economic factors on news channels in Pakistan. *Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economies, 6*(2), 883-892.
- Shabir, G., Ashraf, A., Shah, B. H., & Ghaznavi, Q. U. D. (2019). Compromised autonomy: The impact of social pressures on editorial decision making in top news channels of Pakistan. *Global Media Journal: Pakistan Edition, 12*(2).
- Shabir, S., & Mahmood, A. (2020). Political struggle for women empowerment: A comparative study of General Zia-ul-Haq and General Pervez Musharraf Era. *Journal of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences, 1*(1), 17-29.  
<https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.jhsms/1.1.2>
- Shah, S. F. A., Jan, F., Ginossar, T., McGrail, J. P., Baber, D., & Ullah, R. (2022). Trauma exposure and post-traumatic stress disorder among regional journalists in Pakistan. *Journalism, 23*(2), 391-408.

- Shahid, R., Raza, S. Y., & Shams, M. (2023). Promotion of modernism through the influx of private channels in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Social Research*, 5(1), 196-202.
- Shaikh, S. D. (1997). Exegetical Violence: Nushuz in Qur'anic Gender Ideology. *Journal for Islamic Studies*, 17, 49.
- Shamsi, N. (2005). *Journalism: Ethics and code*. Anmol Publications Pvt Ltd.
- Shaw, A. (2017). Encoding and decoding affordances: Stuart Hall and interactive media technologies. *media, culture & society*, 39(4), 592-602.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443717692741>
- Shaw, F. (2012). 'HOTTEST 100 WOMEN' Cross-platform discursive activism in feminist blogging networks. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 27(74), 373-387.
- Shehrbano Zia, A. (2022). Feminists as Cultural 'Assassins' of Pakistan. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 24(2), 15
- Siddiqi K. (2016, September 4) The challenge ahead. *The Express Tribune*, <https://direct88786.tribune.com.pk/index.php/story/1175971/the-challenge-ahead> (accessed 07 January 2019).
- Siddiqi, K. (2019) Lessons to be learnt as harassment prevails in university campuses. *The Express Tribune*. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2083763/6-lessons-to-be-learnt>
- Siddiqi, S., Soomro, N. N., & Mehboob, Y. (2021). Our generation at risk: Tale of disintegrated families' children in areas of Pakistan-A review. *Sukkur IBA Journal of Educational Sciences and Technologies*, 1(1), 56-66.  
<https://doi.org/10.30537/sjest.v1i1.653>
- Sieff, E. (2003). Media frames of mental illnesses: The potential impact of negative frames. *Journal of Mental Health*, 12(3), 259-269.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0963823031000118249>

- Silveirinha, M. J. (2007). Displacing the “Political” The “personal” in the media public sphere. *Feminist Media Studies*, 7(1), 65-79.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14680770601103720>
- Silverman, D. (Ed.). (2020). *Qualitative research*. Sage.
- Simeunović-Patić, B. (2018). Media representations and constructions of crime, offenders and victims: Serbian case. *Criminal Justice and Security in Central and Eastern Europe*, 59-73.
- Simga, H., & Goker, G. Z. (2017). Whither feminist alliance? Secular feminists and Islamist women in Turkey. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 23(3), 273-293.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.2017.1349717>
- Simons, M., & Morgan, J. (2018). Changing media coverage of violence against women: Changing sourcing practices?. *Journalism Studies*, 19(8), 1202-1217.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1266279>
- Singh, D., & Bhandari, D. S. (2021). Legacy of honor and violence: An analysis of factors responsible for honor killings in Afghanistan, Canada, India, and Pakistan as discussed in selected documentaries on real cases. *Sage Open*, 11(2),  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211022323>
- Siraj, S. A., & Hussain, S. (2016). Journalism in Pakistan: Practice and function. *Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 24(2).
- Skalli, L. H. (2011). Constructing Arab female leadership lessons from the Moroccan media. *Gender & Society*, 25(4), 473-495. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243211411051>
- Skalli, L. H. (2016). Young women and social media against sexual harassment in North Africa. In L. H. Skalli (Ed.). *Gender, women and the Arab Spring* (pp. 114-128). Routledge.

- Skogerbø, E., Bruns, A., Quodling, A., & Ingebretsen, T. (2015). Social media and sourcing in mainstream journalism. In A. Bruns, G. Enli, E. Skogerbø, A. O. Larsson & C. Christensen (Eds.). *The Routledge companion to social media and politics* (pp. 190-222). Routledge.
- Slakoff, D. C., & Brennan, P. K. (2019). The differential representation of Latina and black female victims in front-page news stories: A qualitative document analysis. *Feminist Criminology, 14*(4), 488-516. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1557085117747031>
- Slater, M. D., Rouner, D., & Long, M. (2006). Television dramas and support for controversial public policies: Effects and mechanisms. *Journal of Communication, 56*(2), 235-252. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00017.x>
- Sleep, L. (2019). *Domestic violence, social security and the couple rule*. Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety..
- Smith, A. L., Bond, C. E., & Jeffries, S. (2019). Media discourses of intimate partner violence in Queensland newspapers. *Journal of Sociology, 55*(3), 571-586. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783319837612>
- Squires, V. (2023). Thematic analysis. In J. M. Okoko, S. Tunison & K. D. Walker (Eds.). *Varieties of qualitative research methods: Selected contextual perspectives* (pp. 463-468). Springer International Publishing.
- Sreedharan, C. & Thorsen, E. (2021). *Sexual violence and the new media: Issues, challenges, and guidelines for journalists in India*. UNESCO. <https://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/35830/7/MAAR%20REPORT%20PDF%20Online%20.pdf>
- Steiner, L. (2020). Feminist media ethics. In L. Wilkins & C. G. Christians (Eds.). *The Routledge handbook of mass media ethics* (pp. 433-452). Routledge.



