

# Battered Women Syndrome as a Theoretical Explanation of Domestic Violence

Arfan Latif<sup>1</sup>, Sumera Tul Hasan<sup>2</sup>, Shoukat Ali<sup>3</sup> and Rabia Zafar<sup>4</sup>

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## Abstract

*This study delves into the escalating issue of violence against women in Pakistan, focusing on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and its profound impact on battered women. They are centered in district Okara. Domestic violence is an important area of investigation for social scientists and an important point of concern in Pakistan. The study used a quantitative research approach, gathering empirical data from 209 responses of women, comprising 105 rural victims and 104 urban women fearing their male partners. The researcher applied purposive sampling and snowball technique to identify the current study participants. Findings reveal a higher prevalence of violence among rural women, particularly those with limited education. The study underscores the psychological and physical toll on victims, manifesting in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and physical injuries. The pervasive atmosphere of fear, where women feel akin to robots, lacking protection and living as prisoners, is illuminated. Additionally, the research explores the potential ramifications for children exposed to such violence. This comprehensive analysis aims to contribute valuable insights to the understanding of IPV dynamics, advocating for targeted interventions to safeguard the well-being of battered women in Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Battered Women Syndrome, Intimate Partner Violence, Domestic Violence.

## Introduction

Battered women syndrome is a term used to describe the psychological and behavioral effects that can result from prolonged exposure to domestic violence, particularly in cases where a woman is a victim. A psychological illness known as Battered Women Syndrome (BWS) appears in people who have experienced domestic violence. This phrase refers to a pattern of behavior in which a woman who has experienced ongoing physical, emotional, and psychological abuse finds herself caught in a vicious cycle of violence and feels powerless to break free (Campbell, 1990).

Battered Women Syndrome is not recognized as a mental disorder but rather a psychological response to a traumatic experience. It is important to note that not all victims of domestic violence will develop BWS. Factors such as the severity and duration of the abuse, the age at which it began, and the victim's coping mechanisms all play a role in the development of BWS. Treatment for Battered Women Syndrome usually involves therapy to help the victim overcome the trauma of the abuse and regain control of their life. This can include individual counselling, group therapy, and support groups. The victim needs to have a safe and supportive environment to help them heal from the effects of the abuse. Battered Women Syndrome is a

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Okara. Email: [arfanlatif929@uo.edu.pk](mailto:arfanlatif929@uo.edu.pk)

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Okara. Email: [sumerahasan@uo.edu.pk](mailto:sumerahasan@uo.edu.pk)

<sup>3</sup>Probation Officer, Punjab Probation and Parole Service (Home Department). Email: [alishoukali45@gmail.com](mailto:alishoukali45@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup>BS Scholar, University of Okara. Email: [rabiiazafar484@gmail.com](mailto:rabiiazafar484@gmail.com)



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complex psychological condition that develops in victims of domestic violence (Amini, Heidary & Daneshparvar, 2015).

### **Global Perspective**

In 1979, the FBI conducted research on battered women syndrome, and they found that every eighteen seconds, women were violated by their husbands or boyfriends in the world. Homicide victims kill forty per cent of women. Between two-thirds of all married women, a minimum of one woman experiences battering in their marriage relationship.

Battered Women Syndrome (BWS) is a global issue affecting women across different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. Domestic violence and intimate partner abuse are prevalent in many countries, and the psychological impact of this abuse is universal. However, the cultural and social contexts in which BWS develops can differ from region to region (David, 1985).

In some countries, women may face social and cultural barriers that prevent them from speaking out about the abuse they have experienced. These barriers can include societal pressure to maintain family harmony and cultural beliefs prioritizing the family unit over individual needs. In some cases, the legal and justice systems may also be biased against women who speak out about domestic violence.

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the global nature of domestic violence and the need for a coordinated response to address this issue. International organizations such as the United Nations have developed policies and initiatives aimed at preventing violence against women and providing support to victims of domestic violence. Efforts to raise awareness about Battered Women Syndrome have also been made in many countries. This includes education and outreach campaigns aimed at helping women recognize the signs of abuse and encouraging them to seek help. Battered Women Syndrome is a global issue affecting women across different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds (David, 1985).

