

**DEBATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE: LAW,
SOCIETY AND PERCEPTIONS IN PAKISTAN 2013-2023**

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Vienna, 01/06/2025

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ABSTRACT OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis examines the public history of domestic violence in Punjab, Pakistan from 2013 to 2023. Although Pakistan has some of the most progressive laws against domestic violence globally, their implementation has been undermined by various factors. This project relies on a range of sources such as newspaper articles, court judgements and interviews with survivors to demonstrate how extreme cases of violence have historically dominated the public discourse while the nuances and factors that shape domestic violence faced by women in their daily lives remain out of the public sphere. By developing *Nazariya*, an interactive workshop tool based on museum pedagogy and empathy based-civic learning, this thesis advocates to shift from punitive legal frameworks to public education aimed at addressing attitudinal acceptance of abuse. This tool uses survivor testimonies to create first person narratives for fostering empathy among users—primarily judges, police personnel, and students— by allowing them to make choices as the survivor, faced by the same obstacles and decisions. The thesis argues that a vacuum exists between the public history of domestic violence and the lived realities of Pakistani women who experience abuse. By narrating private stories in public learning spaces, this project contributes to a more nuanced and empathetic understanding of domestic violence in Pakistan.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As a result of coordinated efforts by the civil society and assemblywomen, Pakistan has some of the most progressive laws against domestic violence in the world.² Each of the four provinces has its own law addressing domestic abuse.³ However, till date, no case filed under these laws has reached its final conclusion i.e. no judgement can be found under these laws on public record.⁴ This fact is not indicative of low levels of domestic abuse in the country. Rather, there is strong evidence to suggest that most Pakistani women do experience some form of domestic abuse during their lifetime.⁵ Many of the laws protecting women in Pakistan were passed in the shadows of grave and extreme cases of violence that triggered widespread public outrage. Perhaps, precisely for this reason, they fail to address one crucial factor for high rates of domestic abuse in the country: attitudinal acceptance towards domestic violence in Pakistani society.

This thesis and capstone project seek to challenge the public history of domestic violence in Punjab, Pakistan by contributing to a more nuanced and empathetic public understanding that reflects both its historical context and ongoing realities. The written section of the thesis explores how domestic violence has been publicly represented through channels such as newspapers over the period of 2013 to 2023 in Punjab. In particular, it examines six high profile cases not only captured public attention but also influenced the broader discourse and legal developments on the issue. These cases are analyzed to understand why they resonated so

² Naeem Mirza, *"Seven Pro Women Laws in Seven Years,"* Legislative Watch, no. 38 (December 2011): 1, Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation.

³ The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2013; The Balochistan Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2014; The Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016; The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence Against Women (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2021

⁴ This is based on a search on the Pakistanlawsite website where court judgements are made available for the public.

⁵ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. "Annual Reports." HRCP, 2005. <https://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/annual-reports/>

strongly with the public and how they shaped perceptions and talking points around domestic violence.

This discussion is followed by an assessment of 30 legal judgments concerning domestic abuse. While these cases do not explicitly use the term "domestic violence," they include terms such as "cruelty" or "torture" which enabled this author to identify relevant judgements between 2013 to 2023. These judgments shed light into the multifaceted nature of domestic violence and the social and economic factors that perpetuate it. In particular, these rulings reveal the role of families in encouraging reconciliation, often reflecting broader attitudinal acceptance of domestic violence.

To deepen the understanding of domestic violence in Pakistan, this author conducted four interviews with women in Punjab who have experienced domestic violence. These testimonies reveal the nuanced realities of survivors' lives, the conditions in which abuse is normalized, family-led reconciliation efforts, interactions with the legal system, and the internalization of beliefs that justify the violence. When contrasted with the selected newspaper coverage and case law, the interviews demonstrate that these lived experiences are not isolated, but represent of a broader pattern affecting many women across Punjab.

The capstone project is an interactive workshop tool that draws on museum pedagogy and historical studies methodology to transform one of the interviews conducted into a first-person narrative. Through the use of storytelling and audiovisual elements, the tool—titled *Nazariya* (perspective)—offers an alternative, more nuanced account of personal histories of domestic violence in Punjab, Pakistan. Participants are able to engage directly with the narrative, making choices mirroring those faced by the interviewee, and witness the consequences of those decisions. Thus, *Nazariya* aims to foster empathy and encourage critical reflection on personal and societal attitudes towards domestic violence. These participants are expected to be two

groups of people. The first group is judges and policepersons who already attend sensitivity trainings organized by different NGOs in Pakistan. These trainings are held at the judicial and police academies. The second group of participants in high school students in facilities that provide equipment required to administer *Nazariya*.

Nazariya challenges prevailing social presumptions that often justify domestic violence under certain circumstances—such as a woman speaking back to her husband, or a child performing poorly in school. Through *Nazariya*, users are faced with the arbitrary and systemic nature of such violence, which challenges these deeply ingrained beliefs by providing nuance, emotional depth, and a fuller understanding of the lived experience of survivors. The workshop tool uses a broader educational framework of museum pedagogy, with the aim that the project contributes to a more informed and empathetic public discourse in relation to domestic violence.

Historically, domestic violence in Pakistan has been treated as a private matter, never really at the forefront of public discourse. However, in the early 2000s a shift of conversation was driven by efforts from civil society and the media, as well as a few high-profile cases that drew public attention. Organizations started publishing statistics, and news outlets began reporting on domestic violence cases. Unfortunately, media tended to focus on particularly violent cases, often involving the death of the victim. A specific narrative was created in which domestic violence was framed as extreme, isolated incidents caused by unstable or monstrous individuals. A public perception of domestic violence developed that suggests that such abuse only exists when it takes on a visibly brutal form, rather than recognizing the more common and sustained patterns of emotional, psychological, sexual, economic and physical abuse that many women experience. Although this public discourse has often led to the passage of progressive laws, these resulting laws focused mainly on severe acts of violence and punishment, overlooking the broader spectrum of abuse that affects women in everyday life.

This thesis is a public history project that offers an alternative account of domestic violence in Pakistan during the period from 2013 to 2023, when most of the domestic violence laws were passed. By challenging the dominant public narrative shaped by media, legislation, and civil society it introduces a more nuanced understanding of how domestic violence occurs and why existing laws have limited impact. One reason identified for this gap in public perception and private realities is that these laws do not address the attitudinal acceptance of domestic abuse or the pressures that encourage victims to reconcile rather than seek justice. Drawing on four interviews with domestic violence survivors, *Nazariya* transforms one of them into an interactive workshop tool. *Nazariya* brings private stories into the public domain by allowing users to step into the shoes of the interviewees, making decisions faced by the same choices and constraints faced by the interviewees, thereby contributing to a more nuanced and informed public understanding of domestic violence in Pakistan.

The structure of this thesis unfolds in five core chapters. The first chapter identifies the problem at hand by outlining the prevalence of domestic violence in Punjab, its historical representation in the public sphere, the evolution of the legal framework, and the challenges posed by underreporting and societal acceptance of violence. This chapter concludes by proposing empathy as a tool for change and explores how gamification and critical play can be used to foster it. The second chapter presents the discussion of six prominent cases of domestic violence as discussed in newspapers between 2013-2023. This analysis assesses public discourse through one of the core sources of this research. The third chapter analyzes thirty legal judgments in comparison to the six prominent cases in newspapers, and the interviews conducted for the workshop by this author. In the fourth chapter, the four interviews conducted with women who have experienced domestic violence, are discussed in detail. The final chapter turns to the development of the workshop tool *Nazariya*, detailing its design process, and intended impact. A conclusion that discusses the positionality of this author brings the thesis to a close.

1.1 Problem Identification

1.1.1 Prevalence of Domestic Violence

Various studies carried out in Pakistan show that domestic violence against women is a serious problem in the country. A study conducted by the Human Rights Watch estimated that around 70 to 90% of Pakistani women experience some form of domestic violence during their lifetime.⁶

Another such study was carried out in the maternity wards of three different hospitals with a sample of 218 women.⁷ Ninety-three percent of the interviewees reported that they had experienced domestic violence. The types of violence endured included (1) being shouted at, (2) threatened, (3) slapped, (4) punched, (5) kicked, (6) pushed, and (7) hurt with a weapon e.g. a gun or knife.⁸ Marital rape was not tabled in the same category as domestic violence by the study. Termed as ‘non-consensual sex’, it was reported by 47% of the interviews.⁹ In another study conducted in Rural Health Centers in five districts, 490 women reported 88% of them had experienced psychological violence, 30% had a history of experiencing physical violence, and 44% reported having experienced sexual violence.¹⁰ Therefore, it may be concluded that an overwhelming majority of women in Pakistan suffer from domestic violence.

However, to understand this phenomenon further, it is crucial to discuss what domestic violence entails in the Pakistani context. The National Commission for Human Rights, in its Policy Brief of 2023, reported that complainants of domestic violence are frequently dismissed by the police

⁶ Samya Burney, *Crime or Custom? Violence Against Women in Pakistan* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999).

⁷ Masood Ali Shaikh, “Is Domestic Violence Endemic in Pakistan? Perspective from Pakistani Wives,” *Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences* 23 (2007): 23–28.

⁸ Shaikh, “Domestic Violence”, 26.

⁹ Shaikh, “Domestic Violence”, 26.

¹⁰ Rubeena Zakar, Muhammad Z. Zakar, and Safdar Abbas, “Domestic Violence Against Rural Women in Pakistan: An Issue of Health and Human Rights,” *Journal of Family Violence* (2015): 15–25.

as such matters are considered private family matters.¹¹ Thus, this attitude gives rise to the question of what shape domestic violence takes in Pakistani society, and how it threads into the normal daily lives of people, becoming a private, and even acceptable phenomenon. This section shall first assess a more legal definition of domestic violence, before delving into a more contextualized definition that demonstrates the wide array of acts that can be categorized as domestic abuse given their impact on victims.

Domestic violence against women has been defined by the United Nations General Assembly as the “physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family”.¹² For the socio-political context of Pakistan where men enjoy a dominant position over women socially, politically, and economically, and domestic relationships are formed under the traditional joint family unit, a broader yet more contextualized definition of domestic violence is necessary. In Pakistan, each province has its own laws penalizing the act of domestic violence. The Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act 2016 defines domestic violence to mean “the violence committed by the defendant with whom the aggrieved person is living or has lived in a house, or visits the house when they are related to each other by consanguinity, marriage, adoption or in terms of employment”.¹³ Violence has been further defined to mean “any offence committed against the human body of the aggrieved person including abetment of an offence, domestic violence, sexual violence, psychological abuse, economic abuse, stalking or a cybercrime”.¹⁴ The law explains that economic abuse here means denial of food, clothing and shelter, or taking away of the aggrieved person’s income without consent.¹⁵ It is further

¹¹ Khadijja Ali and Meerum Iman, *Domestic Violence Policy Brief* (Islamabad: National Commission for Human Rights Pakistan, March 2023), 10, <https://www.nchr.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Domestic-Violence-Policy-Brief.pdf>.

¹² United Nations General Assembly. *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women: General Assembly Resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993*. Proceedings of the 85th plenary meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 1993. <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>.

¹³ *The Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016* (Act XVI of 2016), § 2(h), accessed May 17, 2025, <http://punjablaws.gov.pk/laws/2634.html>.

¹⁴ *Punjab Protection of Women Act 2016*, § 2(r).

¹⁵ *Punjab Protection of Women Act 2016*, § 2(r) explanation

explained that psychological violence under the law includes “psychological deterioration” which could lead to anorexia, suicide attempts or clinically proven depression.¹⁶ These problems must result from the abusive behavior endured by the victim.¹⁷

From a legal perspective, the definition of domestic violence under the Punjab law is quite wide in its scope. However, this also results in vagueness. Instead of defining what domestic violence means, the law defines violence to include domestic violence. Thus, ultimately, domestic violence in itself remains undefined. Nevertheless, it is clear that under this law physical violence, sexual violence, psychological abuse, and economic abuse have been highlighted as offences. To understand what these phrases mean in the context of Pakistan, one may look at the report published by Maliha Zia through Legal Aid Society titled ‘Understanding Domestic Violence Within the Legal Framework of Pakistan’.¹⁸ This report examines the data collected from a Legal Advisory Call Centre at Legal Aid Society, revealing a significant number of cases involving domestic violence.¹⁹ Legal Aid Society is an NGO based in Karachi that aims to strengthen rule of law and improve access to justice for marginalized people.²⁰ This report provides the most comprehensive definition of domestic violence available in the context of Pakistan, supporting its definition with data from real life cases collected by the advisory call center.

a. Physical abuse (Jismani Tashadud)

The most recognizable form of domestic violence is physical abuse.²¹ However, due to the high levels of attitudinal acceptance towards such abuse in Pakistan, unless the

¹⁶ *Punjab Protection of Women Act 2016*, § 2(r) explanation

¹⁷ *Punjab Protection of Women Act 2016*, § 2(r) explanation

¹⁸ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence within the Legal Framework of Pakistan*, by Maliha Zia (Karachi, Pakistan: Legal Aid Society, 2018), 16–17.

¹⁹ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*

²⁰ Legal Aid Society, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.las.org.pk/>.

²¹ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 16–17.

violence is severe, ‘light beating’ is not considered to be domestic violence.²² Zia argues that child marriages (which are illegal in Pakistan but still take place) are a form of both physical and sexual abuse under the umbrella of domestic violence as the parents exercise their power to force a child into a highly abusive situation.²³ In addition to the federal law Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929, each province has passed its own law restraining child marriage e.g. Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013 and Punjab Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment Act 2015). Another common form of abuse highlighted by Zia is that of forcing women and children out of the home.²⁴ In a socio-economic context where women and children are dependent on the male members of their household for food, shelter and basic necessities, this act is a form of physical, psychological and economic abuse.²⁵ Zia lists the most common types of physical abuse in her report citing “direct assault on the body, use of weapons or objects to abuse, assault of children, locking the victim inside or outside the home, forcing the victim to take drugs, withholding medication, food or medical care from the victim, sleep deprivation, threats to hurt the person or their loved ones, threats to take the children away or hurt them, taking the children away, abandonment in dangerous places, physical restraint, child marriage, forced marriage, isolation, honor killing and other anti-women customary practices”.²⁶ This list is based on the most commonly occurring complaints Zia noted in the cases brought to her organization Legal Aid Society, which offers legal representation to victims of domestic violence free of cost.

²² Tazeen S. Ali, “Intimate Partner Violence in Urban Pakistan: Prevalence, Frequency, and Risk Factors,” *International Journal of Women’s Health* 3 (2011): 105–15, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3089428/#idm140121900761952title> Rubeena Zakar et al., “Coping Strategies Adopted by Pregnant Women in Pakistan to Resist Spousal Violence,” *International Journal of Gynaecology & Obstetrics* 116 (2011): 77–78, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijgo.2011.08.006>; Fauziah Rabbani et al., “Perspectives on Domestic Violence: Case Study from Karachi, Pakistan,” *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal* 14, no. 2 (2008): 415–26, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18561735>.

²³ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 18

²⁴ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 18

²⁵ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 18

²⁶ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 18-19

Based on the discussion above, for the purposes of this thesis, an act need not be physically violent for it to be classified as physical domestic violence, as long as the repercussions of that act are physically detrimental to the body of the victim.

b. Psychological abuse (Nafsiyati Tashadud)

Zia uses the bulk of cases handled by the Legal Aid Society to explain the type of psychological abuse that is prevalent in cases of domestic violence against women in Pakistan. One of the most common types of abuse identified are the threat of divorce, or the pronouncing of divorce only to revoke it later.²⁷ Aside from the stigma of divorce, women who are financially dependent on their husband may also worry about their survival in the case of divorce.²⁸ Other behaviors that can constitute psychological violence include verbal abuse, displays of anger in private or public, isolating the victim from their loved ones, and threats of violence towards the victim or her children.²⁹ Zia also refers to the laws criminalizing domestic violence in the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan which define psychological abuse to include “a pattern of degrading and humiliating conduct”. Such pattern can include “obsessive possessiveness or jealousy, constituting serious invasion of the victim’s liberty, insults or ridicule, threat of malicious prosecution, blaming a spouse of immorality, baselessly blaming or imputing insanity, or citing barrenness of a spouse with the intention to marry again, bringing false allegation upon the character of a female member by any member of the shared household, and willful or negligent abandonment of the aggrieved person”.³⁰ Zia further

²⁷ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 20

²⁸ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 20

²⁹ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 20

³⁰ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 20

notes that children who witness their mother's abuse also become indirect victims of psychological abuse.³¹

c. Sexual abuse (Jinsi Tashadud)

Although the Punjab law does not define sexual violence, the laws of Sindh and Balochistan define it to include “any conduct of a sexual nature that abuses, humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates the dignity of the aggrieved person”.³² The laws specifically provide for situations where a wife is compelled to cohabit with someone other than her husband, or sexual abuse from a member of the family.³³ Although marital rape (no term for this in Urdu) and statutory rape (no term for this in Urdu) (age of consent is 16 for girls) are criminalized under Pakistani law, a social stigma of shame (شرم (*Sharam*)) and dishonor (بدنامی (*Badnami*)) associated with sexual abuse inhibits most victims from coming forward.³⁴ In particular, marital rape is very difficult to prove and many men refer to conservative religious interpretations to deny its possibility.³⁵ Due to the taboos surrounding sexual abuse, complainants approaching the Legal Aid Society for domestic violence did not usually cite concerns about sexual violence.³⁶ However, Zia notes that cases that do specify such abuse include plans for human trafficking for prostitution, force marriage (including for children).³⁷ In particular, forced marriage almost always has an element of sexual abuse as under Pakistani law, husbands can approach the court to legally mandate their wife to share the bed with them.³⁸ Other types of sexual abuse that is recognized internationally can include “pressured/unwanted sex or sexual degradation, causing pain during sex, assaulting

³¹ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 20

³² Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 21

³³ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 21

³⁴ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 21

³⁵ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 21

³⁶ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 22

³⁷ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 22

³⁸ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 22

genitals, coercive sex without protection, forcing the victim to perform sexual acts, criticizing or using sexually degrading insults, forceful sex during pregnancy or soon after birth, forced sex with the perpetrator and others, and trafficking or prostitution”.³⁹

d. Economic abuse (Mu’uashi ziyaddti)

Zia writes that the most common and pervasive form of domestic violence in Pakistan, according to the data collected by her organization, is actually economic abuse. Zia defines economic abuse to mean a situation where the abuser “takes control or limits access of the victim to finances including the current or future earning potential of the victim”.⁴⁰ Such behavior keeps the victim from leaving an abusive relationship as they lack independent means of livelihood. While prohibiting the wife/daughter from seeking her own employment, male members of the family can withhold basic necessities as a form of abuse. As discussed below in the section detailing interviews, abusive fathers can stop paying school fees or providing for their children’s food/clothing. According to Zia, the Legal Aid Society receives scores of cases where men refuse to pay sufficient or any maintenance (they are legally obligated to do so) to their wives.⁴¹ As women are likelier to be less educated than men, they also have fewer employment opportunities and lower salaries as compared to their male counterparts. Thus, women are structurally reliant on men for economic support which facilitates economic abuse.