- Steiner, L. (2011). Feminist ethics and global media. *The Handbook of Global Communication and Media Ethics, 1*, 171-192. Routledge
- Steiner, L., & Okrusch, C. M. (2006). Care as a virtue for journalists. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 21*(2-3), 102-122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08900523.2006.9679728>
- Sudha, S. S. I. R., & Rajan, S. I. (1999). Female demographic disadvantage in India 1981–1991: Sex selective abortions and female infanticide. *Development and Change, 30*(3), 585-618. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00130>
- Sulaiman, K. D. O. (2015). Insights into the Qur'an, 4: 34 ruling as regard wife beating in Islam. *Islamic Perspective, 14*, 37-59. Surette R (2007) *Media, Crime, and Criminal Justice. Images and Realities*. Wadsworth.
- Surette, R. (2018). Media, criminology, and criminal Justice. *Oxford research encyclopedia of criminology and criminal justice*. Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.013.473>
- Susila, M. E. (2013). Islamic perspective on marital rape. *Journal Media Hukum, 20*(2), 317-332. <https://journal.umy.ac.id/index.php/jmh/article/viewFile/271/234>
- Sustainable Social Development Organization. (2022) *Tracking number state of violence against women & children district wise analysis*.  
[https://www.ssdo.org.pk/\\_files/ugd/5668b5\\_1c339bce7ee4432f8b486379ce103104.pdf](https://www.ssdo.org.pk/_files/ugd/5668b5_1c339bce7ee4432f8b486379ce103104.pdf)
- Sutherland, G., Easteal, P., Holland, K., & Vaughan, C. (2019). Mediated representations of violence against women in the mainstream news in Australia. *BMC Public Health, 19*, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-6793-2>
- Sutherland, G., McCormack, A., Easteal, P., Holland, K., & Pirkis, J. (2016). Media guidelines for the responsible reporting of violence against women: A review of evidence and issues. *Australian Journalism Review, 38*(1), 5-17.

- Sutherland, G., Simons, M., & Blatchford, A. (2017). News media and the primary prevention of violence against women and their children. Our Watch. <https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/11/07040030/Emerging-evidence-guide-media-AA.pdf>
- Tahmasebi-Birgani, V. (2017). Social media as a site of transformative politics: Iranian women's online contestations. In P. Vahabzadeh (Ed.). *Iran's struggles for social justice: Economics, agency, justice, activism* (pp. 181-197). Palgrave MacMillan.
- Talib, S., & Idrees, Z. (2012). Pakistani media and disempowerment of women. In T. Carilli & J. Campbell (Eds.). *Challenging images of women in the media: Reinventing women's lives* (pp. 27-34). Lexington Books.
- Tandon, N. (2007). Secondary victimization of children by the media: An analysis of perceptions of victims and journalists. *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences*, 2(2), 119-135.
- Tax, M. (2022). *The rising of the women: Feminist solidarity and class conflict, 1880-1917*. Verso Books.
- Taylor, G. W., & Ussher, J. M. (2001). Making sense of S&M: A discourse analytic account. *Sexualities*, 4(3), 293-314. <https://doi.org/10.1177/136346001004003002>
- Taylor, L. D., & Setters, T. (2011). Watching aggressive, attractive, female protagonists shapes gender roles for women among male and female undergraduate viewers. *Sex Roles*, 65, 35-46. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-011-9960-1>
- Taylor, M. C. (2005). Interviewing. In I. Holloway (Ed.) *Qualitative research in health care* (pp. 39-55). Open University Press.
- Taylor, R. (2009). Slain and slandered: A content analysis of the portrayal of femicide in crime. *Homicide Studies*, 13(1), 21-49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088767908326679>

- Tchaïcha, J. D., & Arfaoui, K. (2017). *The Tunisian women's rights movement: From nascent activism to influential power-broking*. Routledge.
- Tester, K. (2001). *Compassion, morality and the media*. Open University Press.
- The Balochistan Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2014 (Pakistan).
- The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 2018 (Pakistan).
- The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2013 Sindh (Pakistan).
- The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2020, Islamabad (Pakistan).
- The Express Tribune. (n.d.). *Editor's code of ethics*. <https://tribune.com.pk/code-of-ethics>
- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence Against Women (Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2018.
- The Nation. (2023, July 23). *Info minister defends PEMRA Amendment Bill*.  
<https://www.nation.com.pk/23-Jul-2023/info-minister-defends-pemra-amendment-bill>
- The Quran* (M. H. Shakir, Trans.). (1974). World Organization for Islamic Services.
- The Offence of Zina (Enforcement of Hudood) Ordinance, § 6 (1979).  
<https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4db999952.pdf>
- The Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016 (Pakistan).
- Thomson Reuters Foundation (2018, June 26). Factbox: Which are the world's 10 most dangerous countries for women?  
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-women-dangerous-poll-factbox-idUSKBN1JM01Z>
- Thomson Reuters Foundation. (n.d.). The world's most dangerous countries for women.  
<https://poll2018.trust.org/>
- Thrift, S. C. (2014). # YesAllWomen as feminist meme event. *Feminist Media Studies*, 14(6), 1090-1092.