The social and cultural contexts in which BWS develops can differ from region to region, and efforts to address this issue must consider these differences. Increasing awareness, developing support systems, and advocating for policy change are all crucial steps in preventing and addressing BWS globally.

According to online research, from October 2019 to September 2020 countries of Asia and the Philippines, 63 percent incensement in violence against women. During the lockdown in 2020, the UN noted that many women and girls experienced violence from their partners. UN found that 33% Singapore, 30% Cyprus, 30% France, 25% Argentina, 38.2% Istanbul, 57% Malaysia, 10 % Palestine and 10% in Pakistan. Many women are killed, and their partner injures some.

### **Battered Women Syndrome in Pakistan**

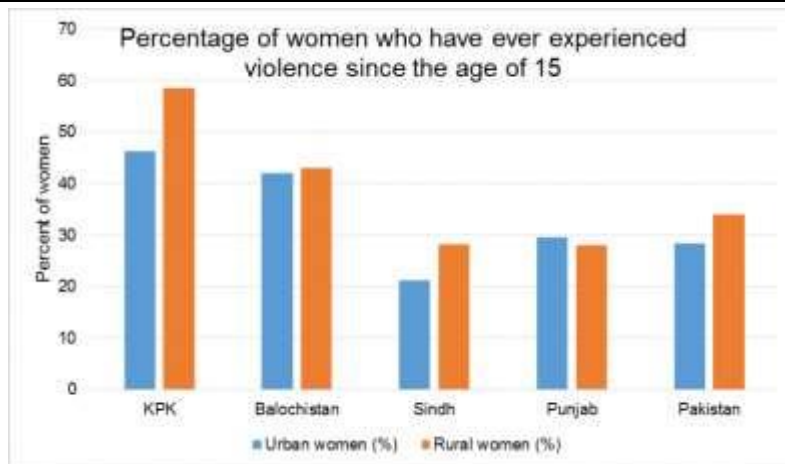
Women in Pakistan faced violence due to a lack of awareness about their legal rights and demands, rights and social responsibilities. In addition, restrictions on marital relations. Violence completely distorts the psychological process of the bereaved, yet our society has a very cold attitude towards it. The literature review also supported that whenever any form of domestic violence occurs in the home, all people are negatively affected by it, and mostly children and women suffer the most (Naz & Malik, 2018).

About 22 per cent of all married women in Punjab reported psychological, sexual, and physical abuse by their husbands in their lifetime, and 11 per cent experienced it in the past 12 months. 34% of women have experienced psychological violence by their husbands during their lifetime, and 22 % of women experienced physical or sexual abuse by their husbands during their lifetime (ESW survey 2018).

Karachi health facilities in Pakistan, fifty percent of women (48/150) have been facing physically violence, and married women between 70% to 90% of their lives in their lives at

any time. A survey on 1000 women in Punjab, Pakistan (Ali PA, Gavino MIB 2008). In the first half of 2012, 4585 cases of violence were reported to women who have a worker's figure. Out of the overall events, 3153 in Punjab, 1027 in Sindh, 283 in KP, and 78 cases were reported in Baluchistan. Women in Jagirdar and tribal systems are also victims of physical, psychological and sexual exploitation hands, their innovative and sexual abuse (Irfan, 2009). In Gilgit Baltistan 88.8% married women effected by high level of violence 69.4% psychological 37.5% physically and 21.2% sexually violated. They found higher level of violence associated risk factors and poor mental health of abused women in Gilgit- Baltistan (Hussain et al., 2000).

**Figure 1: Women who ever experience violence**



Battered Women Syndrome (BWS) is a psychological condition that is characterized by a pattern of physical and psychological abuse inflicted on women by their intimate partners. This can include physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and economic abuse. In Pakistan, BWS is a significant issue, with many women experiencing domestic violence and abuse at the hands of their husbands or partners (Hussain et al., 2020).