The aforesaid discussion on domestic violence presents a contextualized definition of the term in the case of Pakistan. Although the Legal Aid Society largely operates in the province of Sindh, and the focus of this thesis is on Punjab, it will be demonstrated in

³⁹ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 22

⁴⁰ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 22

⁴¹ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*, 22

following chapters with the use of case laws that this definition suits the Punjabi context well.

1.1.2 History of Domestic Violence in the Public Sphere

Up until 2005, there was no coordinated attempt to record statistics related to domestic abuse in Pakistan.⁴² This demonstrates that most public authorities deemed domestic abuse to be a personal matter, not worthy of public scrutiny and measurement. However, certain developments occurred that challenged this attitude towards domestic violence, dragging the issue boldly into the realm of public discourse. In 2005 the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, an independent human rights body established in 1986, began to publish an annual report pertaining to the condition of human rights in the country, which included domestic violence statistics.⁴³ In 2008, Aurat Foundation, an NGO established in 1986, began to publish an annual report solely focused on domestic violence statistics in Pakistan.⁴⁴

In June 2006, GEO Television network hosted a debate pertaining to the controversial Islamic law Zina Ordinance (zīna an Islamic legal term meaning unlawful sexual intercourse) passed by the military dictator Zia-ul-Haq in 1979 criminalizing adultery and imposing harsh punishments for it.⁴⁵ The debate highlighted how the Zina Ordinance disproportionately impacted women who spent years in prison over false allegations of adultery often made by their husbands.

⁴² This is based on my own research. I have looked at national and provincial websites, as well as notable NGOs that were functioning during this time period.

⁴³ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. *Annual Reports*. HRCP, 2005. <https://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/annual-reports/>.

⁴⁴ Aurat Publication & Information Service Foundation. *Programme Reports*. Aurat Foundation, 2006. <https://www.af.org.pk/af-annual-reports.php>.

⁴⁵ DAWN.COM. "GEO TV Debate on Hudood Laws." *DAWN*, June 11, 2006. <http://beta.dawn.com/news/196428/geo-tv-debate-on-hudood-laws>.

This increasing push to bring domestic violence into public discourse was simultaneously accompanied with the restoration and enhancement of reserved seats for women in national and provincial assemblies, as well as the Senate.⁴⁶ Thousands of women were elected at the local government level, and the overall proportion of women's representation in legislative assemblies rose to almost 20%.⁴⁷ These women legislators laid the foundation for gender-based legislation in the country with the support of various human rights organizations working for women's rights e.g. Aurat Foundation, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, AGHS, etc.⁴⁸ Thus, the following years saw the passage of laws such as the Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act 2006, Sindh Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2013, Punjab Protection of Violence Against Women Act 2016, Balochistan Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2014, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence Against Women Act 2021. These legal developments signify how various actors in Pakistani society are negotiating space for redressal of domestic violence in the public sphere by calling for state intervention.

1.1.3 Legal Framework against Domestic Violence and its Development

The legal system in Pakistan is a mixture of common law from the British colonial period, secular law promulgated since the formation of an independent state, and Islamic law imported partially by the British during the colonial period in the form of Islamic family laws, and partially by the post-colonial state.⁴⁹ Article 227 of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 states, "All existing laws shall be brought in conformity with the Injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah, and no law shall be enacted which is repugnant to such

⁴⁶ Mirza, Naeem. "Legislative Watch". p 1-9

⁴⁷ Mirza, Naeem. "Legislative Watch". p 2.

⁴⁸ Mirza, Naeem. "Legislative Watch". p 2.

⁴⁹ Ghulam Rasul Zahid, "Sharia Law and Legal System in Pakistan: A Historical Overview," *Journal of Islamic and Religious Studies* 6, no. 1 (2022): 241, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://harf-o-sukhan.com/index.php/Harf-o-sukhan/article/download/1245/1199/>.

Injunctions.” In practice, however, most legal affairs are regulated by common law. Islamic law governs areas of Muslim Family law (Muslim Family Law Ordinance 1970), and some parts of criminal Law (Qanun-e-Shahadat Order 1984 (Law of Evidence) and Pakistan Penal Code 1860).

The insistence on protecting the private sphere of the family from governmental intervention is enshrined in the law in Pakistan. Article 14 of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 provides, “The dignity of man and, subject to law, the privacy of home, shall be inviolable.” Thus, the privacy of home is a constitutionally protected right. Article 35 states that the state shall protect the marriage, family, mother and child. This article interestingly gives the state a role in protecting the family unit, creating room for intervention. Such intervention, however, has not been easy to achieve.

The development of domestic violence laws in Pakistan has been the result of an arduous effort on the part of the woman parliamentarians as well as civic society. In an issue of the Legislative Watch, Naeem Mirza comments on the shift from a strong resistance in legislative assemblies to discussing Gender Based Violence to an active recognition of women’s issues.⁵⁰ In 1999, the Senate rejected a resolution condemning the honor killing of a woman without allowing any discussion on it. However, within the next twelve years, civic society and legislators made leaps in recognizing women’s issues when the Parliament passed three important laws criminalizing acid hate crimes, emergency funding for women in distress, and banning of harmful customary practices such as exchange marriages.⁵¹ Mirza writes that this change was due to the gradual efforts of women in political parties who continued to undertake bold initiatives in the legislature despite tough resistance.⁵² He also credits the women’s rights activists who

⁵⁰ Mirza, Naeem. “Legislative Watch”. 1

⁵¹ Mirza, Naeem. “Legislative Watch”. 1

⁵² Mirza, Naeem. “Legislative Watch”. 2

continued to protest on the streets, and contributed immensely to research and advocacy, especially through extensive lobbying with political parties and decision makers.⁵³ Thus, the 2000s saw a surge of pro-women laws which addressed a variety of issues such as criminalization of honor killings and sexual harassment, as well as amendment of harsh adultery laws and unattainable evidentiary standards for proving rape.⁵⁴ An important institution National Commission on the Status of Women was also set up in 2000 in lieu of Pakistan's international legal obligations which continued to support these actors in their efforts.⁵⁵

The first attempt at passing a law against domestic violence was made in 2009 by a prominent parliamentarian, Yasmeen Rashid.⁵⁶ However, due to harsh criticism from religious lobbies, it was tabled until 2012.⁵⁷ The revised bill was one of its kind, as it allowed the judge to pass restraining orders as injunctions if they found that on the face of it, domestic violence was likely to have occurred.⁵⁸ Applying only to the capital city of Islamabad, this bill has yet to be passed.⁵⁹ In the meantime, in 2010, the 14th amendment devolved certain matters from the hands of the federal government to the provincial governments. The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2013 was passed soon by the Sindh legislature. This law is perhaps the most detailed in its definitions of different types of abuse, illustrating the in-depth research conducted by civic society actors when lobbying for the bill to be passed. Balochistan was second to pass a law against domestic violence in 2014, closely resembling the bill from 2012, titled The Balochistan Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act.⁶⁰ This law expanded the definition of a vulnerable person to include domestic help and even acknowledged

⁵³ Mirza, Naeem. "Legislative Watch". 2

⁵⁴ Mirza, Naeem. "Legislative Watch". 2

⁵⁵ Mirza, Naeem. "Legislative Watch". 2

⁵⁶ Muhammad Hassan Zia and Huma Hassan, "Laws against Domestic Violence in Pakistan: An Appraisal," *Journal of Development and Social Sciences* 4, no. 1 (January–March 2023): 282 [http://dx.doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2023\(4-1\)26](http://dx.doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2023(4-1)26).

⁵⁷ Zia and Hassan, "Laws against Domestic Violence," 282.

⁵⁸ Zia and Hassan, "Laws against Domestic Violence," 282.

⁵⁹ Zia and Hassan, "Laws against Domestic Violence," 283.

⁶⁰ Zia and Hassan, "Laws against Domestic Violence," 285.

that a complainant could be a man.⁶¹ The Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act was passed in 2016, introducing the novel idea of introducing GPS trackers to be worn by the accused for enforcing the restraining order.⁶² There was an overwhelming public opposition to the law in Punjab, as clergy members and conservatives called out the GPS tracker to be violative of the constitutional right protecting the dignity of man.⁶³ Another argument was raised against the provision for residence orders under the law, whereby the abuser could be removed from the residence where he resides with the victim.⁶⁴ Critics opposed this provision, deeming it to be violative of the constitutional right of men to their property. An interesting critique fiercely debated on media was the alleged Islamic right given to men to ‘lightly beat’ their wives.⁶⁵ The passage of this law sparked intense discussions over domestic abuse in the public sphere and forced both proponents and opponents to come up with arguments to defend their position on talk shows, newspapers, and parliamentary debates.

It should be noted that both the residence order, and tracker are innovations that are being considered by progressive lawmakers across the globe. Diane Rosenfeld a leading law maker in the US proposed that the proper manner of enforcing restraining orders should be a GPS tracker, which ensures that abusers are the ones surveilled and policed, rather than the victim.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Zia and Hassan, “Laws against Domestic Violence,” 285.

⁶² AFP and Dawn.com, “Pakistan’s Historic Women’s Rights Bill Praised by Activists,” *Dawn*, February 25, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1241848>.

⁶³ Tanveer Khadim, “Why Did PTI So Strongly Oppose the Protection of Women Against Violence Bill?” *The Express Tribune* (blog), February 28, 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/article/32607/why-did-pti-so-strongly-oppose-the-protection-of-women-against-violence-bill>.

⁶⁴ “Why Is a Pakistani Bill to Protect Women Unpopular?” *BBC News*, March 17, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35811180>.

⁶⁵ Raza Khan, “‘Lightly Beating’ Wife Permissible, Says CII’s Proposed Women Protection Bill,” *Dawn*, May 26, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1260803>.

⁶⁶ HLS News Staff, “Domestic Violence Monitoring Initiative Proposed by Rosenfeld Is Signed into Law,” *Harvard Law Today*, January 9, 2007, <https://hls.harvard.edu/today/domestic-violence-monitoring-initiative-proposed-by-rosenfeld-is-signed-into-law/>; Colleen Walsh, “No Visible Bruises: Author and HLS Scholar Discuss the Scourge of Domestic Violence,” *Harvard Gazette*, July 30, 2019, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2019/07/harvard-scholar-talks-domestic-violence-with-no-visible-bruises-author/>.

Thus, the domestic violence laws in Pakistan are some of the most progressive manifestations of pro-women ideals internationally.

1.1.4 Underreporting of Domestic Violence and Attitudinal Acceptance

Despite the prevalence of domestic violence in Pakistan, the public record shows that the Punjab law against domestic violence has no case law⁶⁷, indicating severe underreporting. This means that no case of domestic violence has reached its conclusion in the court of law in Punjab under the Punjab law from 2016 till present. Other provinces report similar statistics.⁶⁸ It is likely that when the victims tried to pursue legal remedies, they were discouraged or prevented from doing so by public authorities. It is very common for policepersons to discourage complainants from pursuing legal recourse, and instead encourage them to opt for reconciliation with the abuser.⁶⁹ This is usually because the police officers feel that domestic violence is a private family matter that should be resolved from within. Furthermore, victims of domestic abuse enjoy little to no familial support in pursuing legal action against their abusive family members.⁷⁰ In sum, it appears that despite the state's recognition that domestic violence is an issue that warrants public attention, community at large, which includes families, friends and law enforcement authorities, still believe otherwise. Indicative of a certain degree of normalization of domestic violence in society as in most cases, families encourage reconciliation as a preferable mode of conflict resolution.⁷¹ This process usually ascribes a degree of blame onto the woman for

⁶⁷ The Pakistan Law Site is a website which consolidates all publicly available case law on an online forum for the ease of lawyers and judges. The website shows that there is only one reported case pertaining to PPVAW and it is a constitutional case filed in the Federal Shariat Court, questioning the constitutionality of the legislation by citing it as unislamic.

⁶⁸ This is based on my own research looking at Pakistan Law Site.

⁶⁹ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence* p. 29, <https://www.las.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Understanding-Domestic-Violence-within-the-Legal-Framework-of-Pakistan.pdf>.

⁷⁰ Asif Mahmood, "Domestic Violence Victims Suffer in Silence," *The Express Tribune*, November 26, 2023, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2448018/domestic-violence-victims-suffer-in-silence>.

⁷¹ Mahmood, "Domestic Violence Victims Suffer in Silence."

invoking the anger of the aggressor.⁷² This behavior is referred to in this thesis as a concept called attitudinal acceptance.

Reine-Marcelle Ibala, Ilana and Seff, and Lindsay Stark in their article published in 2021, ‘Attitudinal Acceptance of Intimate Partner Violence and Mental Health Outcomes for Female Survivors in Sub-Saharan Africa’ define attitudinal acceptance as the belief that physical or emotional violence subjected against a romantic partner can be justified.⁷³ However, as discussed earlier, in the context of Pakistan, domestic violence has to be defined to suit the traditional joint family structure and socio-political patterns prevalent in the society. Typical family structures in Pakistan include the nuclear family, as well as the extended family with grandparents, aunts and uncles living in the same household.⁷⁴ Amongst the interviewees for this thesis, there are cases where the aggressors were not intimate partners but rather older siblings. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, this author would like to expand this definition to mean the belief that physical, emotional, sexual, psychological and emotional, and economic violence against a female member of the household (whether a child or adult) can be justified.

Various other studies show that attitudinal acceptance of violence in society is associated with a higher likelihood of perpetrating violence among men and an increased risk of victimization among women.⁷⁵ Thus, victims, perpetrators and bystanders, all are at a risk of perpetuating domestic violence in society if they have high levels of attitudinal acceptance towards domestic

⁷² Mahmood, "Domestic Violence Victims."

⁷³ R.-M. Ibala, I. Seff, and L. Stark, "Attitudinal Acceptance of Intimate Partner Violence and Mental Health Outcomes for Female Survivors in Sub-Saharan Africa," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 10 (2021): 5099, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18105099>.

⁷⁴ Misha Nayab and Ayesha Farooq, "Family Structure and Dynamics: Influence on Personality and Well-Being of Individuals," *International Journal of Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences* 3, no. 1 (2024): 1217.

⁷⁵ T. A. Callands, H. L. Sipsma, T. S. Betancourt, and N. B. Hansen, "Experiences and Acceptance of Intimate Partner Violence: Associations with Sexually Transmitted Infection Symptoms and Ability to Negotiate Sexual Safety among Young Liberian Women," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 15 (2013): 680–694.; World Health Organization and Pan American Health Organization, *Understanding and Addressing Violence against Women: Intimate Partner Violence* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2012).; Ibala, Seff, and Stark, "Attitudinal Acceptance of Intimate Partner Violence," 5099.

violence. This fact is significant for the purposes of the proposed workshop as it seeks to address attitudinal acceptance in general population, including victims, bystanders and perpetrators.

Important research in this area has been conducted by Amir-ud-Din *et al.*, who identified attitudinal acceptance as an important risk factor (amongst other factors such as childhood experience, education and occupation) for domestic violence against women in Pakistan.⁷⁶ Their study used a sample of 3526 women who were first asked if they had ever suffered from domestic violence.⁷⁷ The categories of violence included acts of physical abuse. Participants who reported abuse were asked if they felt their husbands were justified in abusing them in the following circumstances i.e. going out without informing their husband, neglecting their children, arguing with their husband, refusing to have sex with their husband, or burning the food.⁷⁸ The study found that women who believe that a husband is justified in abusing his wife were more likely to experience violence than women who do not share this belief.⁷⁹

Amir-ud-Din *et al.* proposed that women may accept and justify domestic violence in the context of their understanding of conventional gender roles, cultural and religious norms, as well as financial and emotional dependency.⁸⁰ Thus, they may choose not to report incidences of violence, inevitably maintaining their status quo.

1.2 Proposing a Solution

1.2.1 Empathy (Hamdardi) as a tool

Nazariya crucially aims to make use of empathy in sensitizing its users for addressing attitudinal acceptance towards domestic violence in Pakistan. Empathy has been defined in different terms

⁷⁶ Rafi Amir-ud-Din, Shameem Fatima, and Shazia Aziz, “Is Attitudinal Acceptance of Violence a Risk Factor? An Analysis of Domestic Violence Against Women in Pakistan,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 33, no. 22 (2018): 4515–4541.

⁷⁷ Amir-ud-Din et al, “Women in Pakistan”, 4521.

⁷⁸ Amir-ud-Din et al, 4521.

⁷⁹ Amir-ud-Din et al, 4530.

⁸⁰ Amir-ud-Din et al, 4534.

by different disciplines. Kate Nelson in her PhD dissertation (Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Policy) conducted an in-depth qualitative study on the influence of technology on empathy and civic engagement amongst students.⁸¹ Nelson refers to the work of Amy Coplan, a scholar of philosophy and psychology, when defining the term empathy for her research.⁸² Coplan refers to empathy as a “complex imaginative process in which an observer simulates another person’s situated psychological states while maintaining a clear self-other differentiation”.⁸³ Thus, empathy includes not only understanding, but personally perceiving or experiencing the psychological condition of another person, all the while being able to differentiate between one’s own experiences and the other person’s. Nelson refers to another expert, Martin Hoffman, who is a Developmental psychologist and leading theorist on empathy, to call this practice ‘perspective taking’, whereby one person imagines how they would feel in another person’s position.⁸⁴ This perspective taking is both cognitive and affective, that is, it requires factual and emotional knowledge of the other person’s situation.⁸⁵

A social philosopher, Roman Krznaric, in his book *‘Empathy: Why it Matters and How to Get it’* explains the two types of empathy human beings are capable of feeling.⁸⁶ The first is perspective taking or cognitive empathy whereby children as young as two or three develop the ability to imagine perspectives other than their own. The second type is shared emotional response or affective empathy whereby one shares or mirrors another person’s emotions. In lieu of the aforesaid, Krznaric provides a definition that recognizes both types of empathy; “empathy involves stepping into someone’s shoes, gaining an understanding of their feelings (the affective aspect) and perspectives (the cognitive aspect), and using that understanding to guide

⁸¹ Kate Nelson, *Immersion and Emotion: Engaging Technologies for Empathy-Based Civic Learning*, PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2019.