- Towns, A., & MICP, P. D. C. P. M. (2005, June). Violence against women: Beyond silence. In *Invited paper presented at The Women's Convention, Wellington, New Zealand, June* (pp. 3-6). *Trends*, 55(1), 22-45. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2006.0053>
- United Nations. (1993). *Declaration on the elimination of violence against women: Proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993*. [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.21\\_declaration\\_elimination\\_vaw.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.21_declaration_elimination_vaw.pdf)
- United Nations (n.d.). *Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women*. [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/showDetails.aspx?objid=080000028000309d&clang=\\_en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/showDetails.aspx?objid=080000028000309d&clang=_en)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2018). *Global study on homicide: Gender-related killing of women and girls*. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/GSH2018/GSH18\\_Gender-related\\_killing\\_of\\_women\\_and\\_girls.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/GSH2018/GSH18_Gender-related_killing_of_women_and_girls.pdf)
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2015). Critical discourse analysis. *The handbook of discourse analysis*, 466-485. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118584194.ch22>
- Vettehen, P. H., & Nuijten, K. (2006). In need of an audience: Sensationalism in Dutch public service news and current affairs programs in the 1990's. *3rd Bi-Annual RIPE Conference*,
- Vettehen, P. H., Nuijten, K., & Peeters, A. (2008). Explaining effects of sensationalism on liking of television news stories: The role of emotional arousal. *Communication Research*, 35(3), 319-338. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009365020831596>
- Von Nordheim, G., Boczek, K., & Koppers, L. (2018). Sourcing the sources: An analysis of the use of Twitter and Facebook as a journalistic source over 10 years in The New

- York Times, The Guardian, and Süddeutsche Zeitung. *Digital Journalism*, 6(7), 807-828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2018.1490658>
- Wagner, M. W., & Collins, T. P. (2014). Does ownership matter? The case of Rupert Murdoch's purchase of the Wall Street Journal. *Journalism Practice*, 8(6), 758-771. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2014.882063>
- Ward, S. J. (2019). Journalism ethics. In Wahl-Jorgensen & T. Hanitzsch. *The handbook of journalism studies* (pp. 307-323). Routledge.
- Warren, C. A. (2002). Qualitative interviewing. In J. G. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and method* (pp. 83–99). Sage
- Warrich, H. U. R., Ashfaq, M., & Rehman, S. U. (2020). Conglomerates in Pakistani media industry: Exploring the effects of non-journalistic ownership of media companies. *Global Regional Review*, 1, 151-159. [https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2020\(V-1\)](https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2020(V-1))
- Wasif, S. (2018, October 14). More cases being reported ‘as# MeToo movement picks up in Pakistan. *The Express Tribune*. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1825368/cases-reported-metoo-movement-picks-pakistan>
- Wasserman, E. (2006). Plagiarism and precedence. *Media Ethics*, 18(1), 16.
- Weaver, C. K., Carter, C., & Stanko, E. (2013). The female body at risk: Media, sexual violence and the gendering of public environments. In *Environmental risks and the media* (pp. 187-199). Routledge.
- Weaver, D. A., & Scacco, J. M. (2013). Revisiting the protest paradigm: The Tea Party as filtered through prime-time cable news. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 18(1), 61-84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161212462872>
- Websdale, N. (2021). Domestic violence fatality review: The state of the art. In *Handbook of Interpersonal Violence and Abuse Across the Lifespan: A project of the National Partnership to End Interpersonal Violence Across the Lifespan (NPEIV)* (pp.

- 3093-3115). Cham: Springer International Publishing.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-89999-2\\_133](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-89999-2_133)
- Wendt, S., & Zannettino, L. (2014). *Domestic violence in diverse contexts: A re-examination of gender*. Routledge.
- White, M. D., & Marsh, E. E. (2006). Content analysis: A flexible methodology. *Library Trends* 55(1), 22-45. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2006.0053>.
- Whiting, J. B., Olufuwote, R. D., Cravens-Pickens, J. D., & Banford Witting, A. (2019). Online blaming and intimate partner violence: A content analysis of social media comments. *The Qualitative Report*, 24(1), 78-79.
- Wilkins, L., & Christians, C. G. (Eds.). (2020). *The Routledge handbook of mass media ethics*. Routledge.
- Williams, S. (2015). Digital defense: Black feminists resist violence with hashtag activism. *Feminist Media Studies*, 15(2), 341-344.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1008744>
- Wodak, R. (2002). Aspects of critical discourse analysis. *Zeitschrift für angewandte Linguistik*, 36(10), 5-31.
- Wodak, R. (2011). Critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis. *Discursive pragmatics*, 8, 50-70.
- Wodak, R., & Fairclough, N. (1997). Critical discourse analysis. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as social interaction* (pp. 258–284). Sage.
- World Economic Forum. (2023). *Global gender gap report 2023*.  
[https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2022.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2022.pdf)
- WorldHealth Organization. (2021). *Violence against women Prevalence Estimates, 2018*.
- World Health Organization. (2021). *Violence against women Prevalence Estimates, 2018. Global, regional and national prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence*

*against women and global and regional prevalence estimates for non-partner sexual violence against women.*

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/341337/9789240022256-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

World Justice Project. (2018, August 6). Women in Pakistani society [Press release].

<http://gallup.com.pk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/06.08.18-English-2.pdf>

Yadav, D. Y. (2011). Is social responsibility a sham for media? *Global Media Journal - Indian Edition*, Summer Issue, 1-10.

Yoshihama, M., Bybee, D., Dabby, C., & Blazeovski, J. (2011, July 30). Lifecourse experiences of intimate partner violence and help-seeking among Filipina, Indian, and Pakistani women: Implications for justice system responses. National Institute of Justice.

<https://ecald.com/assets/Resources/Assets/Lifecourse-Experiences-Intimate-Partner-Violence.pdf>

Young, S. (2014). *Changing the wor(l)d: Discourse, politics and the feminist movement*. Routledge.