**Figure 2: Honor killing in Pakistan**



In 2020, there were 5,993 reported incidences of violence against women, including 1,865 instances of domestic violence, according to a report by the Aurat Foundation, a Pakistani organization for women's rights. The true number of occurrences, however, is probably far higher because many women do not report abuse out of concern for social stigma or retaliation. In Pakistan, BWS has been recognized as a legal defense in cases where women have killed their abusers in self-defense. However, many women still face significant barriers in accessing justice and support, including a lack of awareness about their rights and the available resources, limited legal protections, and social stigma surrounding domestic violence (Wolfe et al., 1985). Efforts are being made by the government, civil society organizations, and activists to address the issue of BWS in Pakistan. For example, the government has established hotlines for women to report abuse, and shelters have been set up to provide safe spaces for women fleeing domestic violence. However, more needs to be done to raise awareness about BWS, improve legal protections for victims, and provide access to support services for women who have experienced abuse (Schuller, 1992).

### **Reasons for Battered Women**

Battered women in Pakistan may face unique challenges and barriers to leaving abusive relationships due to cultural, social, and economic factors. Here are some possible reasons why battered women in Pakistan may stay in abusive relationships:

*Patriarchal cultural norms:* Pakistan is a patriarchal society where men hold significant power and control over women. Cultural norms often dictate that women should be obedient and submissive to their husbands and that divorce is stigmatized. This can make it difficult for women to leave abusive relationships.

*Lack of legal protection:* Even while Pakistan has laws to protect women from domestic abuse, these laws are not always upheld. Due to apprehension of retaliation or a lack of confidence in the legal system, women may hesitate to seek assistance (Upadhyay, 2020).

*Economic dependence:* In Pakistan, women could be economically dependent on their husbands and be unable to sustain themselves and their kids if they break the relationship. Women may find it challenging to end violent relationships and begin fresh as a result (Ayyildiz, 1995).

*Stigma and shame:* If they leave their violent partners in Pakistan, especially if they are divorced or separated, women may experience stigma and humiliation. Because of this, it may be challenging for women to ask their families and communities for support.

*Lack of awareness and education:* Many women in Pakistan may not be aware of their legal rights or available resources for leaving abusive relationships. Lack of education can also limit their ability to find employment and gain financial independence (Bohn, 1990).

### **Effects on Women**

It is important to recognize and address the cultural and social factors that contribute to domestic violence in Pakistan and to provide women with resources and support to help them leave abusive relationships safely. This includes providing legal protection, access to education and employment, and counselling and support services. Battered Women Syndrome (BWS) is a condition that can result from prolonged physical, emotional, and psychological abuse suffered by women at the hands of their intimate partners. The effects of BWS can be devastating and long-lasting, affecting many aspects of a woman's life. Some of the effects of BWS are:

*Physical effects:* BWS can cause physical injuries such as bruises, broken bones, cuts, and burns. These injuries can lead to chronic pain and long-term health problems (Bohn, 1990).

*Psychological effects:* BWS can cause psychological trauma such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and suicidal thoughts. Women with BWS may also experience low self-esteem, shame, guilt, and feelings of helplessness (Naz & Malik, 2018).

*Behavioral effects:* Women with BWS may develop coping mechanisms such as substance abuse, eating disorders, or self-harm. They may also exhibit symptoms of learned helplessness, such as an inability to make decisions or take actions independently (Niaz, 2004).

*Social effects:* BWS can isolate women from friends and family and may affect their ability to work or engage in social activities. They may also need help in forming new relationships or trusting others.

*Legal effects:* Women with BWS may have difficulty accessing legal remedies or face legal challenges such as false accusations or retaliation from their abusers.

## Methodology

The current study applied quantitative research techniques to address the study's objectives. The quantitative study is the most appropriate method for such topics where the researcher intends to find out the nature and relationship between variables and to fetch information from a larger population.