⁸² Nelson, *Immersion and Emotion*, 37.

⁸³ Nelson, *Immersion and Emotion*, 37.

⁸⁴ Nelson, *Immersion and Emotion*, 37.

⁸⁵ Nelson, *Immersion and Emotion*, 37.

⁸⁶ Roman Krznaric, *Empathy: Why It Matters, and How to Get It* (London: Penguin, 2014), 37–38.

our actions.”⁸⁷ Empathy can be learned and increased throughout one’s life time, a skill that Krznaric argues is essential in solving conflicts regardless of their scale.⁸⁸

While there is not much literature on the concept of empathy in the Pakistani context, one study by Iqbal *et al.* titled “Sex Differences in Displaying Level of Empathy in Pakistani Adults” suggests that in Pakistan, empathy has a positive relationship with pro-social behavior and role taking.⁸⁹ Additionally, women are likelier to be more empathetic than men, suggesting that empathy responses are influenced by gender. This study supports the hypothesis that role taking through a tool like Nazariya is conducive to cultivating empathy, even in a Pakistani context. It might be useful to consider the implications of the gendered differences in empathy when designing the workshop that will introduce Nazariya to its users. However, the development of the full workshop is outside the scope of this thesis.

The term empathy, as understood through the discussion above, is a crucial concept for Nazariya. By introducing the experiences of the interviewees to the users in a first-person narrative, this author hopes to provide both a factual and emotional knowledge of a woman’s circumstances who is suffering from domestic violence. The aim is that the user will be able to understand the interviewee more, and their future actions will be guided by this understanding.

Crucially, Nazariya aims to address attitudinal acceptance towards domestic violence. By facilitating the user’s journey into the life of the interviewee, demonstrating the impact of different choices, and centering the perspective of the interviewee, it is hoped that the user will be able to empathize with the interviewee. This empathy should help in critically assessing the previously held beliefs that justify domestic violence. For example, one interviewee had an

⁸⁷ Krznaric, Roman. *Empathy: Why It Matters, and How to Get It*. Penguin, 2014, 39.

⁸⁸ Krznaric, Roman. *Empathy: Why It Matters, and How to Get It*, 40-59.

⁸⁹ Nazia Iqbal, Naila Aslam, and Uzma Masroor, “Sex Differences in Displaying Level of Empathy in Pakistani Adults,” *Peshawar Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences* 3, no. 1 (2017): 81–93.

abusive brother who was allowed by their parents to hit her when teaching her. The idea being that educational excellence is important enough that a child's bad grades justify violence. In the interviewee's case, her brother hit her regardless of her grades, showing how arbitrary the abuse was. Moreover, she performed worse at school when her brother was tasked with her tutoring than when she studied on her own. Maneuvering through her experience, users will encounter, quite closely, these nuances that challenge notions of attitudinal acceptance towards domestic violence.

An important link to establish in order to justify the proposed workshop tool, is between a virtual, often interactive experience (such as a digital game) and the cultivation of empathy. In one study, Perry *et al.*, through a project called EMOTIVE sought to design digital experiences for virtual museums which use storytelling to connect with their audience.⁹⁰ Using different techniques of digital interaction, the project proved successful in evoking relatability and empathy amongst the audience.⁹¹ The team noted that one of the difficulties in providing a positive experience for visitors was that visitors could not relate to the exhibition simply through objects.⁹² Thus, they introduced various activities and roles that participants could immerse themselves in for the duration of their virtual tour/visit.⁹³ Users reported that they could put themselves in the shoes of the person from the past and this led to their positive learning experience.⁹⁴ The study found that emotive storytelling in virtual experiences leads to positive learning experiences as it creates empathy for strangers. This study demonstrates that immersive storytelling allows users to take the perspective of another person and has a real impact in their learning about the subject.

⁹⁰ Sara Perry et al., "Moving beyond the Virtual Museum: Engaging Visitors Emotionally," paper presented at the 23rd International Conference on Virtual System & Multimedia (VSMM), 2017 (IEEE Xplore, 2017), 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.1109/VSMM.2017.8346276>.

⁹¹ Perry et al, "Engaging Visitors Emotionally", 5.

⁹² Perry et al, "Engaging Visitors Emotionally", 5.

⁹³ Perry et al, "Engaging Visitors Emotionally", 6.

⁹⁴ Perry et al, "Engaging Visitors Emotionally", 6.

In her study on the influence of technology on empathy and civic engagement amongst students, Kate Nelson found that immersive technologies can have an instrumental influence on civic learning as they enable the students' capacities for perspective taking (a critical component of empathy).⁹⁵ Literature on the subject has firmly established that digital storytelling facilitates the sharing and understanding of multiple perspectives.⁹⁶ In fact, an explicit connection between digital storytelling and empathy has been established through the neuroscientific study of mirror neurons.⁹⁷ Nelson explains that such storytelling necessitates one to first create one's own story and then hear that of others. In this manner, people are able to fully participate in others' narratives as a sense of connection and engagement has been created.⁹⁸ An interesting study referred to in this paper is that of Gehlbach *et al.* conducted on the impact of virtual reality technology and empathy.⁹⁹ According to this research, the more a participant knows about the target, and the more active their form of learning is, the greater level of productivity can be achieved in the process of "social perspective taking". "They also demonstrate that social perspective taking is most effective when tasks are scaffolded – when the target perspectives shift from less challenging, or more similar to the negotiator's, toward more challenging, more different perspectives." This author understands this to mean that a gradational introduction to perspectives different from their own is more successful in inspiring empathy amongst participants.

Nelson cites a an experiment conducted by Jeremy Bailenson at Stanford University's Virtual Human Interaction La.¹⁰⁰ In this experiment, people who saw a representation of themselves in a virtual reality framed in the perspectives of others, changed their behaviors as a

⁹⁵ Nelson, "Immersion and Emotion".

⁹⁶ Nelson, "Immersion and Emotion", 59.

⁹⁷ Nelson, "Immersion and Emotion", 59.

⁹⁸ Nelson, "Immersion and Emotion", 60.

⁹⁹ Nelson, "Immersion and Emotion", 69.

¹⁰⁰ Nelson, "Immersion and Emotion", 70.

consequence.¹⁰¹ For example, young people who viewed their surroundings as a colorblind person would, proved to be more helpful towards colorblind people after the experiment.¹⁰² In another experiment, 7th grade students who had observed Syrian refugees reach Greece on boat through virtual reality decided to make videos helping the Syrian refugee community in their locality the following year.¹⁰³

In Nelson's own study, she found that her students were able to create stronger emotional connections with others through the use of photographs, music and videos.¹⁰⁴ Her students shared that first person view into another person's life and their emotions engaged their own emotions as well.¹⁰⁵ In fact, the emotional aspect of people's experiences proved to be a crucial component that increased the likelihood of students feeling empathy for them.¹⁰⁶

From the discussion above, it may be gathered that empathy can be strategically used to influence people's actions in a more favorable manner towards the affected group. This author plans to use gamification and critical play strategically to cultivate such empathy in users and address their attitudinal acceptance towards women suffering from domestic violence. The next section justifies this choice.

1.2.2 Gamification and Critical Play for Empathy

This author proposes to create an interactive workshop tool addressing attitudinal acceptance towards domestic violence in Pakistan that utilizes museum pedagogy in the area of gamification. Thus, it is helpful to look at how the term gamification is approached in museum pedagogy.

¹⁰¹ Nelson, "Immersion and Emotion", 70.

¹⁰² Nelson, "Immersion and Emotion", 70.

¹⁰³ Nelson, "Immersion and Emotion", 70.

¹⁰⁴ Nelson, "Immersion and Emotion", 262-265.

¹⁰⁵ Nelson, "Immersion and Emotion", 265.

¹⁰⁶ Nelson, "Immersion and Emotion", 266.

In one study, Niklas Nyland writes that digital games in exhibitions are either material or software artifacts, as well as cultural artifacts.¹⁰⁷ They can be identified by their physicality in the form of consoles, controllers and storage media, or their interactivity.¹⁰⁸ Yet, the embedded meanings they carry are socially shaped, which makes them cultural artifacts as well.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the exhibiting process also changes the game by giving it a new meaning compared to other uses and contexts.¹¹⁰ When a game is played in a public place, quite possibly with an audience, the person playing it also becomes part of the exhibition. Their interaction with the game is part of the experience of others who view it. Thus, a digital game, when part of an exhibition, can have four components: material artifacts, software artifacts, cultural artifacts, and a personalized component added by the interaction with visitors. The proposed workshop tool is certainly a digital game as defined above. Users (personalized component) will ‘play’ this game (software component) using material equipment (a computer). Digital games are generally perceived in negative light in Pakistan.¹¹¹ In fact, in 2020, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority even banned the popular online game PUBG, citing reasons such as addiction, wastage of time, and negative impact on the physical and psychological health of children as the cause.¹¹² Therefore, in the cultural context of Pakistan, a digital game could potentially be perceived as an improper workshop tool for a subject matter as serious as domestic violence. Thus, the discussion following this section shall explain the exhibiting process of the game that will help give this game a new meaning.

¹⁰⁷ Niklas Nyland, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions: Objects, Experiences, and Context," *Arts* 7, no. 4 (December 18, 2018): 103, <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts7040103>.

¹⁰⁸ Nyland, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹⁰⁹ Nyland, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹¹⁰ Nyland, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹¹¹ M. Shahzad, "Is PUBG the Sole Trigger Behind String of Violent Incidents & Suicides?" *The Express Tribune*, February 27, 2022, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2345499/is-pubg-the-sole-trigger-behind-string-of-violent-incidents-suicides>.

¹¹² Shahzad, "Is PUBG the Sole Trigger."

Hanbing Wang *et al.* write in their paper discussing the potential of immersive virtual exhibitions that gamification is “the purposeful application of game design elements and principles in non-game environments and activities, aimed at enhancing engagement, motivating users, and solving problems to improve user experience and achieve specific objectives.”¹¹³ The game design elements intended for the proposed workshop are quite commonly found in role play based games. For the purpose of the proposed thesis, the workshop will utilize gamification, as defined above, for the specific goal of fostering empathy and understanding for domestic violence victims amongst users.

Critical play, as defined by Mary Flanagan and quoted by Løvlie *et al.* is “a broad concept which encompasses a wide range of play activities from artistic play—such as techniques used by Surrealists— to engagement in modern videogames designed for political, aesthetic, and social critique.”¹¹⁴ An example discussed by Løvlie *et al.* is the game ‘Train’.¹¹⁵ This game aims to make players think critically about the concept of complicity. Initially, the players are tasked with loading passengers onto toy cars. However, the players later find out that the trains are headed towards the death camp of Auschwitz.¹¹⁶ Løvlie *et al.* use their paper to suggest design strategies for hybrid museum experiences for critical play. According to the definition they use, the workshop proposed by this author is an example of critical play. It involves a play activity whereby the user shall immerse themselves in a role as the Interviewee and make decisions within the framework of the set narrative. Different decisions can lead to different outcomes (bad or good). However, the purpose of this workshop is not entertainment but rather using aspects of this feature and put it to a distinct purpose; a socio-political aim of addressing

¹¹³ Hanbing Wang *et al.*, "Gamifying Cultural Heritage: Exploring the Potential of Immersive Virtual Exhibitions," *Telematics and Informatics Reports* 15 (September 2024): 100150, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.teler.2024.100150>.

¹¹⁴ Løvlie *et al.*, "Playing Games with Tito: Designing Hybrid Museum Experiences for Critical Play," *Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage* 14, no. 2 (May 2021): 1-26, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3446620>.

¹¹⁵ Løvlie *et al.*, "Playing Games with Tito," 1.

¹¹⁶ Løvlie *et al.*, "Playing Games with Tito," 1.

attitudinal acceptance towards domestic violence in Pakistani society. Perhaps it will not suffice to play this game once. That is why the planned model of Nazariya will have multiple storylines based on various interviews. These can be utilised for ‘refresher’ workshops such as those conducted by the NGO Legal Aid Society after six months of the initial training with the same group.¹¹⁷

A common criticism faced by interactive experiences such as digital games in museums is that they do not create a deeper understanding of the subjects they deal with.¹¹⁸ Niklas Nylund in his article ‘Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions: Objects, Experiences, and Context’ writes about a more nuanced understanding of digital games in exhibitions.¹¹⁹ He provides a model and vocabulary for understanding such experiences within museums. His study narrowed down four digital games out of a sample of 70 at the Finnish Museum of Games.¹²⁰ His definition of digital games is discussed above where he points out three central components i.e. material, software, and cultural. Being both an object and an experience at the same time, Nylund refers to digital games as “original experiences”.¹²¹ Arguing that games share many similarities with ‘interactive experiences’, Nylund traces the latter to John Dewey, a progressive pedagogist, who advocated for the utility of interactivity in learning.¹²² However, despite the growing popularity of games as an interactive experience for learning in museums, Nylund warns against them becoming “an end instead of means to some sort of contextualising understanding”.¹²³ This approach which ignores the notions of understanding and communication in museums is called the theme park approach.¹²⁴

¹¹⁷ This author spoke to trainers at Legal Aid Society to confirm their training structure.

¹¹⁸ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹¹⁹ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹²⁰ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹²¹ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹²² Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹²³ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹²⁴ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

In order to avoid this approach, Nylund problematizes the notion of “original experiences” and instead pivots to a “contextual mode of learning”.¹²⁵ “The authenticity of “original experiences” is always constructed, since it entails choosing whose experiences are defined as “authentic” and deciding if developers, players or other sources are the foremost authority on it. “Original experiences” are an ideal impossible to reach because visitors do not re-experience “original experiences” but rather approach re-constructions of the sociocultural values of an exhibited game in a physical exhibition context, shaped by their own prior personal (game) experiences.”¹²⁶ The contexts in which learning takes place in museums are threefold: personal, sociocultural, and physical.¹²⁷ Each museum visitor brings a unique set of interests, perspectives, and motivations, shaping a learning experience that is deeply personal. Likewise, their socio-cultural background—including factors such as ethnicity, nationality, and social class—also plays a significant role in influencing how they engage with and interpret exhibits. The physical context is also important as one’s learning at an exhibit can vary greatly if they are accompanied by a 3-year-old or a 40-year-old.¹²⁸ This author understands this discussion to mean that focusing solely on the game as an original experience, i.e. an object and an experience, is not enough to foster learning and understanding amongst visitors. Instead, ample attention must be afforded to the visitors and their contexts when designing the digital game and exhibition. Here Nylund points out that simply exhibiting games on their own may not be enough for making visitors reflect on a certain subject.¹²⁹ Instead, there is a need for additional information, guidance or narration which helps the exhibited game reach the standards required from a museum exhibition.¹³⁰ A curt introduction to the game may be completely

¹²⁵ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹²⁶ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹²⁷ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹²⁸ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹²⁹ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹³⁰ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

incomprehensible for players instead of a tool that incites understanding or reflection.¹³¹ This is especially true for people who have no familiarity with the operating system, game controller or even digital games in themselves.

Contextualizing a game in an exhibit with information can take many forms. For Nylund's study, this can mean context of play, game development, or public reception.¹³² Context of play can be provided by photographic or videographic demonstrations showing people how to play the game.¹³³ Game development context can be shared through interviews with game developers and even documentation of the process itself.¹³⁴ Finally, public reception can be contextualized through reviews and media reports on the game.¹³⁵ Sometimes, museums and exhibitions choose to not make the game playable, but instead provide the external context necessary for framing them.¹³⁶

1.2.3 Challenges Expected and Proposed Solution

In this section, this author shall discuss some common challenges faced by experts in museum studies in the field of gamification, and explore solutions to them. Løvlie *et al* discuss some of these challenges in their article "Playing Games with Tito: Designing Hybrid Museum Experiences for Critical Play".¹³⁷ They write that a growing interest in using play within museums is influenced by the proliferation of learning theories that children play to learn.¹³⁸ Museums also want to open themselves up to co-creation and participation of visitors.¹³⁹ This means that new applications of play in the form of digitisation and gamification are being adopted in pursuance of these developments.¹⁴⁰ Various experiments involving digital games

¹³¹ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹³² Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹³³ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹³⁴ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹³⁵ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹³⁶ Nylund, "Constructing Digital Game Exhibitions," 103.

¹³⁷ Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito"

¹³⁸ Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito," 16:4.

¹³⁹ Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito," 16:4.

¹⁴⁰ Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito," 16:4.

are taking place in museums e.g. ‘Murder at the Met Scavenger Hunt’ at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.¹⁴¹ In this study, Løvlie *et al.* assess different games in museums and visitor feedback on them. One game called Twitto was a single player role play based game in which the player took on the role of a resistance leader who eventually becomes a dictator.¹⁴² Through a series of creative challenges, the players are facilitated to think critically (albeit in a lighthearted way) about the nature of propaganda in the history of Yugoslavia and today. The participants’ feedback was quite interesting as they responded to the challenge of making propaganda by connecting their personal experiences to the game.¹⁴³ Interestingly, introducing playfulness and humor to the exhibit did not offend any of the participants.¹⁴⁴ Some felt that the game was too trivial and did not provide enough education or learning.¹⁴⁵ Feedback also included uncertainty about the tone of the app.¹⁴⁶ People felt unsure whether the game was meant to be taken seriously or not.¹⁴⁷

Løvlie *et al.* point out in their discussion of critical play that inviting visitors to play a game in a museum is likely to challenge their expectations about the norms of a museum visit.¹⁴⁸ Some visitors may find that playful behavior is not acceptable inside museums. Fitting a game within the time-frame of a museum visit was another challenge pointed out by visitors.¹⁴⁹ However, the authors note that this awkwardness serves as a disruption to the idea of what a museum is.¹⁵⁰ Museums are sometimes referred to as ritual environments because guides and cues tell visitors how they should behave within a museum.¹⁵¹ On one hand, critical play is meant to transgress

¹⁴¹ Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito," 16:4.

¹⁴² Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito," 16:10

¹⁴³ Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito," 16:11

¹⁴⁴ Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito," 16:4.

¹⁴⁵ Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito," 16:4.

¹⁴⁶ Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito," 16:4.

¹⁴⁷ Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito," 16:4.

¹⁴⁸ Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito," 16:16

¹⁴⁹ Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito," 16:16.

¹⁵⁰ Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito," 16:16.

¹⁵¹ Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito," 16:16.

these norms, but on the other hand, this may become a challenge for certain people to participate in a museum in this manner. Løvlie *et al.* offer a solution to this problem. They suggest that creating a safer space for more visitors to play in museums, “social contracts need to be properly established; both between players and other visitors, as well as between players and the museum”.¹⁵² It can help to create a ‘magic circle’ for play where games are clearly positioned within spatial and temporal limits, with a “clear license to engage in play”.¹⁵³

The aforesaid discussion is quite relevant to the proposed workshop tool as domestic violence sensitivity training is considered a trauma-sensitive subject, most people would not associate with a game. In fact, it may be perceived as offensive to some. Thus, the subject must be approached carefully.