Yousaf, Z., Yasmeen, G., & Ali, E. (2019). Sensationalizing the news events by Pakistani media. *Journal of Media Studies*, 34(1), 53-75, Yousuf, M. (2023). Book review: Mashal Saif, the ‘Ulama in contemporary Pakistan: contesting and cultivating an Islamic Republic. *South Asia Research*, 43(1), 143–145.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/02627280221143524>

Yue, Z., Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2019). Using television drama as entertainment-education to tackle domestic violence in China. *Journal of Development Communication*, 30(1), 30-44.

- Zafar, F., & Ali, R. (2020). Understanding the causes of honor killing: An exploratory study in South Punjab, Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 40(2), 937-947.
- Zakar, R., Zakar, M. Z., & Kraemer, A. (2013). Men's beliefs and attitudes toward intimate partner violence against women in Pakistan. *Violence Against Women*, 19(2), 246-268. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1077801213478028>
- Zia, A. (2007). Effects of cable television on women in Pakistan: A comparative study of heavy and light viewers in Lahore. [Doctoral thesis, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore].
- Zia, M. (2014). Legislative initiatives on women in Pakistan-need for self-critique and reassessment. *Legislative Watch*, 43, 1-8. .
- Zulqarnain, W., Hashmi, N. U., & Zulqarnain, A. (2020). Social media and Pakistani journalists: WhatsApp usage for news and ethical performance. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 88, 12-19. <https://doi.org/10.7176/NMMC/88-02>



## **Appendix A. Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for Interviews with Journalists**

1. As a TV journalist, when and why would you include a domestic violence news story in the news bulletin? and when such stories make headlines?
2. How much coverage is given to domestic violence stories? Has the number of such stories increased or decreased over the period (and why is that)?
3. Are there any criteria for covering incidents of domestic violence stories based on specific area, city or group of population or such incidents are covered regardless?
4. What journalistic codes of ethics are practiced for domestic violence coverage?
5. Do you cover domestic violence news after a police report is filled and/or when judicial proceedings begin? Or it can get covered without that?
6. Can you talk about any experience in which ethical deviations resulted in any form of consequences for producer, reporter, or news organization?
7. Did you get any professional training for reporting incidents of domestic violence? Do you feel that such training can be helpful for journalists, organizations, and viewers (in what ways)?
8. How are domestic violence stories presented generally? Are they treated like any other news stories or differently? For instance, if any pre- or post-production elements are used in script and/or visual?
9. In domestic violence stories, emphasis is only on incident or previous history and relationship between victim/s and perpetrator/s are also explored?
10. Have you ever come across a news story related to marital rape?
11. Comments and responses from victim, perpetrator, eyewitness, and relatives of the victim, police, lawyers, and doctors can be seen in domestic violence stories. Do you think comments from psychologists and religious scholars should also be incorporated to address this issue vigorously?
12. Are domestic violence statistics, health services and support networks for victims and legal consequences for perpetrators mentioned in news stories or reports?
13. In what ways a news channel's representation of DV can have more influence on viewers? What are your views on sensational coverage of crime news?

14. Primetime bulletins have ten to fifteen minutes long headlines and commercials – Does it affect coverage of social issues? (Why breaking news is used for dv stories of few seconds)
15. Sometimes domestic violence headlines and updates news stories do not become part of that news bulletins, what could be the reason for that?
16. Does any change is made in the reporter's story (in terms of context, language, frame, or perspective etc.)? And is the reporter consulted? Is there any agenda or motive behind coverage of domestic violence stories or they are covered as routine incidents? (Media influence people and create issues)
17. Can the gender of a reporter or producer play a role during information gathering from various sources or news compilation? Do you think male or female journalists may frame news differently?
18. Would you like to comment on media discourse and representation of domestic violence on Pakistani news channels?

## **Appendix B. Information Sheet (For Journalists)**

I am Omer Bin Nasir, PhD student enrolled in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. I am conducting research into the “Coverage of domestic violence in the Pakistani news media and its audience reception” under the supervision of Professor Kay Weaver and Associate Professor Gareth Schott. I want to conduct interviews with 20 to 24 TV journalists. Since you are a TV journalist, I would like to conduct an interview with you at the place and time of your convenience. The interview will take about an hour, and will be audio recorded. I would like to ask questions related to the factors that shape how television journalists in Pakistan report and represent domestic violence?

You do not have to decide right now if you want to participate in this project. If you do not wish to be recorded, then unfortunately, you would not be able to participate in this research. You can take your time to think about it and/or discuss it with anyone you feel comfortable with. Your valuable response will become part of my PhD thesis. In addition, I will publish research articles and present the findings orally or through posters at academic conferences. Please note that you will not gain any direct benefit by participating in this research.

You have the right to exercise your freedom of expression by choosing to answer or not any question asked during the interview. You are free to ask as many questions as you like during this process and/or give feedback directly to me through email, text or a phone call. You also have the choice to view the transcript of your interview and/or request a summary of the research findings. You can withdraw from study within three weeks after the interview or a week after the receipt of the interview transcript (if you have requested it) by informing me directly through email, text or a phone call.

Data (audio recordings and transcriptions of the interviews) and the associated manuscripts will be stored in my password-protected laptop. Signed consent forms will be scanned first and then also stored into my laptop. Data will be stored up until five years after the completion of my PhD thesis. Only my PhD supervisors and I will have access to it.

Thank you so much for taking the time out to go through this document. Please let me know if you have any questions.