In addition to a quantitative strand of inquiry, the current study uses a descriptive research design to analyze and conclude the data. The researcher in the current study is not interested towards finding out the causative relationship between variables. Rather, the researcher intended to assess the level and magnitude of domestic violence about some socio-demographic features of the respondents.

This study was carried out in District Okara, Punjab, Pakistan. The population for this study consisted of women who are battered in Okara District.

In this research, the researcher selected 209 females who experienced violence by their partner in district Okara. This number is selected randomly, and the data is easily accessible to the researcher. No statistical operation was used to determine the sample size, as no sampling frame was available regarding the study's respondents.

In this research, the researcher used the snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling is a type of non-probability sampling method where currently recruited research participants are by referral technique. The researcher observed all the ethical considerations as the topic of the study was sensitive; hence, it was important to adhere to ethics in this research.

## RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Following are the findings of the study. In the first place, frequency distribution has been presented, followed by

**Table 1: He makes me feel unsafe even in my own home**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	61	29.18
	Disagree	46	22.09
	Neutral	45	21.53
	Agree	24	1.48
	Strongly agree	33	15.78
	Total	209	100

Table 1 presents the responses to a statement: "He makes me feel unsafe even in my own home." The table provides the frequency and percentage distribution of responses from 209



participants. Respondents were given the options of "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "Neutral," "Agree," and "Strongly Agree" to express their feelings about the statement.

Here is the breakdown of the responses:

**Strongly Disagree:** 61 participants, constituting 29.18% of the total responses, strongly disagreed with the statement, indicating that they do not feel unsafe in their own home because of "him."

Forty-six participants, or 22.09%, disagreed with the statement, suggesting that they generally do not feel unsafe in their homes due to the influence of "him."

**Neutral:** 45 participants, accounting for 21.53%, expressed a neutral stance, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. This group may have mixed feelings or uncertainties regarding their safety at home about "him."

Twenty-four participants, representing 11.48%, agreed with the statement, signifying that they feel unsafe in their homes due to the individual in question.

**Strongly Agree:** 33 participants, making up 15.78%, strongly agreed with the statement, indicating a high level of agreement that "he" makes them feel unsafe even in their homes.

The total column sums up the responses from all participants, providing a comprehensive view of how individuals perceive their safety in their homes concerning the specified person. The table's percentages allow for a quick understanding of the distribution of responses, emphasizing the prevalence of each sentiment among.

**Table 2: I feel ashamed of the things he does to me**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	31	14.8
	Disagree	62	29.6
	Neutral	32	15.3
	Agree	52	24.8
	Strongly agree	32	15.3
		209	100

The table 2 provided the responses regarding the statement "I feel ashamed of the things he does to me." The responses are categorized into five levels of agreement: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly agree.

The Frequency column shows the number of respondents who selected each level of agreement. The Percent column represents the percentage of respondents who chose each level of agreement out of the total number of respondents (209 in this case).

For example, 31 respondents (14.8%) strongly disagreed, 62 (29.6%) disagreed, 32 (15.3%) were neutral, 52 (24.8%) agreed, and 32 (15.3%) strongly agreed with the statement.

This table helps to provide a clear overview of how respondents feel about the statement "I feel ashamed of the things he does to me" by showing the distribution of responses across different levels of agreement.

**Table 3: I try not to rock the boat because I am afraid of what he might do**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	31	14.8
	Disagree	37	17.7
	Neutral	77	36.8
	Agree	32	15.3
	Strongly agree	32	15.3
Total		209	100

In the above table the statement being assessed is "I try not to rock the boat because I am afraid of what he might do." The responses are categorized into five levels of agreement: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly agree.

The frequency column shows the number of respondents who selected each level of agreement. The Percent column represents the percentage of respondents who chose each level of agreement out of the total number of respondents (209 in this case).

For example, 31 respondents (14.8%) strongly disagreed, 37 (17.7%) disagreed, 77 (36.8%) were neutral, 32 (15.3%) agreed, and 32 (15.3%) strongly agreed with the statement.

This table provides an overview of how respondents feel about the statement "I try not to rock the boat because I am afraid of what he might do" by showing the distribution of responses across different levels of agreement.