1.3 Discussion

There is much to be learned by Løvlie *et al.*’s study in the issue of trauma-sensitivity. The intended audience for the proposed workshop are students in high schools and universities. However, many NGOs in Pakistan are currently conducting gender sensitivity trainings for legal professionals such as judges and policepersons. One such NGO has already shared interest in implementing the proposed workshop in their judicial trainings. Bearing in mind such an age diverse target audience, the norms associated with a workshop must be borne in mind. This author has attended several gender sensitivity trainings for professionals in Lahore, Pakistan. The atmosphere is usually serious, and trainers (usually young lawyers from NGOs such as SHEher and Legal Aid Society) prepare a presentation which is followed by a feedback form submitted by the participants. One trainer confided with this author that the participants are case-hardened judges and policepersons who consider themselves to be experts on the issue.

¹⁵² Løvlie *et al.*, "Playing Games with Tito," 16:16.

¹⁵³ Løvlie *et al.*, "Playing Games with Tito," 16:20.

Trainers often find themselves appealing to ‘objective’ sources of reasoning such as statistics and utilitarian arguments about the economic benefits of reducing domestic violence. The proposed workshop tool takes advantage of this self-perceived authority on the part of the participants. The role-play-based game offers an element of agency that differs from a traditional training session (one person presents statistics to appeal to the group’s rationality). However, it also introduces an awkwardness due to the norms of seriousness of trainings and workshops. As discussed above, digital games also have an added negative perception associated to them in Pakistan. Løvlie *et al.*’s ideas suggest creating a magic circle where participants perceive a clear license to engage in critical play.¹⁵⁴ They also suggest creating a social contract between the participants and the hosting institution.

This author envisions that the proposed workshop will take place in a controlled environment, with the guidance of professionals in the field of gender-based violence. Depending on the target audience, the location can be a classroom, a room in the judicial academy, or an auditorium in a university. A magic circle could be created by separating the seating area for different parts of the workshop. For the introductory part of the workshop, participants could be seated in a file facing the trainer. During this time, they could be briefed about the design of the workshop tool and how to use it. This is the stage at which a ‘social contract’ could be negotiated. This is also the opportune time to contextualise Nazariya in a way that re-contextualises it in norms different to those typically associated with digital games in Pakistan. Perhaps, the trainer could demonstrate the design by ‘playing’ a small portion of the story of one of the Interviewees. Once this part of the workshop has been completed, participants could rise from their seats and the seats could be rearranged into a circular formation (so that participants can enjoy some level of privacy). Alternatively, participants could leave to a different room where chairs and desks have already been organized in a circular formation. This

¹⁵⁴Løvlie et al., "Playing Games with Tito," 16:20.

could help create the ‘magic circle’ proposed by Løvlie *et al* above. Since the proposed workshop tool requires computers and internet, the room should be equipped with both facilities.

Allowing some privacy to the participants is important because this author wants to avoid influencing the behavior of participants due to their feeling of being observed. The trainer will be present in the room to guide the participants with any technical difficulties or questions. In order to assess the impact of the workshop, participants could be asked to share their opinions on a simple questionnaire before and after the workshop. Although there is no winning or losing component in the ‘game’, participants will be able to see the impact of their actions on the domestic violence ‘score’ in society. This final score for each participant could be recorded (while retaining anonymity) for adjustments and modifications in the workshop in the future (as needed). According to one trainer, some NGOs ask the same participants to return for another training every six months. This serves to assess the impact of the previous training, as well as a refresher on the training contents. This author imagines a similar ideal scenario for this workshop where participants could return to the same workshop (albeit they could ‘play’ through the story of a different Interviewee). In this way, their changing final ‘score’ could be an indicator of the workshop’s success.

CHAPTER TWO: DISCOURSES IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

This chapter introduces newspaper coverage of domestic violence cases in Pakistan between 2013 and 2023 to trace the type of cases that dominate public discourse on the subject. The analysis focuses on six high-profile cases that were picked up by newspapers and other public platforms such as news channels and social media. Publicly debated and discussed, these cases, also contributed to shaping the broader discourse on domestic violence in Pakistan. In contrast the everyday experiences of abuse reflected in the four interviews conducted for this project detail the nuanced factors and context that create a social environment where abuse can be perpetuated. This chapter argues that while public discourse tends to focus on the most extreme and violent cases, these narratives fail to reflect the more common, sustained forms of abuse experienced by many women. Therefore, the legal changes prompted by these high profile cases, fail to address the social factors such as attitudinal acceptance that encourage domestic violence.

There are two purposes of using newspaper coverage alongside the interviews. Firstly, it helps establish the representativeness of the four interviews by showing that many of the same patterns appear in other sources. Although only four interviews were conducted, the lived experiences shared in them mirror the broader trends of domestic violence in Pakistan. Secondly, this chapter highlights the gap between public perception and lived realities of domestic abuse. The media only focuses on sensational cases, creating a shallow understanding of domestic violence. This understanding emphasizes physical violence often resulting in serious injury or death, ignoring other types of domestic abuse. It also presents abusers as rare monstrous people with mental illnesses rather than products of common social attitudes. These public narratives often shape the direction of legal reform, leading to legislation that addresses only the most visible forms of violence, ignoring everyday abuse and its underlying causes.

While this chapter focuses specifically on media narratives, the following chapter assesses 30 court judgements to further support the argument that public and legal responses tend to overlook the more pervasive, less visible forms of domestic abuse. These judgments also contextualize the interviews by providing insight into the interpretation and response of the legal system to related cases.

The focus of this discussion is not the manner in which these cases were reported in mainstream newspapers, but rather the type of cases that made it to the public debate in themselves. It should be noted that Pakistani newspapers are largely privately owned, but they operate under significant influence from the state.¹⁵⁵ Pakistan has a 62.3% adult literacy rate¹⁵⁶, raising concerns that perhaps not everyone reads newspapers in the country. However, the choice to focus on newspapers does not take away from the fact that these six cases were overwhelmingly reported by all media sources including news channels, independent journalists on social media etc. This choice over other forms of media was made for practical reasons. Newspaper archives in Pakistan are more accessible and easier to search by keyword or date range compared to news channels, which do not maintain searchable public databases. This accessibility made it possible to identify and analyze specific cases that generated sustained public attention and debate. Once these six cases were popularized by the media, they became part of the public history of domestic violence in the country. They shaped public perception simply by being shockingly violent in nature, overshadowing any alternative representation of domestic violence (with nuances that highlight different factors contributing to domestic violence).

2.1 Farzana Parveen

¹⁵⁵ S. A. Kamboh, A. Hameed, and M. Ittefaq, "Ethnic Newspaper Industry in Pakistan and Impacts of Corporate Ownership," *South Asia Research* 0, no. 0 (2023): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02627280231190769>.

¹⁵⁶ Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, *Adult Literacy*, Government of Pakistan, accessed May 27, 2025, <https://mofept.gov.pk/ProjectDetail/NjQ4ZTg2NjltOWM2NC00Y2IxLTkzMdgtMjU2OTFhMjA4NzNh>.

On May 27th, 2014, a 30-year-old pregnant woman, Farzana Perveen, was murdered outside the Lahore High Court for marrying against her family's wishes.¹⁵⁷ A leading local newspaper in English, Dawn, reported the incident on May 29th, 2014, revealing the gruesome details of the case.¹⁵⁸ Her death was a result of being attacked with bricks and batons by around two dozen of her family members while onlookers (including policemen and others) did not intervene.¹⁵⁹ Perveen had visited the court to record her statement in response to a case filed by her family claiming that she had been abducted by her husband.¹⁶⁰ According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, the murder was premeditated and according to Perveen's father, who surrendered willingly to the police, he did not regret his actions.¹⁶¹ The news item by Dawn quotes a prominent women's rights organization in its condemnation of Perveen's murder in the name of honor (honor killing). The organization called on the government to consider honor crimes as crimes against the state instead of person in order to end the impunity for honor killings. This is because until this point in time, in accordance with Islamic Law, the Penal Code allowed for the *wali*, or the legal representative, to pardon the perpetrator if they so desired.¹⁶² This provision was relied upon notoriously in cases of honor killings where families orchestrated the murder themselves, and pardoned the facilitators in the aftermath.

This case prompted public outrage and was quickly picked up by international outlets like BBC and the Washington Post.¹⁶³ In fact, the Prime Minister at the time, Nawaz Sharif, even made a

¹⁵⁷ Reuters. "Farzana Parveen's Family Claims Husband Killed Her." *Dawn*, May 31, 2014. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1109761>.

¹⁵⁸ "HRCF Appalled by Woman's Murder Outside LHC." *Dawn*, May 29, 2014. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1109304>.

¹⁵⁹ "HRCF Appalled by Woman's Murder," *Dawn*, May 29, 2014.

¹⁶⁰ "HRCF Appalled by Woman's Murder," *Dawn*, May 29, 2014.

¹⁶¹ "HRCF Appalled by Woman's Murder," *Dawn*, May 29, 2014.

¹⁶² Section 309 Pakistan Penal Code 1860, "In the case of qatl-i-amd, an adult sane wali of the victim may, at any time and without any compensation, waive the right of qisas."

¹⁶³ Rick Noack, "In Pakistan, 'Honor Killings' Claim 1,000 Women's Lives Annually. Why Is This Still Happening?" *Washington Post*, May 28, 2014. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/05/28/in-pakistan-honor-killings-claim-1000-womens-lives-annually-why-is-this-still-happening/>; Shaimaa Khalil, "The Pakistani Women Killed for 'Honor,'" *BBC News*, November 25, 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-30113128>.

statement, deeming the incident, “totally unacceptable”.¹⁶⁴ The court found Perveen’s father, brother, cousin and former fiancé, all guilty of her murder. Another brother received a sentence of ten years in jail for being an accomplice in her murder.¹⁶⁵ Members of civil society engaged in widespread protests to condemn the killing. However, according to a survey conducted by Pew Research Center, almost 50% of Pakistani respondents, when asked if they believed that honor killings were justified, responded in affirmative in all or some cases.¹⁶⁶

The relevance of this case lies in the way it demonstrates the most extreme form of attitudinal acceptance of domestic violence: honor killing. Farzana was murdered because her family could not accept her decision to choose her own partner. This reflects a broader societal norm of controlling women’s sexual autonomy. In the interviews conducted by this author, similar patterns emerged—women spoke of being physically abused by their family members for having boyfriends or for engaging in sexual activity outside of marriage. In each case, the abuse was justified as punishment for immoral behavior. Farzana’s case ended in murder, but the underlying reasoning was the same. The difference is one of degree, not of kind. Although Nazariya currently focuses on Kiran’s story, future versions of the workshop will include other interviews that help demonstrate this connection more clearly. They will show how everyday abuse and extreme cases like honor killings exist on the same spectrum and are driven by similar attitudes and beliefs. These attitudes must be addressed to make any meaningful progress towards curbing domestic violence.

¹⁶⁴ BBC News. “Pakistan Honor Killing: Father Defends Stoning.” *BBC News*, May 29, 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-27622232>.

¹⁶⁵ “HRCF Appalled by Woman’s Murder,” *Dawn*, May 29, 2014.

¹⁶⁶ Pew Research Center, *The World’s Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society – Overview*, April 30, 2013, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-overview/>; Pew Research Center, *Four in Ten Pakistanis Say Honor Killing of Women Can Be at Least Sometimes Justified*, May 30, 2014, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2014/05/30/four-in-ten-pakistanis-say-honor-killing-of-women-can-be-at-least-sometimes-justified/>.

2.2 Saba Qaiser

On February 24, 2016, Zahid Hussain, an author and journalist, wrote an op-ed on the short documentary following a 19 year old girl's story from Gujranwala by Director Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy titled 'A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness'.¹⁶⁷ Saba Qaiser married her husband at the age of 19, against her parents' wishes.¹⁶⁸ She decided to plead for her family's forgiveness after the marriage and her father and uncle pretended to be open to reconciliation. Instead of accepting her back into the family at the meeting, her family shot her in the head and threw her into the river, thinking that she was dead. In a shocking turn of events, Saba survived this attack, and her life was saved after she was taken to a hospital. Saba decided to pardon her father and uncle in court through the then-prevailing law which allowed victims or in case of murder, their heirs, to pardon the perpetrators.¹⁶⁹

Saba's story gained international recognition when the Director Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy made a short documentary titled 'A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness', which won an Oscar for Best Documentary (Short Subject) in 2016.¹⁷⁰

After years of lobbying on part of the civil society, the government eventually passed stricter laws against honor killings in 2016.¹⁷¹ The documentary's international success certainly helped the passage of these laws. Sections of the Penal Code were amended to restrict the right of pardon for violent acts related to honor.¹⁷² The punishment for killing someone in the name

¹⁶⁷ Zahid Hussain, "The Law of Forgiveness," *Dawn*, February 24, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1241459>.

¹⁶⁸ *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness*, directed by Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, produced by Tina Brown and Sheila Nevins (SOC Films and HBO Documentary Films, 2015), 40 min

¹⁶⁹ *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness*. Directed by Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy.

¹⁷⁰ Asia Society. "Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy Wins Second Oscar." *Asia Society*, February 29, 2016. [https://asiasociety.org/asia21-young-leaders/sharmeen-obaid-chinoy-wins-second-oscar.​;contentReference\[oaicite:0\]{index=0}](https://asiasociety.org/asia21-young-leaders/sharmeen-obaid-chinoy-wins-second-oscar.​;contentReference[oaicite:0]{index=0})

¹⁷¹ The Express Tribune. "Parliament Finally Passes Bills Against Rape, Honour Killings." *The Express Tribune*, October 7, 2016. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1194878/parliament-finally-passes-bills-rape-honour-killings>; Pablo Sartorio, "Qandeel Baloch's Sacrifice – A Review on Pakistan's Anti-Honor Crime Bill and Its Effectiveness as a Legal Tool to Safeguard Women from Honor Killings in Pakistan," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Law & Forensic Sciences* 2, no. 1 (2017): 40, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3314252.

¹⁷² The Express Tribune, "Parliament Finally Passes Bills."

of honor was increased to a mandatory prison term of 24 years, even if the family of the victim pardons the accused. The law was lauded by the then-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who congratulated the parliament and nation in his speech on the passing of this law. “There is no honor in honor killing.” He remarked.¹⁷³

Unfortunately, implementation of the law has not been smooth. In *Muhammad Qasim v The State*¹⁷⁴, the Supreme Court of Pakistan convicted Muhammad Qasim for the murder of his sister-in-law and her alleged paramour with a lesser punishment under Section 302(c) of the Penal Code. Under the new law, the Court should have convicted the Muhammad Qasim under Section 302(b) instead of 302(c) because the amendments to the Penal Code do not allow the punishment for murder committed in the pretext of honor to be mitigated. Section 302(b) provides for death or life imprisonment as the punishment for murder, whereas Section 302(c) provides for a lesser punishment for the same i.e., up to 25 years. The proviso to Section 302(c) states that the lesser punishment shall not apply to offences of murder committed *in the name or pretext of honor*. Meanwhile, the erstwhile provision of Section 300 of PPC provided grounds for mitigation: if the murder was caused by a loss of the power of self-control due to grave and sudden provocation.¹⁷⁵

Muhammad Qasim had made a statement admitting to having committed both murders under the impulse of ‘grave and sudden provocation’ on account of *ghairat* (honor) after witnessing the victims in a compromising position. The Court found that the confession established grave and sudden provocation. The judge went as far as to say that grave and sudden provocation can differ depending on the cultural context. The highest court of Pakistan recognized that seeing your wife or sister in a compromised position with a stranger was enough to qualify as a grave

¹⁷³ The Express Tribune, “Parliament Finally Passes Bills.”

¹⁷⁴ PLD 2018 Supreme Court 840

¹⁷⁵ Prosecutor General Punjab. “Grave and Sudden Provocation.” *Prosecutor General Punjab*, n.d. https://pcps.punjab.gov.pk/grave_and_sudden_provocation.

and sudden provocation in the Pakistani cultural context. Rather than following the spirit of the law, the judiciary opted to recognise the attitudinal acceptance of domestic violence in Pakistan as a given.

This case shows that while the law may have changed, the underlying attitudes of acceptance towards domestic violence have not. Muhammad Qasim's case makes it clear that despite the legal reforms, the Court still accepted that seeing a female relative in a 'compromised position' could amount to grave and sudden provocation. This line of reasoning reflects that women's lives and choices can be policed and punished in the name of honor. Nazariya aims to highlight this disconnect in future versions that include more interviews, by focusing on attitudes the law was supposed to change but didn't. It will amplify the lived realities of women who have suffered the everyday consequences of this acceptance.

2.3 Qandeel Baloch

Perhaps the second case of honor killing that drove the passage of the anti-honor killing laws was that of Qandeel Baloch. Qandeel, aged 26 and based in Punjab was an internet sensation and model.¹⁷⁶ She belonged to a poor family and rose to fame through a popular reality tv show in Pakistan.¹⁷⁷ She caused a lot of social controversy with her posts on social media which included bold content, and critique of patriarchy. Right before her death, she had posted a series of selfies with a prominent conservative cleric, Mufti AbdulQawi, which raised questions about their relationship and more importantly, his character.¹⁷⁸ For his involvement in Qandeel's case, Mufti Qawi was removed from the Ruet-e-Hilal Committee (a committee responsible for sighting the moon to determine the days of Eid), as well as his prominent position in the political

¹⁷⁶ Zehra Nawab and Fareedullah Chaudhry, "Qandeel Baloch: Exposing Patriarchy in Death," *Herald Magazine*, July 24, 2017, <https://herald.dawn.com/news/1153809>.

¹⁷⁷ Nawab and Chaudhry, "Qandeel Baloch."