*"This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email [fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz), postal address, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Te Kura Kete Aronui, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240."*

### Appendix C. Participant Consent Form (For Journalists)

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the research project titled as **“Coverage of domestic violence in the Pakistani news media and its audience reception,”** conducted by **Omer Bin Nasir**, who has explained the purposes, risks and methods of the research to me in a clear manner. I understand that the purpose of this research project is purely academic and the researcher is gathering information/data as a PhD student enrolled in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.

I have been told that I will be one of 20 to 24 TV journalists, who will be interviewed. I have asked questions related to research project and have received answers to my satisfaction. The following has been explained to me:

1. My personal information and identity will remain confidential.
2. My right to withdraw from research during the interview and after that (within three weeks of the interview or within a week after the receipt of the interview transcript if requested).
3. My right to decline to answer or to end the interview.
4. That I may not be directly benefited from participation in the research.
5. What am I expected to do as a research participant.
6. That my participation is completely voluntary.
7. I will be provided with a copy of interview transcript and/or research findings on request.
8. The contact to which I should make request and/or give feedback, if any.
9. The audio recording of my interview.
10. If I don't want to be recorded, I would not be able to participate in the research.
11. Publication of research and results on the condition of anonymity to my identity.
12. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

When I sign this consent form, I give consent for the researcher to use the interview for the purposes of the research outlined in the Information Sheet.

<b>Please complete the following checklist. Tick the appropriate box for each point.</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
I wish to view the transcript of the interview.		
I wish to receive a copy of the findings.		

Participant : \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Details: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Details: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **Appendix D. Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for Interviews with Activists**

1. Can you tell me a bit about your background, why you got involved in campaigns to stop domestic violence, and what your current role is in relation to campaigning against this social problem?
2. How do you see the role of activists' campaigns in addressing domestic violence?
3. What aspects of domestic violence are you highlighting in your campaigns to curb it?
4. In your opinion, what are the underlying causes of domestic violence in Pakistan?
5. What platforms do you use to campaign against domestic violence and why did you opt to use those platforms in your campaign?
6. Can you talk about how your organisation has approached communicating about domestic violence - how you represent it and what audiences you are trying to reach?
7. What are the challenges of campaigning against domestic violence and portraying it in the way you have and to the audiences you have?
8. Are you able to talk about successes of your campaign, and how you judge its effectiveness? For example, do you think the campaign has succeeded in changing public attitudes to domestic violence?
9. Can you talk about how you use television news media to raise awareness about domestic violence?
10. What challenges do you face in using television news media to promote awareness about domestic violence?
11. What role do you think television news media plays in addressing domestic violence? Do you think television news media is responsible for addressing this social issue?
12. What are your views about domestic violence representation in television news media?
13. What are the dominant discourses about domestic violence on television news media? And generally, in society? What discourses do you highlight as an activist?
14. In what ways, activists' campaigns representation is different than that of television news?
15. What do you think are the broad challenges you face in changing attitudes to domestic violence?

### Appendix E. Information Sheet (For Activists)

I am Omer Bin Nasir, PhD student enrolled in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. I am conducting research into the “Coverage of domestic violence in the Pakistani news media and its audience reception” under the supervision of Professor Kay Weaver and Associate Professor Gareth Schott. I want to conduct interviews with four to six women rights’ activists. Since you are working to promote women rights, I would like to conduct an interview with you at the place and time of your convenience. The interview will take about one hour and will be audio recorded. I would like to ask questions related to how you represent domestic violence and the challenges you face in encountering dominant discourses on domestic violence in Pakistan through media.

You do not have to decide right now if you want to participate in this project. If you do not wish to be recorded, then unfortunately, you would not be able to participate in this research. You can take your time to think about it and/or discuss it with anyone you feel comfortable with. Your valuable response will become part of my PhD thesis. In addition, I will publish research articles and present the findings orally or through posters at academic conferences. Please note that you will not gain any direct benefit by participating in this research.

You have the right to exercise your freedom of expression by choosing to answer or not any question asked during the interview. You are free to ask as many questions as you like during this process, and/or give feedback directly to me through email, text or a phone call. You also have the choice to view the transcript of your interview and/or request a summary of the research findings. You can withdraw from study within three weeks after the interview or a week after the receipt of the interview transcript (if you have requested it) by informing me directly through email, text, or a phone call.

Data (audio recordings and transcriptions of the interviews) and the associated manuscripts will be stored on my password-protected laptop. Signed consent forms will be scanned first and then also stored into my laptop. Data will be stored up until five years after the completion of my PhD thesis. Only my PhD supervisors and I will have access to it.

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. Please let me know if you have any questions.

*"This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email [fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz), postal address, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Te Kura Kete Aronui, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240."*

### **Appendix F. Participant Consent Form (For Activists)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the research project titled as **“Coverage of domestic violence in the Pakistani news media and its audience reception.”** conducted by Omer Bin Nasir, who has explained the purposes, risks and methods of the research to me in a clear manner. I understand that the purpose of this research project is purely academic and the researcher is gathering information/data as a PhD student enrolled in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.

I have been told that I will be one of four to six women’s right activists, who will be interviewed. I have asked questions related to research project and have received answers to my satisfaction. The following has been explained to me:

1. My right to withdraw from research during the interview and after that (within three weeks of the interview or within a week after the receipt of the interview transcript if requested).
2. My right to decline to answer any questions or to end the interview.
3. That I will not be directly benefited from participation in the research.
4. What am I expected to do as a research participant.
5. That my participation is completely voluntary.
6. I will be provided with a copy of the interview transcript and/or research findings on request.
7. The contact to which I should make request and/or give feedback, if any.
8. The audio recording of my interview.
9. If I don’t want to be recorded, I would not be able to participate in the research.
10. Publication of research and results in the form of thesis and research articles.
11. I have been given a copy of this consent form.



