

THE IMPACT OF PATRIARCHAL BELIEFS ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Rabia Aftab Abbasi¹, Fatima Zafar², Dr. Ulfat Nisa³

^{1,2,3}National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan

¹rabiaabbasiaftab@gmail.com, ²fzafar072@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21028932>

Keywords

Patriarchal beliefs, domestic violence, acceptance of violence, gender norms, patriarchy.

Article History

Received: 24 April 2026

Accepted: 06 June 2026

Published: 21 June 2026

Copyright @Author

Corresponding Author: *

Rabia Aftab Abbasi

Abstract

Background: The presence of patriarchal beliefs significantly influences an individual's acceptance of domestic violence, therefore, it is important to understand the belief system of the people accepting domestic violence in their culture.

Aim: The objective of this research study is to examine the influence of patriarchal beliefs on the acceptance of domestic violence among young adults in Pakistan.

Method: Quantitative research with a cross-sectional correlational approach and a convenient sample of 120 men and 130 women (age 18-30) was used in the study from different universities and colleges of Islamabad, Pakistan, through an online questionnaire. It included the Patriarchal Beliefs Scale (PBS) and the Domestic Violence Myth Acceptance Scale (DVMAS).

Results: An independent sample t-test showed no significant difference amongst the two genders regarding acceptance of domestic violence, however, male participants overall reported higher scores on the patriarchal beliefs scale. A Pearson product correlation showed that as patriarchal beliefs increased, the acceptability of domestic violence as well as the justification of domestic violence in certain situations also increased. Implications of findings lie in addressing both factors, patriarchal ideology and acceptance of domestic violence in educating not only men but women of the dangers against society.

Conclusion: This study can lead to increase in awareness and change in the social structures of our country, which can improve psychological well-being of men and women. It can ultimately contribute to the goal of not only opposing patriarchal structures in society, but also promoting equal and fair relationships where all individuals are viewed as equals who can contribute to society.

INTRODUCTION

Domestic abuse is a severe and prevalent global issue that comes in the forms of physical, psychological, emotional, sexual and financial abuse. It is a fundamental abuse of humans' rights that overwhelmingly occurs under the auspices of marriage or cohabitation. This according to the World Health Organization (2021), is one of the

most under-reported gender-based violence whose repercussions are deeply rooted in psychological, social and physical issues that are not only detrimental to the victim but also to the family and society as a whole.

The far-reaching consequences of domestic abuse even stretch to the next generation who bear the brunt of traumatized parents and the resultant

consequences of their own not being cared for as they should be. Domestic abuse results in intergenerational cycles of violence and crime as children exposed are more likely to adopt violent behaviors in their interactions with others. The long-run psycho-social, physical and health repercussions of domestic abuse can also strain the healthcare system which incurs heavy expenses as it tries to offer victims care. Trauma related to domestic abuse is most predominant in females and is categorized along lifelong mental health, emotional, sexual, trauma and substance abuse issues which create a burden for both the individual and the society at large. (Walby, Sylvia. 1990)

The roots of gender-based violence are issues of patriarchy and its societal consequences are prevalent in many societies and cultures today. Patriarchy is defined as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and control women. In such a milieu, male dominance is accepted as the norm while traditional gender norms that dictate the behavior of men and women reinforces the superiority of the male gender over the female gender in many areas of society. Such gender biases promote the acceptance of violence against women as it is widely believed that men are naturally aggressive and will always be dominant over women. (Amir-ud-Din, Rafi et al., 2021).

Seeing back on these destructive patriarchal beliefs and ideologies is necessary in the unceasing fight against violence against women. (Walby, Sylvia. 1990) notes that the prevalence of male violence against women is proportionate with the institutional support for patriarchal ideology which is complicit in the justification of domestic abuse. Meda Chesney-Lind, in her article entitled "The Female Offender", adds that in societies where patriarchy is strong and is socially accepted, female criminality is invariably viewed through the patriarchal lens and is construed as an extension of the husband's offence and thus becomes acceptable in line with the patriarchal ideology. (Lind, M., et al., 2004).