**Table 4: I feel like I am programmed to react a certain way to him**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	18	8.6
	Disagree	69	33.0
	Neutral	13	6.2
	Agree	76	36.3
	Strongly agree	33	15.7
	Total	209	100

"I feel like I am programmed to react a certain way to him." Is the statement of the above table with following explanation.

The Percent column shows the percentage of respondents who selected each level of agreement out of the total number of respondents (209 in this case). For instance, 18 respondents (8.6%) strongly disagreed, 69 (33.0%) disagreed, 13 (6.2%) were neutral, 76 (36.3%) agreed, and 33 (15.7%) strongly agreed with the statement. This table provides an overview of how respondents feel about the statement "I feel like I am programmed to react a certain way to him" by displaying the distribution of responses across different levels of agreement.

**Table 5: I feel like he keeps me prisoner**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	56	26.7
	Disagree	38	18.1
	Neutral	38	18.1
	Agree	44	21.1
	Strongly agree	33	15.7
	Total	209	100

The data shows the frequency and percentages of responses for each category: "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "Neutral," "Agree," and "Strongly Agree."

- "Strongly disagree": 56 responses, accounting for 26.7% of the total.
- "Disagree": 38 responses, accounting for 18.1% of the total.
- "Neutral": 38 responses, accounting for 18.1% of the total.
- "Agree": 44 responses, accounting for 21.1% of the total.
- "Strongly agree": 33 responses, accounting for 15.7% of the total.

The above responses reinterest how women feel towards being exploited and hurt by the counterpart and explains the extent of being subjugated.

**Table 6: He makes me feel like I have no control over my life, no power, no protection**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	30	14.3
	Disagree	63	30.1
	Neutral	58	27.7
	Agree	19	9.0
	Strongly Agree	39	18.6
	Total	209	100

The first column, labeled "Cumulative Frequency," represents the total number of respondents who selected each response option. For example, 30 respondents strongly disagreed, 63 disagreed, 58 were neutral, 19 agreed, and 39 strongly agreed with the statements. The second column, labeled "Percent," indicates the percentage of respondents who chose each response option out of the total number of respondents. For instance, 14.3% of respondents strongly disagreed, 30.1% disagreed, 27.7% were neutral, 9% agreed, and 18.6% strongly agreed.

**Table 7: I hide the truth from others because I am afraid not to**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	18	8.6
	Disagree	56	26.7
	Neutral	52	24.8
	Agree	57	27.2
	Strongly agree	26	12.4
	Total	209	100

The table above shows the results of a survey where respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement "I hide the truth from others because I am afraid not to."

The Frequency column indicates the number of respondents who chose each level of agreement.

The Percent column shows the percentage of respondents who selected each level of agreement out of the total number of respondents (209 in this case).

For example, 18 respondents (8.6%) strongly disagreed, 56 (26.7%) disagreed, 52 (24.8%) were neutral, 57 (27.2%) agreed, and 26 (12.4%) strongly agreed with the statement.

This table provides an overview of how respondents feel about the statement "I hide the truth from others because I am afraid not to" by displaying the distribution of responses across different levels of agreement.



**Table 8: I feel owned and controlled by him**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	19	9.0
	Disagree	88	42.1
	Neutral	31	14.8
	Agree	26	12.4
	Strongly agree	45	21.5
	Total	209	100

Based on the provided data, it appears to be a survey or questionnaire with multiple response options related to feeling owned and controlled by someone. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement. Here is a breakdown of the responses:

- Strongly disagree: 19 respondents (9.1%)
- Disagree: 88 respondents (42.1%)
- Neutral: 31 respondents (14.8%)
- Agree: 26 respondents (12.4%)
- Strongly agree: 45 respondents (21.5%)

The total number of valid responses is 209, with 48 responses categorized as missing or not applicable. The cumulative percent column shows the accumulated percentage of responses up to each category. Based on these results, the majority of respondents (42.1%) indicated that they disagreed with the statement "I feel owned and controlled by him." This suggests that a significant number of individuals do not feel owned or controlled by the person in question.