¹⁷⁸ The Express Tribune, "When Qandeel Baloch Met Mufti Qawi: A Guideline on How NOT to Learn Islam." *The Express Tribune*, June 22, 2016. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1127984/qandeel-baloch-met-mufti-qawi-guideline-not-learn-islam>.

party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI).¹⁷⁹ He was also arrested on suspicion for his involvement in Qandeel's murder but later released.¹⁸⁰

On July 15th, 2016, Qandeel's brother, Muhammad Waseem, drugged and strangled her to death in their family home in Multan.¹⁸¹ He confessed boldly before a press conference organised by the police that he was not embarrassed of his actions, and that Qandeel's behavior had been completely intolerable. Admitting to the murder, he claimed to have provided relief to his parents who had been suffering due to Qandeel's actions for the last two decades. "Girls are born only to stay at home and to bring honor to the family by following family traditions, but Qandeel had never done that", he further justified his act.¹⁸²

Shortly after this case, the government passed the aforementioned anti-honor killing laws that prohibit the pardon of perpetrators who commit murder on the pretext of honor. However, criminal law cannot be applied retrospectively, which quickly became apparent in this case. Although Waseem had been convicted by a lower court in Multan and sentenced to life imprisonment for killing his sister, the Lahore High Court acquitted him six years later for Qandeel's parents pardoned him. This ruling is currently under appeal at the Supreme Court of Pakistan.¹⁸³

While Qandeel was alive, she was the subject of a lot of online hate and mockery.¹⁸⁴ This author recalls the online debates her murder sparked, many going far to justify her brother's actions.

¹⁷⁹ Zahid Gishkori, "The Curious Case of Mufti Qavi," *The News on Sunday*, October 29, 2017, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/564280-curious-case-mufti-qavi>.

¹⁸⁰ Gishkori, "The Curious Case of Mufti Qavi."

¹⁸¹ The Express Tribune. "Drugged Qandeel Before Strangling Her to Death, Says Brother." *The Express Tribune*, July 17, 2016. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1143481/drugged-qandeel-strangling-death-brother>.

¹⁸² Maya Oppenheim. "Qandeel Baloch's Brother Admits to Drugging and Strangling Her: 'Girls Are Born Only to Stay at Home.'" *The Independent*, July 17, 2016. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/qandeel-baloch-death-brother-admits-murder-twitter-instagram-celebrity-pakistan-a7141761.html>.

¹⁸³ The Express Tribune. "State to Appeal Decision in Qandeel Baloch Case Before SC, Says Maleeka Bokhari." *The Express Tribune*, February 26, 2022. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2345353/state-to-appeal-decision-in-qandeel-baloch-case-before-sc-says-maleeka-bokhari>.

¹⁸⁴ Azra. "Watch: Hilarious Audition of Qandeel Baloch in Pakistan Idol." *The Siasat Daily*, March 24, 2016. <https://archive.siasat.com/news/watch-hilarious-audition-qandeel-baloch-pakistan-idol-936771/>.

Her face became an icon for the Pakistani feminist movement, with women wearing a mask of her face, and marching the streets of big cities calling for justice. At one such march, the protestors dug six feet deep holes into the ground and buried empty coffins that bore the names of Qandeel and other women who had been murdered in the name of honor that year.



Figure 1 Aurat March with Qandeel Baloch masks¹⁸⁵

On the other hand, public figures such as journalists and politicians came out to blame Qandeel for her own murder. A prominent politician and leader of the political party Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam said that “Shamelessness and exhibitionism are a scourge in our society, spread through women like her.”¹⁸⁶ Senior journalists like Haroon Rashid at Dunya News and Shahid Masood

¹⁸⁵ Reuters. “Pakistan Appeals Court Frees Brother Convicted of 'Honour Killing' of Social Media Star Qandeel Baloch.” *Reuters*, February 14, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/pakistan-appeals-court-frees-brother-convicted-honour-killing-social-media-star-2022-02-14/>.

¹⁸⁶ Sanam Maher. “Viewpoint: Qandeel Baloch Was Killed for Making Lives 'Difficult'.” *BBC News*, September 30, 2019. <https://feeds.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-49874994>.

at ARY made public statements blaming Qandeel's murder on her own inappropriate lifestyle choices.¹⁸⁷

Qandeel's case highlights the same issues as any honor killing case- this idea that if a woman behaves 'immorally,' her murder is somehow justified. Her death could be blamed on her own actions. This attitudinal acceptance towards domestic violence is sought to be addressed through. In future versions of Nazariya, where more interviews will be turned into interactive first-person narratives, users will be able to experience different scenarios and empathize with the victims of honor crimes. That shift in perspective is key in making it harder to dehumanize victims, harder to justify violence against them. It should be noted that Nazariya alone is not sufficient in holistically addressing the tragic problem that is domestic violence. However, it is intended as a meaningful contribution to the solution.

2.4 Zohra Shah

Zohra Shah, like many young children in Pakistan who work as domestic servants for upper class homes, was a seven-year-old girl from a poor family.¹⁸⁸ She worked for a wealthy couple living in Rawalpindi who raped and beat her to death, allegedly for freeing two expensive parrots as she cleaned their cage.¹⁸⁹ Her employers brought her to the hospital where she shortly thereafter succumbed to her injuries.¹⁹⁰ As hashtags like #JusticeforZohraShah went viral, this case became the focus of public attention, sparking debates about child labor and legal

¹⁸⁷ Digital Rights Foundation. "Invasion of Privacy & The Murder of Qandeel Baloch." *Digital Rights Foundation*, July 15, 2016. <https://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/invasion-of-privacy-the-murder-of-qandeel-baloch/>.

¹⁸⁸ Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir, "Zahra Shah: A Test Case," *The News International*, October 25, 2020, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/734288-zahra-shah-a-test-case>.

¹⁸⁹ The News International. "Zohra Shah Murder: Problem Not the Law but Implementation of the Law, Says Mazari." *The News International*, October 29, 2020. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/736536-zohra-shah-murder-problem-not-law-but-implementation-of-law-says-mazari>.

¹⁹⁰ Mazari-Hazir, "Zahra Shah: A Test Case."

protection for domestic workers.¹⁹¹ The employers were both arrested and handed severe punishments in June 2022.¹⁹² This case is similar to another one just a few years before in 2014 when a 10-year-old girl Tayyaba who worked for a judge and his wife, was brutally beaten and tortured in Islamabad.¹⁹³ This case also became prominent in public discourse in 2016 when a photo of Tayyaba's bruised face went viral, sparking outrage. In Tayyaba's case, the three-year jail term imposed on the judge and his wife was eventually reduced to a year.

It is important to note that Pakistan already had laws against child labor such as the Employment of Children Act 1991, and Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act 2016. However, as pointed out by a legislator, Shireen Mazari, "the problem is not the law but the implementation of the law".¹⁹⁴ According to a study conducted by the International Labor Organization in July 2022, one in four households in Pakistan employs a child servant for domestic work, usually a girl aged 10 to 14 years.¹⁹⁵ Mazari points out that beyond legal changes, there is a need to change the culture of discipline through corporal punishments in Pakistan.¹⁹⁶ Poverty is another crucial factor for such pervasive child abuse. Zohra's parents were so poor that they were unable to take her body back to their village for burial.¹⁹⁷ Such social factors contributed to her being employed at such a young age, with such unfair employment terms in the first place.

¹⁹¹ EMEA Tribune. "Zohra Shah: 8-Year-Old Minor Girl Killed for Releasing Parrots from Cage." *EMEA Tribune*, June 5, 2020. <https://web.archive.org/web/20201005233909/https://emeatribune.uk/zohra-shah-killed-for-releasing-parrots-from-cage/>.

¹⁹² EMEA Tribune, "Zohra Shah: 8-Year-Old Minor Girl Killed."

¹⁹³ Mohammad Imran. "Tayyaba Torture Case: Judge, Wife Handed One Year in Prison, Rs50,000 Fine." *Dawn*, April 17, 2018. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1402145>.

¹⁹⁴ Web Desk. "Zohra Shah Murder: Shireen Mazari Stresses on Implementation of Law in Child Labour, Abuse Cases." *Geo News*, October 29, 2020. <https://www.geo.tv/latest/315740-zahra-shah-murder-shireen-mazari-stresses-on-implementation-of-law-in-child-labour-abuse-cases>.

¹⁹⁵ Nabila Feroz Bhatti. "Child Domestic Labour: The Worst Form of Slavery." *The Express Tribune*, August 13, 2023. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2430576/child-domestic-labour-the-worst-form-of-slavery>.

¹⁹⁶ Xari Jalil. "Pakistan: 8-Year-Old Zohra Shah, a Caged Soul Killed for Setting Birds Free." *Thomson Reuters Foundation News*, June 12, 2020. <https://news.trust.org/item/20200605174555-0zaro/>.

¹⁹⁷ Jalil, "Pakistan: 8-Year-Old Zohra Shah."

In any case, the outcry following this case was strong enough for the government of Islamabad to pass a notification criminalising child domestic labor in urban households under the Employment of Children Act 1991.

Although Nazariya doesn't claim to address something as complex and vast as poverty redressal, the interviews conducted by this author make it clear that child abuse is pervasive in Pakistan. Often excused as discipline for bad grades, or disobedience, child abuse is so normalized that many people turn a blind eye, convinced that hitting a child is somehow for their own good. Nazariya shows how arbitrary this such discipline is, how it brutalizes children and hinders their healthy upbringing. Infact, it often teaches them violence as that's what they've known.

2.5 Noor Mukadam

Perhaps the most well-reported case of domestic violence in recent history occurred in 2021 wherein Noor Mukadam, the daughter of a former diplomat was found beheaded in the home of her ex-boyfriend Zahir Jaffer, a US national belonging to one of Pakistan's wealthiest families.¹⁹⁸ Noor had been held captive and tortured in Jaffer's home for two days before her demise. Zahir Jaffer was arrested and sentenced to death for the murder and kidnapping, while his employees who prevented Noor from escaping the house, Muhammad Iftikhar and Muhammad Jan, were sentenced to ten years of imprisonment.¹⁹⁹ Jaffer's parents were acquitted of charges of abetment while they had been aware of Noor's abduction and subsequent torture but were not physically present in Pakistan at the time.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ "Islamabad: Child Domestic Labour Banned Following Outrage over Murder of Eight-Year-Old Zohra Shah." *Gulf News*, June 7, 2020. <https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/islamabad-child-domestic-labour-banned-following-outrage-over-murder-of-eight-year-old-zohra-shah-1.73002317>.

¹⁹⁹ Hasnaat Malik. "Justice for Noor: Triumph and Apprehensions." *The Express Tribune*, March 6, 2022. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2346543/justice-for-noor-triumph-and-apprehensions>.

²⁰⁰ Malik, "Justice for Noor."

The public discourse on Noor's murder was fraught with victim blaming. This attitude for Noor's violent death is evident in the vandalism of a public mural for her in Sialkot.²⁰¹



Figure 2 Vandilism at Noor Mukadam's funeral²⁰²

Journalists like Imran Riaz Khan commented publicly on social media that Noor's murder happened because of her 'illicit relationship with Jaffer'.²⁰³ He claimed that there were more calls to Jaffer from her phone in the last six months, than to her own father, alluding to this as the reason for her death. The trial itself was widely covered and despite Jaffer having confessed

²⁰¹ Entertainment Desk. "Unidentified Men Deface Noor Mukadam's Poster in Sialkot and Twitter Is in Tears." *The Express Tribune*, August 3, 2021. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2313624/unidentified-men-deface-noor-mukadams-poster-in-sialkot-and-twitter-is-in-tears>.

²⁰² Entertainment Desk, "Unidentified Men Deface Noor Mukadam's Poster."

²⁰³ Salima Bhutto. "Islam and Noor Mukadam: Is Journalist Imran Khan's Statement Justified?" *MM News*, August 11, 2021. <https://mmnews.tv/islam-and-noor-mukadam-is-journalist-imran-khans-statement-justified/>.

to the murder to the press, he submitted a not guilty plea. The defense counsel questioned Noor's father aggressively, asking him if it was appropriate for Noor to have a relationship with Jaffer in an Islamic country. He also alleged that Noor had brought drugs to Jaffer's house, all baseless claims that further shifted public opinion towards victim blaming.²⁰⁴

Noor's murder was framed not as a jarring and brutal crime, but as the outcome of her her supposedly immoral choices. Such justifications normalize violence and deflects blame from the perpetrator. Nazariya confronts these narratives by amplifying the voices of survivors, allowing users to experience their stories first-hand.

2.6 Sara Inam

In September 2022, a celebrated Pakistani-Canadian economist was brutally murdered in Islamabad by her husband Shahnawaz Amir after just three months of their marriage.²⁰⁵ Amir confessed to her murder, saying that he thought she was cheating on him. The police challan form on the other hand noted that the couple had fought over Sara refusing to send Shahnawaz money.²⁰⁶ He had used a dumbbell to kill his wife, as shown by the multiple skull fractures on her head.²⁰⁷ This case happened shortly after Noor's death and quickly drew much public attention.²⁰⁸ Although Amir was awarded the death penalty, his mother, who resided in the same house and was charged with conspiracy and abetment, was acquitted by the court.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ Bhutto, "Islam and Noor Mukadam."

²⁰⁵ "Another Victim of 'Femicide': Who Was Sara Inam?" *Geo News*, September 27, 2022. <https://www.geo.tv/latest/442831-another-victim-of-femicide-who-was-sara-inam>.

²⁰⁶ News Desk. "Shahnawaz Amir Sentenced to Death in Sara Inam Murder Case." *The Express Tribune*, December 14, 2023. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2450008/shahnawaz-amir-sentenced-to-death-in-sara-inam-murder-case>.

²⁰⁷ Umer Mehtab. "Sara Inam Murder: Victim's Father Challenges Mother-in-Law's Acquittal in IHC." *Dawn*, January 2, 2024. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1802632>.

²⁰⁸ News Desk, "Shahnawaz Amir Sentenced."

²⁰⁹ News Desk, "Shahnawaz Amir Sentenced."

The public discourse surrounding Sara's death was not as disruptive as that of Noor's. While most were appalled at the brutality of her death, some did question her decision to marry Amir. This author herself had a heated conversation with her family where they argued that Sara knew what she was getting into when she married a man like Amir. This kind of victim blaming aids a narrative that domestic abuse can be avoided if one is careful and protects oneself, if one behaves exactly as the rules of society prescribe. However, this is rarely ever the case.

Nazariya helps show that abuse is rarely ever in the victim's control. Even when women try school their own behavior based on the social norms set by society, it is ultimately the abuser who chooses to abuse. Hiding, appeasing, compromising only protect the victim to a certain extent (possibly at the expense of another victim who was unable to do so), as seen in Kiran's story. Abuse is arbitrary and justifying it and normalizing it only helps in perpetuating it. The interviews in Nazariya highlight how the silence and victim blaming of bystanders make abuse easier to carry out, and harder to escape.

2.7 Discussion

The aforementioned discussion shows the type of cases that catch public attention and feature in newspapers. It appears that most newspapers reported the cases in a sympathetic fashion. There are few trends of supporting the killing, aside from an occasional quote from a third person who has in fact justified the killing in some way. However, once the victim is already dead, it is easier for newspapers to take a sympathetic stance. This is clear in the example of Qandeel Baloch who was a famous influencer before her death. Newspaper coverage was less than favorable then, often questioning her character.²¹⁰ However, as seen from the discussion above, domestic violence cases reported in the media usually involve extreme violence. Thus, public discussion focuses on these cases and any legal changes that are triggered from such

²¹⁰ Azra, "Watch: Hilarious Audition of Qandeel Baloch."

discussion fail to address the deep-rooted factors behind domestic violence, e.g. attitudinal acceptance towards domestic violence. The kind of media coverage that these cases received definitely helped pass progressive laws as a consequence. For example, Qandeel Baloch and Farzana Parveen's cases, coupled with the documentary on Sara Inam's life brought the issue of honor killings into public attention. The anti-honor killing laws were passed precisely to address the system of arranging a murder and pardoning it through legal means, as seen in Qandeel Baloch's case. Nevertheless, the outcome of these cases themselves was not guaranteed to be in the victim's favor. Qandeel Baloch's brother was still pardoned by her parents, and Sara Inam chose to pardon her own family for attempting to kill her. Thus, these laws did not result in meaningful change even in the prominent cases that helped push for their passage. Thus, Nazariya is proposed as a tool in domestic violence sensitivity workshops to address attitudinal acceptance towards domestic violence- a crucial factor that this author discovered in her research.

CHAPTER THREE: LEGAL CASES

The representativeness of the four interviews can also be observed in the discussion of 30 legal judgements on issues related to domestic violence as defined in the previous chapter. Around 30 cases of domestic violence were selected for this thesis over the period of ten years i.e. 2013-2023 for this section. The four main provincial laws on domestic laws in Pakistan have no case law under them till date. This means that despite years since their passage, no cases instituted under these laws either exist, or have been resolved till completion. Thus, this author utilized the search engine for judgements i.e. Pakistanlawsite.com to look for keywords that usually appear in judgements related to cases of domestic violence. The type of words searched for include ‘Khula’, ‘cruelty’, ‘mental torture’, ‘maintenance’, ‘dowery’, ‘domestic violence’, ‘domestic abuse’, and ‘wife’, ‘beat’/‘hit’. Terms related to sexual violence did not show any results that could be categorized as domestic violence (perpetrators were not members of the household in the cases that showed up). The results were vetted to list cases that correspond to the definition of domestic violence discussed above. In the attached Annexure 1, these cases have been listed in a table format. The aim of this exercise was to demonstrate the representativeness of the interviews conducted for the workshop, to highlight patterns of attitudinal acceptance that surround cases of domestic violence, and to demonstrate the gradational variations between the cases prominent in public discourse (as discussed above), and the relatively more private sphere (albeit still public) of courts. While the cases that catch public attention certainly bear similarities with these cases, they still represent only the most violent forms of domestic violence that can take place, and not the iceberg below the waterline that shows the whole array of violent behaviors and attitudes that this phenomenon is comprised of. This section shall summarize the key notable themes of discussion that arose from an overview of the case law on domestic violence between 2013 to 2023: child marriage, marriage

against parents' wishes, character malignment and claims of infidelity, economic abuse, familial support or reconciliation, abuse of child domestic servants, and the role of language used by judges in case law.

3.1 Child Marriage

Although child marriage is outlawed under Pakistani law, it appears that in many cases, it is excused and justified by Pakistani courts.²¹¹ The age of marriage for girls is 16, and 18 for boys under the law.²¹² However, Pakistani judges repeatedly justify the marriage of girls younger than 16 despite the same being in clear contravention of law.²¹³ Instead of looking at official documents such as birth certificates and school records, courts refer young girls to medico-legal officers who conduct physical exams to determine the age of the minor. These determinations seem to only confirm if the child has undergone puberty, and if she has, her marriage is deemed valid. Pakistani criminal law recognizes statutory rape and deems the act of having sexual relations with a minor under the age of 16, with or without consent, as rape.²¹⁴ However, judges disregard this provision, instead focusing on certain conservative Islamic interpretations which justify the marriage of minors.²¹⁵

Interestingly, many of the cases in which child marriage is justified, are cases where parents submit complaints of abduction of their minor daughter by an older man. Courts choose to give credence to the statements made by the minors in courts (minors who remain in the custody of their 'husbands') as indicative of consent of the minor.²¹⁶ In one case, the court found that lack

²¹¹ PLD 2013 243; 2015 YLR 2369; 2018 PCrLJ; PLD 2020 Lahore 811

²¹² *Child Marriage Restraint Act*, 1929, § 3.