When I sign this consent form, I give consent for the researcher to use the interview for the purposes of the research outlined in the Information Sheet.

<b>Please complete the following checklist. Tick the appropriate box for each point.</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
I wish to view the transcript of the interview.		
I wish to receive a copy of the findings.		

Participant : \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher :

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Details: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Details: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix G. Focus Group Interview Schedule

In the beginning, I will greet all participants and introduce myself as the moderator of the focus group. Probably, a few minutes will be spent getting to know each other. Then I will once again explain to them my research briefly and the purpose of conducting this focus group. After which, I would get them to sign consent forms to make this process more formal and academic. The focus group will consist of three steps: pre screening discussion, screening of five news pieces followed by a discussion; and activists campaign followed by another discussion. Screening of domestic violence content will take around 7 minutes and activist video will be around 3 minutes long. Total 10 minutes will be spent showing the content to participants. I am aiming to complete this whole exercise within a couple of hours as I have already asked for this much time during my first conversation with a representative of Pakistani student club at university of Waikato.

Here are some pre-screening questions mentioned below:

1. What is domestic violence to you and what does it include?
2. Where do you get your information about domestic violence – what it is and what its causes are?
3. Do you think domestic violence is a problem in Pakistan?
4. Can you remember seeing much domestic violence on Pakistan television news or in other TV programmes?

After which I will play domestic violence news on my laptop with the approval of participants.

- First news package screened will be 2 minutes and 28 seconds long from the 9PM bulletin in which two different stories themed around domestic violence were clubbed together by the news channel. First part of the news report is based on a female who was beaten up by her husband; her head was shaved off for not dancing in front of his friends. Second part of the news report is about a newly wedded girl who was beaten up by husband and in-laws for not bringing expensive dowry. In both cases, police allegedly took bribes for registering FIRs .Both incidents took place in the city of Lahore, capital of Punjab which is the biggest province of Pakistan in terms of population with more than 110 million people living in it.
- Second news report shown will be 2 minutes 28 seconds long. It is a follow up of the first domestic violence incident, in which the husband shaved off her wife's head and beat her. In the news, it was reported that the perpetrator husband is out on bail and the female victim is talking about the recent threats of acid attack and murder that she has got from her husband.
- Third story will be a 19 second long breaking news story in which a brother killed his sister and another man in the name of honor because they wanted to be married out of love.

- Fourth story will be 28 seconds long in which a newly wedded wife was injured with bullets fired in her legs by her husband because she wanted to visit her mother's house.
- Fifth and last story will be 34 second long breaking news in which a woman was set on fire by her husband and in-laws.

Here are some of the post-screening questions:

1. How do you immediately respond to what you have just seen? What are your thoughts on it?
2. How do you feel in terms of explanation for these crimes?
3. How does it help you understand domestic violence as a crime?
4. Do you think Pakistani television news media are playing a role in curbing domestic violence?
5. Does the way these news stories are produced hold any appeal for you?
6. Sometimes, domestic violence is shown as mini-drama or entertainment. Why is that?
7. What attracts people to watch domestic violence represented as entertainment on television news?
8. If you were to change anything in these news pieces, what would you change?

At this stage, I will screen one of the videos from an activist campaign of BBC SHE aimed to raise awareness about women issues including domestic violence in Pakistan after seeking participants' approval. This video will be 3 minutes 10 seconds long and is shot in Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University Quetta.

Here are some of the post-screening questions:

1. How do you respond to that material? What are your thoughts about it?
2. What is your opinion about issues raised in the BBC SHE campaign?
3. Does it help you to understand issues faced by women in Pakistan?
4. Do you think such campaigns are spreading awareness and empowering women?
5. What appeals to the audience to watch such campaigns?
6. If you were to change anything in this campaign video, what would you change?
7. Have you seen any other campaigns addressing women related issues in Pakistan?

8. Do you think there is a need for change in the discourses around domestic violence? Should the media be involved in advocating for changes and if so what changes and how can they do it?

After discussion, I will wrap up the focus group by checking in with each participant to see if they are feeling alright. I will also offer them some refreshments with pleasure if they want it.

## **Appendix H. Information Sheet for Potential Focus Group Participants**

I am Omer Bin Nasir, PhD student enrolled in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. I am conducting research into the “Coverage of domestic violence in the Pakistani news media and its audience reception” under the supervision of Professor Kay Weaver and Associate Professor Gareth Schott. Domestic violence is a social issue in Pakistan, and my study aims to explore the coverage of domestic violence on Pakistani TV news media from the perspectives of the journalists, women’s rights activists and you, the audience members. You will be a part of one of the four focus groups comprising five to six other members of the general audience (of the same gender). The facilitator will be a female focus group composed of females. You might not be familiar with what a focus group is. It is a gathering of people in which they have a discussion on a topic. In addition, the facilitator will do a one-on-one interview with you after the focus group. Both will be audio-recorded. The procedure is explained fully below.

I will invite you one day to participate in the focus group on a day of your convenience. I will make attempts to keep the venue of these groups close to your locality to prevent inconvenience. The venue is most likely to be an educational institution to make you comfortable. On the day of the interviews, the facilitator will first screen five to seven domestic violence news stories on topics of physical violence and honor killing, which will take around 10 minutes. These news stories will be taken from Pakistani national news channels and will not be different in any respect from what you normally see on Pakistani news channels. I will only select those stories that meet the broadcasting standards, which includes not revealing the identity of the victim or her family and presentation of the news in a non-dramatized way and not with horrible visuals. In addition, the facilitator will also briefly tell you about the content of each story before screening. Following the screening of the news stories, the facilitator will invite you for discussion regarding what you think about the news stories. This group discussion can take up to one to one and half hours.