Patriarchal Beliefs

Patriarchal ideas often see men as superior and force women into traditional gender roles. These traditional gender roles are deeply embedded in customs when and where men were seen as dominant society and women as subordinate beings who earned significance primarily by being wives and mothers. Early on, a male child was viewed as a blessing who would follow the path of his father. He was prepared and trained to be a ruler and gain the right to be the head of the household with the high status of masculinity. As he grew older, he started to acquire wealth and assets as a patriarch. His father's desire and wish to rely on male offspring often resulted in the birth of female babies, who were viewed as a burden on the family, leading to Category Infanticide Women Suicide and In-Vitro Gender Discrimination. The male authority extended to the household, too, where a male child or an adult male not only wielded authority and demanded servitude from the females but also justified domestic violence in the name of cultural norms. All such ideas led to the construction of the masculine ideology which resulted in men exerting power not only in public spheres but also determining female behavior in private spheres. (Abdul Hadi., 2017).

By definition, gender-based violence encompasses any violent act directed towards an individual based on their sex or gender, creating strong links between the country's patriarchal ideals and the acceptance of abuse existing in Pakistan. Gender-based violence continues to be a dominant threat to women's lives and dignity and is socially legitimized based on patriarchal ideals. Cultural norms surrounding gender-based violence create a cultural environment that justifies gender-based violence as a traditional, acceptable form of social conduct, placing women in vulnerable and marginalized positions and protected only to the extent that they are competent both as an object of sexual coercion and as the bearer of male offspring. (Madhani, Farah I. et al. 2015).

The dangerous objectification of women stems directly from the misogyny rooted in Pakistani society. Women in Pakistan suffer increasingly severe forms of intimate partner violence, men

holding ambivalent beliefs about women working to counteract the political and social progress of woman in the community. Gender-based violence occurs in all sectors of society, but through the lens of patriarchy, it is systemic. The correlation between collectivist societal norms and the acceptance of domestic abuse as a social mandate enables the perpetuation of intimate partner violence in Pakistan. (Ijaz et al., 2026).

Despite a shift in women's rights and equality, many Pakistani women are trapped in toxic cycles of domestic abuse, with rural-area men placing heavy emphasis on issues of control and masculinity while forcing intimate partner violence as the potential means to creating viable home environments. Normalization of the abuse both strengthens manipulation tactics by the males in a marriage, and limits the freedom of expression for women in the situation. (Ijaz et al., 2026).

Acceptance of Domestic Violence

Pakistan has seen a growth in the alarming and prevailing situation of domestic violence against women. It is a growing concern as it is a prevailing and alarming dilemma not only in Pakistan but also a pondered issue on the Global forum. The unprecedented increase in the number of cases of violence against women has not only captured the attention of the local media but also of the international press. The increasing feminization of poverty along with the influence of patriarchal values are the two variables that shape this phenomenon to such an extent that it has become innate to deal with domestic violence through acceptance, in order to maintain social stability. This rationalization of domestic violence is a deeply rooted mechanism that is often used to endure abusive relationships. This social inclination to accept domestic violence is a setting sun of a particular society that seems to denote that social reforms and advancements that take decades to accomplish with grace, are prone to drag back because of such assumptions that diminish the dignity of women. The acceptance of domestic violence often leads to victim-blaming, hence countering any social advancement from taking place while paving way to uphold the

credibility of such constructs that add to the hypocrisy of the society. Such rationalization of domestic violence heavily obstructs the authenticity of reporting abuse, which is why very few cases go beyond the brink of domestic violence. This phenomenon is mostly accepted through the prism of gender, where men are thought to bind to violence while women unavoidably subjected to suffering, thus such acceptance of domestic violence takes many forms as a part of the patriarchy system and culture imposed has shaped people's consciousness. (Hadi, A. 2019). Women only make up for 25% of the victims that bear the brunt of this societal scourge. Domestic violence is not reserved for only women but men are also victims to this social wrath, although they are silenced in the guise of masculinity. (World Health Organization 2021). The study seeks to highlight that the youth in Pakistan are likely to accept domestic violence against women as a man's natural behavior that is at times deserved by the woman. However the current study is limited by the lack of studies on Pakistani youth. In future it would be significant to conduct a study with an education-inclusive sample to compare backgrounds of male and female, educational, social and economic class difference. Such a study will enable more generalizations to be made relating to the youth in Pakistan.