²¹³ PLD 2013 243; 2015 YLR 2369; 2018 PCrLJ; PLD 2020 Lahore 811

²¹⁴ *Pakistan Penal Code* (Act XLV of 1860), § 375.

²¹⁵ PLD 2013 Lahore 243

²¹⁶ 2018 PCrLJ

of physical resistance on part of the minor shows that she clearly consented to the marriage, thus making it valid.²¹⁷

3.2 Marriage against parents' wishes

Much like the case of Saba Qaiser, the act of marrying against one's parents wishes can be a serious violation of social norms, even termed a defilement of the family's honor. In many cases, adult women choose to elope with their partners, after which their parents harass them by filing suits of abduction and kidnapping against their husbands.²¹⁸ The case law on this subject is pervasive, showing that this is a very common practice to pressurize women. On the very face of it, this practice alone constitutes domestic abuse wherein parents impose legal consequences on their adult daughters for exercising their right to choose their husband. On the other hand, it can take extreme forms in the manner of honor killings.

The attitude of judges in cases of child marriage and such cases is the same, there is a trend of validating the marriage.²¹⁹ This is a worrying trend as judges do not discern between children being enticed into abusive marriages, and adult women choosing a partner their parents would not approve of.

3.3 Character malignment and claims of infertility

A common justification offered by abusive husbands in cases of Khula (divorce initiated by the wife) is the infertility of the wife, or her immoral character. In one case, the husband hit his wife claiming that she had made him a eunuch.²²⁰ In another case, the plaintiff filed a suit against her husband for dissolution of marriage on grounds of physical and mental abuse, as

²¹⁷ 2015 YLR 2369

²¹⁸ 2017 YLR Note 418; 2017 PCrLJ Note 112

²¹⁹ PLD 2013 243; 2015 YLR 2369; 2018 PCrLJ; PLD 2020 Lahore 811

²²⁰ 2017 YLR Note 295

well as refusal to maintain maintenance?²²¹ It should be noted that under Pakistani family law, Muslim men are obligated to provide for their wife and children financially, and if they refuse to/fail to do so the wife and children are able to institute suits for maintenance with the Family Court.²²² In this case, the husband submitted his reply to the plaintiff's suit, stating that she refused to fulfill her matrimonial obligations, was unable to 'beget' children, and was a 'non-productive woman'.²²³ The judge took this complaint seriously and directed the wife to undergo medical examination with a medico-legal officer. The officer found that the woman was fertile and had no medical issues²²⁴ As a result, the judge allowed the wife's petition for dissolution of marriage on grounds of cruelty.

The wife's character is a commonly cited justification for domestic violence. In many cases, disrespect and disobedience are perfectly acceptable justifications for perpetrators for physical abuse on part of the husband. In one case, such an argument over disrespect escalated to murder where the husband killed his wife for 'talking back' to him.²²⁵ In another case, the wife was accused of stealing money from her husband and badly beaten as a result.²²⁶

3.4 Economic abuse

Pakistani law conditions the husband's duty to provide for his wife financially so long as she has sexual relations with him.²²⁷ Suits for maintenance are quite common in family courts where wives ask for financial support for themselves and their children. Disturbingly, husbands can file suits for 'restitution of conjugal rights', a type of court sanctioned rape where a wife is obligated to return to her husband's home via court order.²²⁸ Common responses to suits of

²²¹ 2021 CLC 1165

²²² 2022 CLC 372

²²³ 2021 CLC 1165

²²⁴ 2021 CLC 1165

²²⁵ 2019 PCrLJ 325

²²⁶ 2022 PCrLJ Note 111

²²⁷ *Muslim Family Laws Ordinance*, 1961, § 9.

²²⁸ *Muslim Family Laws Ordinance*, 1961, § 9.

maintenance by men include claims that the wife willingly left her matrimonial home, thus the husband is not obligated to provide for her. Another common claim is refusal to acknowledge the children as their own, thus disqualifying them for their right to be maintained by their father. This is a particularly dangerous accusation in a conservative society where allegations of extra-marital affairs are not only legally punishable but also conducive to acts like honor killings. In one case, the husband even killed his wife in a fit of rage over her institution of a suit for maintenance for her children.²²⁹ It seems that economic abuse is legally justified by law and judges alike, in a variety of circumstances. One example is cases where the wife does not bed the husband. If the wife is able to prove that she left the husband on account of his cruelty, judges may not enforce the order for restitution of conjugal rights, instead directing the husband to pay maintenance. However, in general, it is assumed that a woman's maintenance by her husband is contingent on her performing conjugal relations with her husband.

Much of physical abuse is also closely interlinked with economic abuse. In many of the cases assessed, the husband or his family would take the wife's gold ornaments of dowry and refuse to return them. Insistence on return of her possessions could easily lead to physical violence. Therefore, many suits for recovery of dowry are instituted alongside pleas for Khula in Family courts.

3.5 Familial support or reconciliation

It appears that familial support or pressure to reconcile is a crucial factor in the outcome of domestic violence cases. Most cases that resulted in murder had a pattern of previous incidents of abuse which were followed by a jirga (council of village elders that mediate conflicts) reconciliation, or a familial intervention that resulted in some sort of reconciliation. Similarly, cases where women were able to get out of abusive situations, and approach the court for relief

²²⁹ 2023 PCrLJ 1834

in the form of Khula, usually had instances of familial support. In one case, a woman suffered for years at the hands of her husband who repeatedly turned her out of the family home.²³⁰ Her family repeatedly attempted reconciliation between the couple. A commonly cited reason to reconcile are is? the children. In one case, a woman decided to stay with her husband for the sake of her children until the abuse escalated to a point that her husband murdered her.²³¹

3.6 Abuse of child domestic servants

Another common type of case was that of abuse of child domestic servants. The case law on this subject is difficult to read due to the brutality and abuse suffered by the young children. In one case, the judge writes that this practice is akin to modern slavery as the children live and work with the wealthy families, their meagre income collected directly by their parents, with little to no freedom of mobility.²³² The practice is common, as mentioned above, and with an acceptance of corporal punishment as discipline for children, the employers take on a ‘parental’ role for the children, resulting in unspeakable cruelty. Cases of child abuse rarely emerge in courts as children are unlikely to seek legal recourse, unless they die, or are so badly injured that the violence is reported by someone else. As the interviewees shall disclose in the following section, child abuse is frequent, and accepted as a private disciplinary matter.

3.7 Role of language used by judges

Finding case law on domestic violence turned out to be a tougher task than expected. A simple search for the word ‘domestic violence’ only showed 36 results. It appears that this is a rather new term that is not routinely used by judges in their judgements. Rather, more commonly used terms are ‘cruelty’, ‘mental and physical torture’ and ‘inhuman behavior’. When searching for

²³⁰ 2020 YLR 176

²³¹ PLD 2021 Balochistan 145

²³² PLD 2021 Balochistan 145

these key words keywords?, a mixture of judgements on police brutality, custodial violence, and domestic violence turn up. Although judges are likelier to recognise emotional abuse in recent judgements with phrases like ‘cruelty is not limited to physical abuse but can also be mental or even by conduct’²³³ being used in rulings, the only visible relief is the dissolution of marriage. As pointed out by Zia in her report on domestic violence in Pakistan for Legal Aid society, domestic violence cases are buried in Khula proceedings and case law.²³⁴ Relying on an age-old law under the colonial regime which required women to present evidence of ‘cruelty’ for getting a divorce, judges are limited by their vocabulary, as well as orders.²³⁵

This absence of the term ‘domestic violence’ from judgements is also indicative of an attitudinal acceptance towards the phenomena. It appears that in common vernacular there is no direct word for the term in over 200 of the languages used in South Asia.²³⁶ Phrases commonly used to describe the situation are ‘ziyaddti’ which translated to ‘excessiveness’ (more often used to refer to rape), ‘tashaddud’ which translates to violence (less frequently used in the context of domestic violence), ‘zulm’ which translates to ‘cruelty’, or ‘wo hath chalata hai’ which translates to ‘he moves his hand’ If one were to coin a term, it would be ‘gharelu tashaddud’ which would directly translate to ‘domestic violence’. However, as gathered from an assessment of the case law, judges are most likely to use the term ‘zulm’. In one article for the BBC, Punjabi women in the UK discuss how there is no word for emotional abuse in Punjabi.²³⁷ Given the absence of the word, they find it hard to recognize the abuse itself in their lives when it happens. This lack of precise terminology, use of subtle phrases that hint at some bad thing,

²³³ PLD 2020 Supreme Court 146

²³⁴ Legal Aid Society, *Understanding Domestic Violence*

²³⁵ *Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act*, 1939, § 2(viii).

²³⁶ Sangeetha Menon. “The Language of Domestic Abuse in South Asian Communities.” *TEDxCaryWomen*, January 10, 2020. Video, 11:36. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhIbQmuavq8>.

²³⁷ TEDx Talks, *The Language of Domestic Abuse*.

all indicate a cultural hesitation to bring this problem to the fore of public discussion. It is a hushed matter that is spoken of in ‘dabbay alfaz’ or ‘pressed words’.

3.8 Discussion

As seen in the discussion above, analyzing 30 cases across a decade reveals crucial nuances in domestic abuse. Interestingly, some types of cases, such as sexual abuse within the household, do make it to courts at all. Those that do make it to court are against people who are not members of the household, and not a single case of marital rape appeared on record. Even when domestic violence is dragged from the private into the public sphere, it is still carefully filtered. This silence signifies a deep attitudinal acceptance: whether or not abuse is "normalized," its erasure from public discourse suggests that when it does happen, it is not to be named.

Nazariya brings such hidden nuances to the public domain. In Kiran’s story, we see how sexual abuse inside the home, by a family member, is still dismissed or denied, kept quietly within the bounds of the private sphere. Even when her family believed her, their response was to separate her from the abuser, not to hold him accountable. There were no real consequences. This kind of muted response reflects how deeply embedded impunity is when abuse happens within the family. Nazariya brings these stories into the light, not just by naming them, but by making users feel what it’s like to live them. It is this emotional connection, this shift from abstract to personal, that can begin to undo the public-private divide and challenge the attitudes that allow silence to persist.

CHAPTER FOUR: INTERVIEWS

A total of four interviews were conducted for this thesis the months of August and September of 2024. This author had a difficult time convincing women to come forward. An NGO She-Her which directly works in providing legal representation to women in Khula cases initially agreed to facilitate introductions with potential interviewees. However, at a later stage, they reported that their clients were hesitant to give an interview for a purpose not directly related to their case. In some cases, it was difficult for them to travel to the office as they lived in far off places. There was no response to Facebook posts, or Whatsapp messages circulated, asking women to volunteer for an interview if they had suffered from any form of domestic violence in the past. Thus, it was easiest to request personal acquaintances, friends and family members. One interviewee kept delaying the interview until she eventually replied stating that she did not want to recall this period of her life as it was too painful.

Aside from one interviewer, all interviewees are personally known to this author. They mostly took place over the phone call where this author wrote down notes instead of recording. The more well-acquainted this author was to an interviewee, the easier it was to ask specific questions, and the more forthcoming were the interviewees.²³⁸ It is noted that Hareem and Kiran's interviews are much longer than the other two (an hour and a half each approximately). This is because these two interviewees were personally known to this author, and they were much more forthcoming for this reason. For the same reason, this author chose Kiran's

²³⁸ In one of the interviews, the interviewee's young daughter accompanied her and this led to some difficulty in discussing any possible sexual abuse in the case. As she was not able to read or write, the confidentiality and consent form was read out to her aloud to which she consented. The other interviewees were sent the form via Whatsapp a few days in advance. Templates the consent form are attached as Annexure B English and Annexure C Urdu.

interview for the pilot version of Nazariya as it was an adequate length and sufficient information was shared for a complete timeline.

4.1 Farzana (late 40s)

For the sake of anonymity, Interviewee A shall be referred to as Farzana. Farzana belonged to a small city in Punjab where she worked as a domestic servant and raised her two children as a single mother. She was married to a man of her parent's choosing at the age of 16 who turned out to be addicted to drugs. He was physically, economically and emotionally abusive towards Farzana. There were multiple incidents when he beat her and turned her out of the house, and she would return to her family. In these instances, her family encouraged her to return to her husband's home. They told her that she had a sharp tongue, and she must have said something for him to act this way. As Farzana earned money, she bought a small piece of land and constructed her house. However, the same was under her husband's name. Around 12 years before the interview took place, Farzana tried to wake her husband up for morning prayers (Fajr). He reacted very violently and injured her to a point that her face bled heavily. Alongside her mother-in-law, her husband turned Farzana and her young children out of the home. Farzana promised her parents that she was not at fault this time around, that she had only tried to remind her husband of his religious obligations. Her family decided to support her throughout the Khula proceedings as she filed a suit for maintenance of the children as well. She fought this case for ten years. Her husband refused to pay maintenance, claiming that he had no money, and instead chose to go to prison for two years. Farzana lost the land and home she had built with her own money. Today Farzana continues to work as a domestic servant, she has built her own home where she raises her two children. Her ex-husband reached out to get in touch with his children, which Farzana allowed. However, he still refuses to pay any maintenance towards their upbringing.

Farzana's experience of the legal system was quite difficult. She mentioned that every few months, the judge in charge of her case would be changed. On many occasions, the judge insisted that she reconcile with her husband, despite the divorce having already taken place. She spent years of her life, as much of her money fighting the proceedings. Her husband chose to spend more on legal proceedings than the amount he would have had to pay for his children's maintenance.

In Farzana's case, a few things become quite obvious. Her family's insistence that she reconcile with her husband led to a pattern of violence which only escalated with time. Her husband's addiction to drugs led to economic abuse wherein he would take her earnings and spend them on his addiction. Farzana finally won her parent's support when she convinced them that she had in fact only tried to fulfill her obligations as a good Muslim wife. Her father and brothers accompanied her to hundreds of court visits over the years, standing by her. This support may not have resulted in her winning the legal case, but it helped her leave the household where she was being abused. Her financial independence was also key to her ability to leave, raise her children, and sustain herself. The judges' attitude urging her to reconcile with her ex-husband (an act that would be illegal) shows the attitudinal acceptance of the judge towards cases of domestic violence.

4.2 Amna (26-year-old)

For the sake of anonymity, this interview shall be referred to as Amna. Amna belonged to an upper middle-class family in a big city in Punjab. She currently works in a different city as a lawyer after graduating from a renowned university. She lives with her sister in an apartment they rent together. Amna grew up with three younger siblings, watching her father hit her mother in fits of rage. He also hit the children, including Amna. The most common reason for this abuse was not getting good enough grades in school. Disagreeing with her father also

triggered his anger. His reaction was quite unpredictable as there was no discernable pattern to his anger. He would get angry over something on one day, but laugh it off the other day.

Amna's mother belonged to a respectable family with parents who really loved each other. After marrying Amna's father at the age of 22, she began facing sporadic domestic abuse. Her parents insisted that she reconciles ('sulah kerlo') with her husband each time. Eventually her husband isolated her from her family to a point that she only speaks to her mother over the phone sometimes. When Amna was in 8th grade, there was a big fight in which her father badly beat her mother. They went to her grandparent's house where the only person supportive of her mother was her aunty. Everyone else urged Amna's mother to return to her husband with her children. They told her that 'Baap ka sahara zaroori hota hai' which translates to 'A father's support is essential'.

Amna mentioned that she felt the burden of maintaining the peace in her household as the eldest daughter. Her uncle (father's older brother) lived on the upper floor of the same house. One day, her father was badly hitting her mother and her screams were loud enough for the household to hear. Her uncle's family did not intervene. Instead, later he asked Amna, a child at the time, why she did not intervene. On one occasion, Amna tried to take the case he was trying to hit her with. In her words, 'Ham unko nahi maar sakte' (we cannot hit him), 'things would escalate'. His pattern of abuse was breaking things, screaming, hitting the children and his wife with objects, or hitting them directly. He also controlled how much money he gave, and how it was spent.

Amna's father sporadically acted kindly. He would buy his children a laptop, a new car for commute to work, etc. However, Amna learned to distrust these acts because he never stopped hitting her mother. As she grew older, she and her siblings devised ways to protect each other from their father. They would use Photoshop to edit her younger brother's exam results to

prevent their father from finding out that he failed. She and her sister moved to a different city and minimised contact with him. However, they are still careful in how they speak to him as they do not want him to vent his anger at their mother or younger brothers.

When asked why Amna never took legal action against her father, she responded that her family would never support her. She mentioned that she had a recording of him which could incriminate him. However, she does not feel ready to commit to seeking legal recourse as she feels that her family would not support her. Her father still pays the school fees of her younger siblings.

Today, Amna is financially independent of her father. She is surrounded by friends and has sought extensive therapy. She feels that her relationship with her father greatly impacts her own romantic relationships as she finds it hard to trust men. However, with therapy, she continues to work through these problems.

4.3 Hareem (27-year-old)

For the sake of anonymity, this interviewee shall be referred to as Hareem. Hareem's story is much more detailed due to this author's close relationship with her. She was born to a middle-class family in a big city in Pakistan. She had three older siblings, (two brothers and a sister), and growing up they lived in a small apartment with their parents. Hareem was much younger than her older siblings, and always felt closer to her eldest brother than the others. She was also very attached to her father, who was a very gentle person, and always treated her with great care. She recalls her childhood to be fraught with financial problems. Her father was unemployed and looking for jobs. Her mother used to work with her uncle, and Hareem was always alone at home. She spent her time playing on the street with the neighborhood children. To help with the family income, her sister used to teach young kids in the neighbourhood. As she grew older, she also joined her sister with teaching.

Hareem's mother was quick to get angry. Since the children were all good to school, there were few excuses to hit them. However, Hareem recalled that her mother would get angry for no reason. Once she was upset, she would scold everyone in the household. The best thing to do was to stay quiet and wait for it to pass. Hareem's mother was also physically violent towards the children. Hareem recalled that she would get so angry and aggressive that her own hands would bruise from hitting them. Hareem's Mamu (mother's brother) was the same way. He hit his wife in family gatherings behind a closed door. Relatives could hear her screaming, but no one ever intervened. 'Ye inka apna masla hai' (this is their personal problem), Hareem recalled her family saying. On one occasion, Hareem's mother hit her in front of her cousins which really embarrassed her. When she confronted her mother about this later, she dismissed her shame saying, 'Kia hogaya, apnay hi tou hain' (So what? They are 'our own' (meaning they are family)).