After which the facilitator will show the activists material on women empowerment, which will take around 12 minutes. After this, the facilitator will open a discussion on what you think of the content that you have been shown. This group discussion is expected to last for one hour. After which you will be invited to take part in one-on-one interviews with the facilitator, where you can say what you felt you were not able to say during the group discussions, clarify any point, change any statement and make any complaints. The whole process is likely to take six hours.

Refreshments and lunch will be provided keeping in view your dietary preferences. In addition, your travel expenses will be reimbursed.

Since you will be shown news on domestic violence, there is a chance that you might experience distress. If you experience distress, I have made arrangements with qualified clinical psychologists to provide you with counseling. Any travel expenditures incurred while

you seek help will be borne by me. In addition, you will be provided a chance to talk about any negative reaction after seeing the content during the one-on-one interview as well.

I guarantee that your identity will not be revealed during and after the completion of the research project. You have the complete right to exercise your freedom of expression by choosing to answer or to not answer any question asked during the interviews. You are free to ask as many questions as you like during this process and/or give feedback. You also have the choice to view the transcript of your interviews (both group and individual) and/or request summary of the research findings. You can withdraw from study within three weeks after the interview or a week after the receipt of the interview transcript (if you have requested it) by informing me directly through email, text, or a call.

Data (audio recordings and transcriptions of the interviews) and the associated manuscripts will be stored on my password-protected laptop. Signed consent forms will be scanned first and then also stored into my laptop. Data will be stored up until five years after the completion of my PhD thesis. Only my PhD supervisors and I will have access to it. Your valuable responses will become part of my PhD dissertation. In addition, I will also publish research articles based on my research project as well do oral and/or poster presentations in academic conferences.

You do not have to decide right now that you want to participate in this project. You can take your time to think about it. If you do not wish to be taped, then you would not be able to participate in this research. Please note that you will not gain any direct benefit by participating in this research project but what you say will give me valuable insight about this topic.

Thank you so much for taking the time out to go through this document. Please let me know if you have any questions.

*"This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email [fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz), postal address, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Te Kura Kete Aronui, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240."*

## Appendix I. Consent Form for Focus Group Participants

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the research project titled as **“Coverage of domestic violence in the Pakistani news media and its audience reception,”** conducted by Omer Bin Nasir, who has shared general purposes, risks and methods of the research with me in a clear manner. I understand that the purpose of this research project is purely academic and the researcher is gathering information/data as a PhD student enrolled at Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Waikato University, Hamilton, New Zealand.

I have been told that I will be a part of one of focus groups consisting of five to six members of the audience of the same gender, who will participate in focus group discussions and interviews. I have asked questions related to research project and have received answers to my satisfaction. Following has been explained to me:

1. My personal information and identity will remain confidential and secure throughout the research process.
2. My right to withdraw from research during the interview and after that (within three weeks of the interview or within a week after the receipt of the interview transcript if requested).
3. My right to decline to answer or to end the interview.
4. I may not be directly benefited by the research.
5. What am I expected to do as a research participant.
6. Nature of my participation is completely voluntary.
7. I will be provided with a copy of interviews’ (both group and individual) transcript and/or research findings on request
8. The contact to which I should make request and/or give feedback, if any.
9. Audio recording of any part of or of overall research activity/activities.
10. If I don’t want to be taped, I would not be able to participate in the research.

11. Publication of research and results on the condition of anonymity to my identity.

12. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

When I sign this consent form, I give consent for the researcher to use the interview for the purposes of the research outlined in the Information Sheet.

<b>Please complete the following checklist. Tick the appropriate box for each point.</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
wish to view the transcript of the group and individual interviews.		
wish to receive a copy of the findings.		

Participant : \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Details: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Details: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix J. Co-Authorship Forms**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Wāikato*

## Co-Authorship Form

**Postgraduate Studies Office**  
Student and Academic Services Division  
Wahanga Ratonga Matauranga Akonga  
The University of Waikato  
Private Bag 3105  
Hamilton 3240, New Zealand  
Phone +64 7 838 4439  
Website: <http://www.waikato.ac.nz/sasd/postgraduate/>

This form is to accompany the submission of any PhD that contains research reported in published or unpublished co-authored work. **Please include one copy of this form for each co-authored work.** Completed forms should be included in your appendices for all the copies of your thesis submitted for examination and library deposit (including digital deposit).

Please indicate the chapter/section/pages of this thesis that are extracted from a co-authored work and give the title and publication details or details of submission of the co-authored work.

Study 1: Domestic Violence as News: Television Journalists' Discursive Understanding and Reporting of Domestic Violence in Pakistan. Manuscript submitted for publication. Please note that the title of the study is different from the title of submission.

Nasir, O. B., Weaver, K. C., & Schott, G. (*in press*). News of domestic violence: Journalistic imperatives in television news reporting of Pakistan. In D. Kishan Thussu and S. Roy (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and media in the Global South*. Routledge.

Nature of contribution by PhD candidate

IP, research design, full data collection, full data analysis, primary author of complete first draft, and responsible for making revisions to the manuscript.