**Table 9: He can scare me without laying a hand on me**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	36	17.2
	Disagree	31	14.8
	Neutral	40	19.3
	Agree	76	36.3
	Strongly agree	26	12.4
	Total	209	100

Based on the provided table, it appears to be a frequency distribution table with accompanying percentages. The table represents responses to a survey or questionnaire with five response options: "Strongly disagree," "Disagree," "Neutral," "Agree," and "Strongly agree." Here is an explanation of the table: Frequency: This column represents the number of respondents who chose each response option. For example, 36 respondents chose "Strongly disagree," 31 chose "Disagree," 40 chose "Neutral," 76 chose "Agree," and 26 chose "Strongly agree." The above responses are quite evident as 39.7% strongly agreed or agreed to the statement showing a higher level of violence experienced by women.

**Table 10: He has a look that goes straight through me and terrifies me**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	68	26.5
	Neutral	06	2.3
	Agree	57	22.2
	Strongly agree	52	20.2
	Total	26	10.1
		209	100

This table appears to represent the results of a survey or questionnaire where participants were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with a statement or set of statements. The table provides information on the frequency and percentage of responses for each category. The first column, "Cumulative Frequency," shows the total number of responses accumulated for each category. For example, there were 68 responses categorized as "strongly disagree," 6 responses as "disagree," 57 as "neutral," 52 as "agree," and 26 as "strongly agree."

**Table 11: Battered women according to area of residence**

		x			Total
		High	Medium	Low	
Area of residence	rural	52	29	24	105
Total	urban	55	27	22	104
		107	56	46	209

When researcher analysis various variable like fear, self-control and so on. Researcher sees that in rural area women at high risk of violence (52\105), at medium risk of violence researcher find (29\105) and on low risk of violence (24\105). After the findings researcher analysis various variable like prisoner, unsafe and so on. Researcher find that in urban area women at high risk (55\104), on medium rate of violence researcher find that (27\104) and on low level of violence. It is important to mention here is that cross tabulation was applied to 209 respondent instead of 257 as through screening some of the responses such as neutral responses were excluded.

**Table 12: Battered women according to level of education**

		x			Total
		High	Medium	Low	
education	primary	23	16	9	48
Total	middle	35	10	19	64
	matric	11	3	2	16
	FA	14	14	4	32
	BA	8	4	4	16
	above BA	16	9	8	33
		107	56	46	209

The researcher fined that the battered women who read up to the primary at high risk (23\48) of violence, in medium rate (16\48) and in low rate of violence is (9\48).

After the findings researcher analysis that the battered women who read to the middle were effected on high risk (35\64), on medium rate of violence (10\64) and on low risk (19\64) in district Okara.

When researcher analysis various variable like fear, self-control and so on. Researcher sees that the women who educated to the matric at high risk (11\16), at medium (3\16) and at low risk (2\16) were founded in district Okara.

The researcher find that the battered women who were educated to the intermediate at high risk (14\32), at medium risk (14\32) and at low risk of violence is (4\32) in district Okara.

When researcher analysis various variable like fear, self-control and so on. Researcher sees that the women who are graduated at high risk (8\16), at medium (4\16) and at low risk (4\16) were founded in district Okara.

After the findings of various variables like prisoner, no protection researcher analysis that women who highly educated are also in the violence at high risk (16\33), at medium (9\33) and at low (8\33) in district Okara.

In short, the table showed the trend of violence was shown that there is a major high relationship between physical, psychological, sexual and emotionalism between the violence. Women ae on high risk of violence whether they are educated or not and they live in rural or urban.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the Bettered Women Syndrome is a theoretical concept that seeks to explain the psychological and social phenomenon experienced by women who have achieved significant advancements and successes in their lives. Based on the above findings it is concluded that most of the female in the rural areas experience battered women syndrome more than female in urban areas. On the same token experience of battered syndrome also varies with respect to level of education.

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