The fights between the parents were frequent. Hareem's father never raised his voice as her mother abused her verbally and screamed at him for not being able to find a job. At most, the fight one day was escalated so badly, that he left the house and only returned in the morning. Although their mother hit them less in front of their father, Hareem thought that he did not hold much power in front of her. He would try to protect the children, try to intervene or lighten the mood. Despite everything, she was sure that her mother was deeply loved by her father. He would bring her roses for Valentine's Day and treated her with care. At family gatherings, Hareem's mother's family would mock her father for not earning enough. In Hareem's words, he was a simple man, too trusting of others.

When asked about her relationship with her mother, Hareem mentioned that she was very clingy towards her mother as a child. However, later as she grew older, she became more and more fearful of her mother's anger. In fact, she was the only child who ever spoke up before her. There was no physical intimacy between them. She never hugged her children or expressed her

love. As time went by, Hareem grew interested in boys in her class. Since she was considered a good student in class, her teachers were worried this would distract her. One teacher saw her talking to a boy in her class and called home, exaggerating the scene, saying that they were holding hands. Her mother was a conservative woman who believed this story over her daughter's word. Thinking that it did not matter what she actually did, her mother would still believe the worst of her, Hareem went out of her way to behave as her mother thought she was. When her mother wasn't at home, she would chat with the boys in her class on the computer. If she was caught, her mother would call her harsh words and use sexual expletives about her, describing acts that Hareem was not even aware of. As a 12-year-old child, Hareem was constantly caught in these fights with her mother, a beating no longer serving as a deterrent since that was a regular occurrence in any case. Hareem started rebelling more, dating the boys in her class and talking to them at home over the internet.

Things greatly escalated when Hareem's father one day received a phone call that her brother had died in a car accident. It happened on the road right in front of their apartment. A high-speed bus had run over her elder brother as he crossed the road. This tragedy worsened her mother's anger. She turned to religion to seek solace and grew much more religiously strict. It was only two years later that Hareem received a similar phone call, only this time it was her father who had passed away in a traffic accident. Eventually Hareem's mother decided to move to a different city because living in front of the road where both her husband and son had died became too painful.

Hareem's mother could not be reasoned with when she was angry. As she turned more strongly towards religion, it was impossible to argue with her. There was no use apologizing, or quelling her anger. According to Hareem, one had to let the anger take its course. When the anger subsided, she would pretend all was normal and ask Hareem to eat with her. When the family moved to a new city, initially, it was just Hareem and her mother. The two elder siblings were

completing their university education. The mother and daughter began to bond really well. They watched a lot of movies together. Her mother joined a religious school, and Hareem would help her prepare for it. Hareem still remembers this time of her life as a good time.

When Hareem started university, she met a man at a party, who will be referred to as Arslan. Arslan was a few years older than her and was becoming a filmmaker. The two grew close very quickly and Arslan became very serious about their relationship. In the meantime, Hareem's mother was becoming very aggressive about religious obligations. She would wake her daughter for morning prayers (Fajr), and if she refused to wake up, her methods grew crass. She would use curse words and scream. If Hareem still refused to obey, her mother stopped speaking to her for days on end. When Hareem told her mother that she was an atheist, their relationship worsened even more. With building resentment towards her mother, she felt herself grow distant from religion, from her family. At this time of her life, she increasingly relied on Arslan. She started smoking, drinking and doing drugs alongside her new boyfriend. All these things would be absolutely unacceptable for her mother. A few months into the relationship, Arslan proposed to her for marriage. Still very young as a 20 year old, she agreed but remained hesitant. Sending the distance, Arslan took photos of her private Instagram account and shared them with her mother. He told her that she was doing drugs and that he was worried about her. It did not take much else for Arslan to convince her to keep Hareem from going to university. Hareem's mother pulled her out of university and froze her semester. After much begging and pleading, she was allowed to return for the next semester, but her relationship with her mother was devoid of any trust. Hareem decided to forgive Arslan and continued to date him.

One day, her mother surprised Hareem at her hostel when she found an emergency contraceptive pill on her table. Hareem did not lie but admitted that she was sexually active. Hareem's mother and her brother brutally assaulted Hareem in response and forced her to return home, freezing her semester once more. Around this time Arslan convinced her family to

support their marriage. His behavior towards Hareem grew more and more violent. Amidst rampant sexual and physical abuse, Hareem was also facing severe isolation at her mother's hands. Her brother also abused her physically, all justified in the name of her bad character. She would overhear her family talk about her, urging each other to hide money in case she steals it. Her brother hit her with impunity, and she found herself thinking suicidal thoughts. One day she confessed to her mother that when she was eight years old, her surviving brother had sexually abused her. Refusing to believe her, Hareem's mother accused her of seducing her own brother. She started suffering from alopecia and lost nearly all of her hair. Things finally came to a point when she packed her bags and climbed out of the bathroom window. Cutting off all ties with her family, as well as with Arslan.

Living on her own was difficult but Hareem managed it. She started teaching privately to support herself. One day she submitted her photos for a modelling gig and got the job. As life improved, she began to earn enough to rent a room in a shared house. There she met her housemate, who shall be referred to as Hamid. Hamid was a recently unemployed lawyer who drew Hareem's attention. They began dating soon, with Hamid moving into her room quite early on into the relationship. Hareem began having difficulties with the landlady and tried looking for her own place. However, no one was willing to rent a full portion to a single woman, or an unmarried couple. Eventually, Hareem found another place with housemates. One night she woke up to frantic knocking to her door. It was her housemate crying, holding her arm gingerly. Turned out that her boyfriend had hit her and broken her arm in a fit of rage. Hareem took her housemate to the hospital but was shaken by the incident. Her housemate continued to live with the same man in their shared home. Hareem's modeling career had taken off. She decided that she wanted to live on her own. Hamid suggested that she and Hamid enter into a Nikkah just to show the authorities that they were married and had a marriage certificate.

Things took a bad turn once Hareem married Hamid. It was a private ceremony where they were married off in the back of a car by a Molvi they had hired. At this point, Hareem described that she was equally attributable for their relationship not being 'respectful'. "We brought out the worst in each other". Despite his outbursts of anger, Hareem continued the relationship because she felt very fearful of being alone. Their fights initially started over money which began to disturb Hareem as there were times when she could not find any modelling gigs at all.

As Hareem discussed Hamid's anger issues and his outbursts, she always justified his behavior with some wrong doing on her own part. "I have a tendency to say very mean things." "When he used to throw things and get angry, I would become completely emotionless and he would freak out." "I pushed him and when he pushed me back, I fell on a table and had bruises all over."

Hareem explained that they would have long discussions after such outbursts, trying to implement rules so that they would not repeat. "Neither of us would actually implement what we talked about." "The problem was that neither of us knew how to make it work." Hareem admitted that during this time, she was reflecting deeply on her life, her mother's abuse, and her abusive ex-boyfriends. When she confided in Hamid, he told her to get over it. She felt like he did not understand her and asked if they could take a break. This prompted a very violent reaction on part of Hamid who insisted on breaking up instead. During this break, Hareem rekindled an old relationship from high school. She admitted that the point of this was to end things with Hamid. Hamid moved out and started visiting her apartment drunk at night. He would break things around the house and hit her. His mood could not be predicted and, on some days, he would call her to stay in the apartment, while on other days, he would ask her to move out as they had got the apartment together. Eventually Hareem moved out, and some months later Hamid agreed to divorce her.

Today Hareem lives in an apartment with a close friend of hers. She has a cat that she adores with her whole being. She managed to buy her own car, and takes a wide variety of classes to explore her interests. For example, culinary classes, singing classes and even martial arts. She managed to reconcile with her mother, something she never thought was possible. Hareem also quit smoking, and other substances. She finally feels content with her life and in her own words, “has everything she ever wanted”. Her faith in God has rekindled and its an important part of her life.

Hareem’s story is interesting because even after divorcing Hamid, she still considers herself partly to blame for their relationship souring. She still believes that he loved her. When asked why, she responded that he made breakfast for her in the mornings. She took certain acts to overshadow the daily violence, aggression and abuse she had to bear. Her own behavior, something that could be characterized as quite normal in any relationship, to her is what triggered Hamid’s abuse. She felt that her habits of turning stoic when someone screamed at her, was the cause of their relationship deteriorating. As she reconciled with her mother, she mentioned that this was because she came to understand how difficult her own mother’s life had been. And that her behavior made her mother’s life harder. She felt very much at ease at the end of the interview, saying that it helped her feel good about herself, recounting everything that had happened.

It would seem that even now, Hareem justifies the domestic abuse she suffered. According to her, her mother, her partners, all acted the way they did towards her because her actions somehow hurt them. And this hurt, justified their abuse to some extent. This belief puts her at higher risk of getting in an abusive relationship as she is likelier to accept abuse thinking it is the natural consequence of her own actions. It is notable that societal expectations of a young unmarried girl, forced her to marry Hamid for housing. A young single woman is expected to be morally loose, someone who invites trouble. This marriage gave Hamid access to her

apartment even after they separated. While divorce is quite easy for men in Pakistan (they only have to pronounce it, and send a letter to the local union council), if women unilaterally seek divorce, they must go through an entire process in Family Courts called Khula proceedings. Hamid agreed to divorce her and so she did not have to go through the court proceedings. However, she had to prolong her contact with him, giving him opportunities to continue abusing her, as she tried to convince him to give her the divorce.

Hareem grew up in a highly abusive household. She learned to normalize violence against women and children from a young age. Interestingly, it was her mother, and her mother's family, that was abusive, and not her father. In fact, losing her father led to the loss of the only protection she had against her mother. On surface, her mother justified her abuse under the guise of religiosity and moral values. However, it had continued long before that, when Hareem was a child and did not offer much provocation. An important thing to note is that when Hareem was offended with her mother over a beating in front of her cousins, her mother argued that her cousins were their own, they were family. On one hand, there is a trend in domestic violence cases that families do not intervene in matters they deem private. In this case, Hareem's mother actually felt safe abusing her children in front of her family. Family offered her protection in a way, something that gives this author an insight into an abuser's point of view. Attitudinal acceptance of family members, their insistence on reconciliation, can be construed as protection and safety by the abusers. A protective sphere where they do not need to watch their behavior.

4.5 Kiran (30-years-old)

For the purpose of anonymity, this interviewee shall be referred to as Kiran. Kiran grew up in a family of seven. Her parents and three siblings lived with their grandmother in a small city in Punjab. Kiran's parents did not get along with each other as their marriage had been arranged. Her grandmother was also a difficult person who disliked her mother intensely. When Kiran

was ten years old, her mother left her father. Kiran, her younger sister and one older brother left with their mother. Only the eldest brother stayed behind with their father, as he was still taking his high school examinations.

Her parents separating greatly impacted Kiran. She felt like she was to blame for the ‘emotional turbulence’ leading up to the separation. She also felt that her father had abandoned them by not fighting to keep them with him. Since the separation, she felt less confident in school, and developed a lack of interest in her studies. During the interview, Kiran stressed how important her relationship with her mother was. She felt that her mother always supported her, was patient with her when she was not doing well at school, and protected her from her father’s anger. “I always loved Ammi, ever since I was a child.” Kiran listed some warm memories with her mother. Buying books together at the book fair, cooking with her, and reading books with her. “With her, I always felt secure, that she will always be in my corner.” Kiran did not feel the same security with her father. When her mother first separated from her father, Kiran ended up dropping out of school for a year due to bullying. Her father tried to hit her, and her mother stopped him.

Kiran’s memories of her father were mostly fearful. When it was time for him to come home from work, Kiran and her siblings would start studying to avoid becoming the target of his angry outbursts. However, their relationship significantly improved as Kiran grew up. She mentioned that she is still not as close to her father as others around her are, but she feels like he is a close uncle. Today her father is married to another woman and their relationship is very bitter. Kiran admitted that she did not feel any sympathy for her father as she feels that he brought this upon himself. Even now, she questions why she was not enough for her father, enough for him to try to make his marriage work.

The most difficult relationship Kiran had in her family was with her eldest brother. He will be referred to as Mustafa for the purpose of anonymity. Just as she feared her father, Kiran also feared her seven-year older brother Mustafa. Although there were times when he acted like a responsible and kind elder sibling, there was always a fear that he would lose his temper and hit her. Out of all the siblings, it was Mustafa that their father hit the most. In turn, he abused his siblings incessantly. This usually happened when he would be made responsible for his younger siblings. When he had to help them with their homework, or when he had to watch out for them in the absence of an adult. At school, Kiran felt emboldened by having an older brother who would protect her if anyone mistreated her. However, Kiran did not really live with Mustafa under the same roof after her parents separated. Mustafa moved to a different city for his education and only after he graduated university, did he return to live with their mother for a year.

Kiran described this year as uncomfortable. She was no longer used to having him around and felt resentful towards him. He was still sporadically abusive and Kiran always had to be very careful around him. Kiran described that when Mustafa did not live with them, her second older brother, (referred to here as Shahid) who also used to hit his younger siblings, would act less aggressively. Overtime, the fear that she would be hit lessened as the two violent men no longer lived with them. The three siblings grew closer to each other.

Her brother's aggression over the course of Kiran's childhood was largely dependent on their parents. Whenever he was in charge of teaching them or watching over them, he would be as violent as he liked. All was permissible under the guise of discipline. However, if he hit them outside of these arrangements, it could lead to him being punished violently by their father. Kiran's father, on the other hand, was unpredictable in his anger. Anything could put him in a bad mood. Usually, it was over the children's education. Kiran recalled a very cold day when he made her stand in the kitchen bare feet and read a text out loud. He asked her to read so loud

that he would be able to hear her in the living room while he watched TV at full volume. Other times, he would get angry over the children watching TV or playing on the computer. Sometimes he would just come home in a bad mood and hit the children for no obvious reason. Kiran's father never hit her mother or spoke loudly with her. It was only after they separated that her mother intervened when he tried to hit Kiran. Before this, at most she would placate him after his angry outburst, trying to calm him down. When asked what usually helped if her father was in a fit of rage, Kiran explained that she would try to hide or find a book to read. If you argued with him, as Mustafa did, you would get hit more.

When Mustafa hit Kiran or her siblings, her mother usually did not intervene physically. At most she would verbally tell him off. In Kiran's words, she was non-violent. "You didn't fight back. He was powerful, he could hit." Even so, Kiran felt that her mother supported her. She would respond to being hit by staying quiet instead of crying.

Kiran's relationship with her younger sister (referred to here as Fatima) was also complex. As a child, she adored her younger sister. However, her grandmother and father would treat the younger child preferentially over Kiran. This built-up resentment over time and Kiran felt like she had to compete with Fatima for love. When her parents separated, the adults who showed such preference to Fatima no longer lived with them. Kiran felt emboldened to bully Fatima. However, over time this sentiment also changed. As Kiran graduated from high school, she felt closer to Fatima and grew protective of her. Realising her younger sister's perspective, she began to intervene on her behalf, leveraging her position as the older sister to advocate for her. This was necessary because Fatima's relationship with their mother was not as good as Kiran's. Over time, her sister confided in her that Mustafa had abused her sexually as a child.

One summer when Mustafa was visiting with his family (wife and two children), Kiran got into an argument with him which ended with Mustafa hitting Kiran. At this point Kiran was 23 years

old and had resented Mustafa for a long time. So when he hit her, she finally told him exactly what she thought of him. Mustafa hit her to a point of injuring her and she had to leave the house, fleeing to her aunt's house. After she left, Mustafa took a hammer and destroyed her's and Fatima's room. When Fatima found out about this, she reported the incident to the police, despite the severe resistance of their parents. The two sisters supported each other through this time, even as their parents asked them to reconcile with Mustafa. Their brother also supported them in visits to the police station. Mustafa threw another angry fit and destroyed the family car. This time, Kiran's parents went to the police station together and submitted another complaint against him. After this, Mustafa cut off all contact with his family.

Today, Kiran lives independently of her family in a different country. She no longer has to worry about Mustafa harming her or her sister. She feels resentful that her parents only took legal action once Mustafa caused severe property damage. However, she is content with the final result, which is that Mustafa is no longer in her life. She looks forward to building her own life away from a home where Mustafa is welcome.

There are several aspects of note in Kiran's case. Firstly, violence in her childhood home was allowed if it was for disciplining the children or making them study, demonstrating an attitudinal acceptance towards violence. Secondly, the environment of abuse encouraged other members of the household to be violent. Her father's aggression towards Mustafa, in turn, led to Mustafa abusing his younger siblings. When the children were removed from this atmosphere, the abuse significantly decreased. In their father's home, even Kiran abused her younger sister. This is because she felt that she had to compete with her younger sister for safety and care. However, her mother taking a stand for her, stopping her father from abusing her further, provided her with a sense of security that allowed her to recover in the years to come. This also created an environment where the three younger siblings could grow closer to one another and eventually unite in defense against Mustafa. Moreover, once Kiran's mother

intervened, her father stopped acting violently towards Kiran. However, she never intervened physically or legally when Mustafa abused his younger siblings. Kiran maintained a cordial relationship with Mustafa over the course of years which minimised incidents of violence towards her. However, during this time, Fatima became a target of Mustafa's anger.

Another aspect of attitudinal acceptance is visible in how far Kiran's family withstood Mustafa's violent behavior. Even when he hit Kiran over a petty argument and injured her, her parents blamed her for arguing with her older brother- a sign of disrespect. Thus, disrespecting your elders justifies violence as a form of discipline.

Finally, filing a complaint with the local police station was what finally led to the abuse stopping. Although this step did not lead to any legal proceedings (Kiran had failed to get a medico-legal assessment in time, and such delay is detrimental to criminal cases), it was a strong deterrent that scared Mustafa. A second report by the parents over the destruction of the car was an even bigger deterrent. Familial support and institutional intervention thus became crucial factors in ending the years-long abuse.

4.6 Discussion

It appears that attitudinal acceptance towards domestic violence is pervasive in Pakistani society. This attitude becomes central in creating an environment where abuse is safely perpetuated, abusers feel protected and justified, and breaking the cycle of abuse becomes impossible. Victims are endlessly correcting their behavior, forever blindsided by some new trigger that leads to more abuse. Abusers also grow bolder with impunity. Instances where victims did enjoy familial support were occasions when the abuser crossed a boundary that even the family considered inviolable. For example, waking up your husband for prayers should not warrant abuse. In Kiran's case, destruction of valuable property was the act that finally pushed her parents into action. Thus, abuse is not always legitimized by society, but rather regulated

by a set of social norms. These social norms relate to education, respect towards elders, sexual chastity, and fulfillment of gender roles. Another aspect to note is the victims' own mindsets. Victims who accepted their abuse or justified it, like Hareem, were likelier to become involved in another relationship in which they were abused. Amna managed to extract herself and her sister from their abusive household. However, her mother remained behind, suffering at the hands of her father. Despite collecting evidence of her father's abuse, Amna is hesitant to pursue any legal recourse. Perhaps, in this case, her knowledge of the legal system is what informs her behavior.