Extent of contribution by PhD candidate (%)

80

### CO-AUTHORS

Name	Nature of Contribution
Celia Kay Weaver	Advising on the methodological approach, reviewing of write up of the research and drafts of the manuscript, editing of text. Primary Supervisor
Gareth Schott	Review of analyses, and review and editing of text. Secondary Supervisor

### Certification by Co-Authors

The undersigned hereby certify that:

- ❖ the above statement correctly reflects the nature and extent of the PhD candidate's contribution to this work, and the nature of the contribution of each of the co-authors; and

Name	Signature	Date
Celia Kay Weaver		28/8/23
Gareth Schott		18/8/23






# Co-Authorship Form

This form is to accompany the submission of any PhD that contains research reported in published or unpublished co-authored work. **Please include one copy of this form for each co-authored work.** Completed forms should be included in your appendices for all the copies of your thesis submitted for examination and library deposit (including digital deposit).

Please indicate the chapter/section/pages of this thesis that are extracted from a co-authored work and give the title and publication details or details of submission of the co-authored work.

Study 2: Nasir, O. B., Weaver, C. K., & Schott, G. (2023). Ethical Guidelines and Practices for Pakistani Television Journalists Reporting on Domestic Violence. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 1-16.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2023.2228307>

Nature of contribution by PhD candidate	IP, research design, full data collection, full data analysis, primary author of complete first draft, and responsible for making revisions to the manuscript and corresponding with journal editors.
Extent of contribution by PhD candidate (%)	80

## CO-AUTHORS

Name	Nature of Contribution
Celia Kay Weaver	Advising on the methodological approach, reviewing of write up of the research and drafts of the manuscript, editing of text. Primary Supervisor
Gareth Schott	Review of analyses, and review and editing of text. Secondary Supervisor

## Certification by Co-Authors

The undersigned hereby certify that:

- ❖ the above statement correctly reflects the nature and extent of the PhD candidate's contribution to this work, and the nature of the contribution of each of the co-authors; and

Name	Signature	Date
Celia Kay Weaver		28/8/23
Gareth Schott		18/8/23






# Co-Authorship Form

This form is to accompany the submission of any PhD that contains research reported in published or unpublished co-authored work. **Please include one copy of this form for each co-authored work.** Completed forms should be included in your appendices for all the copies of your thesis submitted for examination and library deposit (including digital deposit).

Please indicate the chapter/section/pages of this thesis that are extracted from a co-authored work and give the title and publication details or details of submission of the co-authored work.

Study 3: Journalistic Imperatives Involved in Television News Reporting of Domestic Violence in Pakistan

Manuscript ready for submission

Nature of contribution by PhD candidate

IP, research design, data collection, data analysis, lead author and revisions

Extent of contribution by PhD candidate (%)

80

## CO-AUTHORS

Name	Nature of Contribution
Celia Kay Weaver	Advising on the methodological approach, reviewing of write up of the research and drafts of the manuscript, editing of text. Primary Supervisor
Gareth Schott	Review of analyses, and review and editing of text. Secondary Supervisor

## Certification by Co-Authors

The undersigned hereby certify that:

- ❖ the above statement correctly reflects the nature and extent of the PhD candidate's contribution to this work, and the nature of the contribution of each of the co-authors; and

Name	Signature	Date
Celia Kay Weaver		28/8/23
Gareth Schott		18/8/23



# Co-Authorship Form

This form is to accompany the submission of any PhD that contains research reported in published or unpublished co-authored work. **Please include one copy of this form for each co-authored work.** Completed forms should be included in your appendices for all the copies of your thesis submitted for examination and library deposit (including digital deposit).

Please indicate the chapter/section/pages of this thesis that are extracted from a co-authored work and give the title and publication details or details of submission of the co-authored work.

Study 4: Pakistani Women's Rights Activists Assessment of Mainstream News Reporting on Domestic Violence and Their Representations of Domestic Violence

Manuscript ready for submission

Nature of contribution by PhD candidate

IP, research design, data collection, data analysis, lead author and revisions

Extent of contribution by PhD candidate (%)

80

## CO-AUTHORS

Name	Nature of Contribution
Celia Kay Weaver	Overseeing planning of methodological approach, review of data analyses and editing of text. Primary Supervisor
Gareth Schott	Review of analyses, and review and editing of text. Secondary Supervisor

## Certification by Co-Authors

The undersigned hereby certify that:

- ❖ the above statement correctly reflects the nature and extent of the PhD candidate's contribution to this work, and the nature of the contribution of each of the co-authors; and

Name	Signature	Date
Celia Kay Weaver		28/8/23
Gareth Schott		18/8/23








# Co-Authorship Form

This form is to accompany the submission of any PhD that contains research reported in published or unpublished co-authored work. **Please include one copy of this form for each co-authored work.** Completed forms should be included in your appendices for all the copies of your thesis submitted for examination and library deposit (including digital deposit).

Please indicate the chapter/section/pages of this thesis that are extracted from a co-authored work and give the title and publication details or details of submission of the co-authored work.

Study 5: Pakistani Audience Responses to News Reporting and Women Rights' Activists Content about Domestic Violence. Manuscript ready for submission

Nature of contribution by PhD candidate	IP, research design, data collection, data analysis, lead author and revisions
Extent of contribution by PhD candidate (%)	90

## CO-AUTHORS

Name	Nature of Contribution
Celia Kay Weaver	Overseeing planning of methodological approach, review of analyses and providing support editing the text. Primary Supervisor
Gareth Schott	Review of analyses, and review and providing support editing of text. Secondary Supervisor

## Certification by Co-Authors

The undersigned hereby certify that:

- ❖ the above statement correctly reflects the nature and extent of the PhD candidate's contribution to this work, and the nature of the contribution of each of the co-authors; and

Name	Signature	Date
Celia Kay Weaver		28/8/23
Gareth Schott		18/8/23