What type of legal recourse do victims want? In most legal cases, victims were not seeking revenge but rather protection or an end to their abuse. They filed for dissolution of marriage, and not criminal cases for harm and abuse. This was common in all four interviewees as well. None of them sought for criminal penalties but rather protection. This phenomenon is well reflected in the Punjab law against domestic violence which does not directly criminalize domestic violence, but provides for a series of judicial orders (restraining order, an order ensuring that the victim is not evicted from her home etc.). The law sets up a Violence Against Women Centre in Multan where women can receive medical aid, psychological counselling, and even file police reports at the same center.²³⁹ According to this author's contact at this Center, hundreds of women come to the center but mostly end up using it as a place for reconciliation. Their abusers are sent summons, something the Center is not legally authorized to do so. In response, some retaliate by filing suits against the center, questioning its jurisdiction. But in many cases, the abusers show up to the Center and apologize, promising to correct their behavior. Judging from Kiran's case, it might be somewhat effective for abusers that are fearful of state intervention or repercussions. In any case, it is this author's opinion that

²³⁹ Violence Against Women Center Multan. Facebook page. Accessed May 17, 2025. <https://www.facebook.com/vawcmultanofficial/>.

this center is partially responsible for the lack of any official cases instituted under the Punjab law. Their approach to resolving most domestic violence cases is to encourage reconciliation.

CHAPTER FIVE: MAKING OF NAZARIYA

This chapter shall discuss the making of the interactive workshop tool Nazariya. This author used the website twinery.com to create this tool. Twinery is an easy to use, open-source tool that can be used to tell interactive, non-linear stories. Users need not follow a single pathway but can make choices to experience alternative narratives. This website can be accessed on one's browser or even as an app. Nazariya can be accessed [here](#).

5.1 Kiran's Story

For the purpose of the Capstone Project, this author chose Kiran's story for the prototype of Nazariya to be defended before the defense panel. This is because the interview with Kiran was the most elaborate, and offered multiple possibilities to create choices for the users that could lead to alternate pathways. For example, Kiran felt resentful towards her younger sister Fatima and treated her coldly throughout her childhood. Eventually she decided to work on her relationship with Fatima, which led to Fatima supporting her in pursuing a legal case against her brother after an incident of abuse. This author created choices for the users to treat Fatima with kindness at different junctures. An earlier decision to bond with her sister could lead to a Kiran and Fatima offering each other more support against their abusive brother. If the user chooses not to reconcile, both girls struggle through this difficult time alone.

Another important choice is a contrast between Kiran choosing to defy her mother and her father. Users are offered a choice to buy a book of Kiran's mother's choice as opposed to just her own. Regardless of what the users choose, Kiran's mother reacts kindly. This is because Kiran had a very strong and supportive relationship with her mother. This also shows that a child's disobedience needs not necessarily lead to punishment. If a parent is supportive and kind as Kiran's mother was, it can be a normal encounter. Besides, not all disobedience is harmful, as children should be allowed and encouraged to speak their mind. On the other hand,

Kiran's father, according to Kiran, was very unpredictable in his anger. Whether Kiran obeyed him or not, he would lash out at her anyway. Sometimes hiding from him when he was angry helped her but that was not always possible. These incidents are actual stories told to this author by Kiran. However, to allow the user to influence the narrative with their choices, some modifications have been made to allow for alternate pathways than the one chosen by Kiran herself.

5.2 Pictures and Audio

After writing an initial script, this author planned a visit to Pakistan, Lahore from 12th May to 29th May 2025 to take photos and record audios of various scenes from Kiran's story. This author texted Kiran for permission to photograph different locations from her home. Scenes from her family drawing room, living room and garden were photographed with her permission. The name chosen for this interviewee, 'Kiran', means a ray of light as her story also represents hope for escaping situations of domestic abuse. Thus, this author photographed the sunrise and sunset at a park outside her home to set the tone for the beginning and ending of Nazariya. For the opening scene at the book fair, this author photographed a busy baazar in Lahore (Hafta Baazar, Bahria Town Lahore). This author has two nephews whose feet and hands were photographed in scenes where a child appears. Their schoolbooks and toys were also useful props for other scenes. Their parents gave permission for these photos. Although this author photographed a court room, those pictures were not used for Nazariya in the end as Kiran did not personally visit a courtroom. Instead, this author used a photograph of the outside of a court, where police vans were parked, to illustrate scenes where police was involved. No person's face is visible in any of the pictures used.

The audio recording for the book fair was made at the same baazar in Lahore. However, certain sounds, such as an angry man screaming, this author used a platform called freesound.org which offers free sound effects and audio clips shared by users around the world. This author also used

a musical track from this website that is similarly available without any copyright issues. This track was used in the opening and ending passages of the story, as well as in the middle when the story is a bit lighthearted.

5.3 Domestic Violence Risk Meter

To help users critically reflect on the social dynamics that enable or challenge domestic violence, this author created a Domestic Violence Risk Meter. The meter changes its reading based on how the user respond to different situations.

Intentionally simple, the meter increases when someone in the narrative (not always the user) act in ways that shows attitudinal acceptance of domestic violence. For example, the risk level rises when Kiran decides not to comfort or support her sister in moments of abuse. This shift signals how silence in the face of others' abuse can make everyone more vulnerable to abuse. On the other hand, the domestic violence risk level decreases when the users (or supporting characters) take action to challenge the violence. For example, reporting an incident to the police or standing up to a family member. These moments reflect a shift away from normalization and toward accountability.

Importantly, the risk meter changes based on Kiran **and** other supporting characters' actions. This shows that domestic violence is not simply shaped by the decisions of the person experiencing it. It is also affected by how others respond. In many instances, the risk rises even when Kiran acts with courage or care, because those around her choose to normalize abuse by ignoring it or protecting the abuser. When her parents refuse to remove Mustafa from the home after learning about his sexual abuse of Fatima, the risk level increases. As discussed above, various studies show that attitudinal acceptance of violence in society is associated with a higher likelihood of perpetrating violence among men and an increased risk of victimization among

women.²⁴⁰ Thus, victims, perpetrators and bystanders, all are at a risk of perpetuating domestic violence in society if they have high levels of attitudinal acceptance towards domestic violence.

5.4 Using Twinery.org

Twinery was a rather simple platform where no coding was required to create the main storyline. However, for adding pictures, videos, and text overlay, basic coding was needed. This author used various online sources to learn this basic coding. Once the basic templates were understood, it was a relatively easy task to replicate them for each passage.

5.5 Discussion

Nazariya was created as a prototype for this thesis. In the future, this author plans to add other features such as alternate timelines that can lead to multiple different endings, more complex gameplay features, and storylines for each interview. Importantly, this author hopes to develop a complete workshop that can be administered alongside Nazariya, that highlights the impact of attitudinal acceptance in the perpetuation of domestic violence. While outside the scope of this thesis, it is also planned to carry out more detailed research into the reception of Nazariya by testing it with users of different social, cultural and class backgrounds. Versions with local languages and audio narration will also be included to increase user accessibility.

²⁴⁰Callands et al., “Experiences and Acceptance of Intimate Partner Violence,” 684.; World Health Organization and Pan American Health Organization, *Understanding and Addressing Violence against Women*, 15.; Ibala, Seff, and Stark, “Attitudinal Acceptance of Intimate Partner Violence,” 5100.

CONCLUSION

This thesis began with the observation that despite the passage of progressive laws against domestic violence in Pakistan, no case law under these laws has ever reached a conclusion in over thirteen years. A detailed assessment of the history of domestic violence in Pakistan demonstrates the various reasons why this may be the case. Using multiple sources such as newspapers, legal judgments, and interviews, this author found that a crucial factor contributing to the lack of application of domestic violence laws is the attitudinal acceptance of domestic violence in Pakistan.

The public history of domestic violence in Pakistan does not reflect the lived realities of the vast majority of women in the country. Most cases that become part of public debate often involve extreme violence usually resulting in the death of the victim. Although such cases are important to document, representing domestic violence purely through their lens has contributed to the neglect of a more nuanced understanding of domestic violence.

This thesis attempts to bridge the gap between the publicly available and understood history of domestic violence, and the private lives of women who have experienced it. It does so by identifying where this gap lies and then addressing it through a public history project: Nazariya. Nazariya represents the inherently private experiences of women who have suffered from domestic violence, through the use of a public history tool that draws on museum pedagogy. A crucial component of this tool is its use of empathy. By stepping directly into the shoes of the interviewee, making decisions in her place, faced with the same obstacles as she was, users are able to engage with the emotional and social weight of her experiences. Audio and visual stimuli are used to support this immersive experience.

The Domestic Violence Risk Meter provides a direct connection between the user's actions and the danger posed to the interviewee. But perhaps more importantly, it draws attention to the lack of control the interviewee had in those situations, where the behavior of others and their normalization of domestic violence proved to be far more damaging to her well-being. In several instances, the meter changes regardless of what actions Kiran takes, highlighting that the violence she experiences is not always a result of her choices, but of the choices made by the people around her. For instance, when her parents choose not to expel Mustafa from the home after learning what he had done to Fatima, the risk of violence rises. This reflects the role of attitudinal acceptance in enabling domestic violence.

This author is a 26-year-old woman from Punjab, Pakistan. Before this Master's degree, she was practicing law in Lahore, Pakistan, dealing with khula cases on a regular basis. These experiences formed her understanding of how the legal system is lacking as it fails to respond to the broader and more common forms of domestic violence that women experience daily. Instead, it tends to respond only to the most violent cases that gain media attention.

This thesis has been written with an activist approach. In fact, Nazariya is created with the intention of impacting the social ideas, perceptions, and understandings of domestic violence in Pakistan. It is not just intended for professionals, but also for ordinary people like this author herself, who could one day find themselves becoming the bystander, the victim, or the perpetrator of domestic violence.

APPENDICES

Annexure 1: Selected court cases

Case	Citation	Year	Name	Age	Issue	Area
Allah Nawaz v SHO	PLD 2013 Lahore 243	2013	Jameela Bibi	15	Child Marriage	LHC
Muhammad Younas v State	2015 YLR 2369	2015	Mst Sanya Arif	12/13	Child Marriage, kidnapping, divorce	LHC
Asad v State	2017 YLR Note 295	2017	Mst Sultana		DV, false accusations about sexual problems	SHC
Sarfaraz v the State	2017 PCr.LJ Note 112	2017	Amina Bibi	N/A	Parents' consent marriage	LHC
Muhammad Shafique v State	2017 YLR Note 418	2017			Parents filed case of	LHC

					abduction, love marriage	
Sarfaraz v Additional District Judge	2017 YLR 1684	2017			Maintenance	LHC
Ihsan Elahi v State	2018 YLR Note 181	2018	Amreena Bibi		Murder, DV	LHC
Muhammad Azam	2018 PCrLJ	2018	Atia Bibi	Minor	Child marriage	LHC
State v Maheen Zafar	2018 PCrLJ 841	2018	Mst Tayyaba Bibi	Less than 10	Domestic servant abuse	IHC
Peeru Ram v State	2019 PCrLJ 325	2019	Kammo Mai		Murder after argument DV	LHC
Raja Khurram Ali Khan v Tayyaba Bibi		2019	Tayyaba bibbi	Less than 10 yrs	Domestic child servant	IHC

Tahira Bibi v SHO	PLD 2020 Lahore 811	2020	Tahira Bibi	Minor	Child Marriage	LHC
Raiyet Ali v State	2020 YLR 1913	2020	Mst Khursheed Bibi		Murder	LHC
Muhammad Amin v State	2020 YLR 176	2020	Mst Muniran Bibi		Murder, DV	LHC
Altaf Hussain v State	2020 PCr.LJ 1419	2020	Azizan Mai, little Sania and Sonia		Acid Attack, murder	LHC
Haleema bibbi v Azeem	2020 CLC 1691	2020	Haleema Bibi		Forced marriage	High Court AJK
Rehmatullah v Mst Bibi Zenora	PLD 2021 Balochistan 145	2021	Mst Zenora		Relief of dissolution of marriage, provision of Dower, custody of children, delivery of	BHC

					educational certificates	
Muhammad Kashif Iqbal v State	2021 YLR Note 102	2021	Asma Parveen		Murder, reconciliation by family	LHC pindi
Mst. Saba Akhtar v Imran Ashraf	2021 CLC 1165	2021			Physical, mental abuse, suits for dower and maintenance, second marriage	High Court AJK
Rehan Shehzad v State	2021 PCrLJ 935	2021	Rehand Shehzad v State		Petty issue anger, verbal and physical abuse	LHC
Saqib Khan v State	2021 PCrLJ Note 89	2021	Samina Akhtar		Gold ornaments, abuse over refusal to give	LHC
Mehvish Kazmi v	2022 PLD SC AJK	2022	Mehvish Kazmi		Khula, physical and	

Parvaiz Hussain					mental cruelty	
Umer Zaib v State	2022 MLD 193	2022	Mst Khalida		Honor killing	LHC
Muhammad Yasir v Lubna Kosar	2022 CLC 372	2022	Lubna Kosar		Khula on the basis of cruelty, removal from house, no maintenance, emotional abuse	BHC
Aliya Jabeen v Muhammad Ashfaq	2022 CLC 1253	2022	Aliya Jabeen		Recovery of dower, no maintenance, Jirga for reconciliation,	SC SJK
Mudasir Nazar v State	2022 MLD 1146	2022	Mst Fozia	22/23	Death due to DV	SHC

Munir Hussain v State	2022 PCrLJ Note 111	2022	Amna		DV for alleged stealing	SHC
Farhan Farooq v Salma Mehmood	2022 YLR 638	2022	Salma Mehmood		Dissolution of marriage, recovery of dower, recovery of maintenance	SC AJK
Mst Sunila Mushtaq v Babar Hussain	2023 PCrLJ 1787	2023	Mst Sunila Mushtaq		Court dismissed case claiming there was no evidence of abuse	SHC
Muhammad Fazal	2023 PCr.LJ 1834	2023	Mst Nabila Nazir	N/A	Revenge for maintenance suit	LHC

Annexure 2: Consent Form English

Dear [*Recipient's Name*],

My name is Momina Khurshid, and I am a lawyer based in Lahore. I am also a Master's student at Central European University, currently working on my thesis and Capstone Project. My project involves creating an interactive workshop to raise awareness and sensitize people about domestic violence in Pakistan.

I am conducting interviews with women who have faced domestic violence and either pursued or considered pursuing legal justice. Your story will be instrumental in helping the audience understand the immense challenges and arbitrary cruelty that victims of domestic violence endure. The workshop will allow participants to make choices similar to those you faced, thereby fostering empathy and a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in such situations.

I assure you that your story will be handled with the utmost confidentiality. Your name and identity will not be disclosed at any stage of this project. The information you provide will be anonymized and used solely for the purposes of this workshop. The workshop is intended to be used by NGOs like She-Her for gender sensitivity training, as well as by teachers in schools who wish to educate their students on these issues.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time. The insights gained from your story will contribute significantly to reducing the attitudinal acceptance of domestic violence in our society by helping various professionals, such as students, teachers, judges, and healthcare workers, become more supportive and understanding.

By participating in this interview, you agree to allow us to use your anonymized story for educational and awareness purposes in the mentioned contexts.

If you agree to participate under the terms outlined above, please sign below.

Thank you for considering this request. Your courage in sharing your story will contribute to making our society a safer and more empathetic place for women.

Sincerely,

Momina Khurshid

Lahore

Annexure 3: Consent Form Urdu

میرا نام مومینہ خورشید ہے اور میں لاہور سے ایک وکیل ہوں۔ میں اس وقت سینٹرل یورپین یونیورسٹی میں ماسٹرز کی طالبہ ہوں اور اپنے تھیسس اور کیپ اسٹون پراجیکٹ پر کام کر رہی ہوں۔ میرے پراجیکٹ کا مقصد گھریلو تشدد کے بارے میں آگاہی اور حساسیت بڑھانا ہے۔ اس منصوبے کا مقصد ایک ایسی ورکشاپ تیار کرنا ہے جس میں لوگوں کو گھریلو تشدد کا شکار ہونے والی خواتین کے حقیقی تجربات سمجھنے میں مدد ملے گی۔

اہم آپ جیسی خواتین سے بات کرنا چاہتے ہیں جنہوں نے گھریلو تشدد کا سامنا کیا ہے اور قانونی مدد لینے پر غور کیا یا کی کوشش کی ہے۔ آپ کی کہانی اس ورکشاپ کا حصہ بنے گی تاکہ لوگ یہ جان سکیں کہ گھریلو تشدد کا شکار ہونا کتنا مشکل اور تکلیف دہ ہوتا ہے۔ اس سے معاشرے میں موجود ان خیالات کو چیلنج کیا جا سکے گا جو بعض حالات میں خواتین پر تشدد کو جائز سمجھتے ہیں۔

ہم آپ کو یقین دلاتے ہیں کہ آپ کی فراہم کردہ معلومات مکمل طور پر گمنام رکھی جائیں گی اور صرف اس ورکشاپ کے لیے استعمال ہوں گی۔ آپ کا نام اور شناخت کہیں بھی ظاہر نہیں کی جائے گی۔ یہ ورکشاپ ججز وغیرہ کی ٹریننگ کے اور اسکولوں میں اساتذہ کے ذریعے طلبہ کو آگاہ کرنے کے لیے بھی استعمال ہو سکتی ہے۔

ہمارے معاشرے میں اکثر لوگ گھریلو تشدد کو بعض صورتوں میں جائز سمجھتے ہیں۔ اس ورکشاپ کا مقصد ان غلط خیالات کو بدلنا ہے تاکہ لوگ یہ سمجھ سکیں کہ کسی بھی حالت میں خواتین پر تشدد جائز نہیں ہے۔ اس سے ہمارے معاشرے کو محفوظ اور بہتر بنایا جا سکتا ہے۔

اگر آپ ان شرائط سے متفق ہیں، تو براہ کرم نیچے دستخط کریں۔

آپ کی ہمت کا شکریہ۔ آپ کی کہانی ہمارے معاشرے کو خواتین کے لیے زیادہ محفوظ اور ہمدرد بنانے میں مدد دے گی۔

مخلص

مومینہ خورشید

لاہور

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