Objectives

1. To examine level of acceptance of domestic violence among young adults.
2. To determine the relationship between patriarchal beliefs and acceptance of domestic violence.
3. To explore gender differences in patriarchal beliefs and acceptance of domestic violence.

Method

Research Design

The current study applied a quantitative, cross-sectional, research design to examine the influence of patriarchal beliefs on youth's acceptance of domestic violence. A correlational design was used to examine the direction and strength of the

relationship between the independent variable (patriarchal beliefs) and the dependent variable (acceptance of domestic violence).

Sample

The sample for this research study consisted of 250 young adults aged between 18 and 30 years, recruited through convenience sampling from different universities and colleges in Islamabad, Pakistan. A total of 120 men and 130 women participated in the research. Participants were required to understand the survey in English language. The sampling technique used to recruit young adults in this research study was convenience sampling technique. Participants were selected on the basis of their availability and willingness to take part in the study. This method was found suitable for correlational studies despite being non-generalizable.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria for selection of participants were young adults who were enrolled in university, who understood English language and participated voluntarily with informed consent. Exclusion criteria comprised incomplete or inconsistent answers and lack of engagement.

Assessment Measures

Patriarchal Beliefs Scale (PBS). The Patriarchy Beliefs Scale (Yoon, Schmitt, & Sutherland, 2015) was adapted to measure support for patriarchal ideology. The patriarchal beliefs scale was adapted from a paper by Eunju Yoon et al. (2015) to adapt to the cultural context of the study. This measure has been validated for use with men and women and consists of 20-25 items across three subscales. Items are designed to be endorsed more positively in accordance with support of patriarchal ideology. Responses are made on a 5-point Likert scale (agreement, neutrality, and disagreement). The scale captures construct and convergent validity well. The scale has been shown to correlate positively with a patriarchy scale and demonstrates acceptable reliability (Cronbach's alpha 0.80-0.90).

Domestic Violence Myth Acceptance Scale (DVMAS). This study employed the Peters' (2003) Domestic Violence Myth Acceptance Scale, which is a 46 items scale was adapted for this research to assess the beliefs held by people that justify/minimize domestic violence. The Likert scale points employed are 5-points scale, where a higher score reflects a greater acceptance of domestic violence myths. The scale is reliable as indicated by the results of reliability analysis conducted for the scale. The Cronbach alphas were calculated between the ranges of 0.85 to 0.9.

Statistical Plan

The SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program was used to evaluate the data. To ensure accuracy and relevance, various data accuracy checks were performed and incomplete responses were removed in order to make the data analysis easier. The descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used for both variables first before Pearson correlation analysis, linear regression analysis and independent samples t-tests were performed with the final dependent variable (patriarchal beliefs). As a result, significance level (p) was sought for the correlation matrix and the tests, and $p < 0.05$, was found accepted as statistically significant.

Ethical Considerations

The informed consent was given to participants in a proper manner and avoiding exaggeration or trivialization of the dispute at hand. The participant was expected by the researcher to voluntarily participate in the research. Confidentiality was maintained through numerous measures. Anonymity was properly protected throughout the study period. It was important to guarantee that results from this study were used only for academic purposes, as agreed during the briefing. Finally, no oppressive survey questions were used, and the whole survey was arranged in a way that facilitated the participant's comfort (not directing into a right answer or a preferred opinion).

Results

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD
Patriarchal Beliefs	Male	120	4.80	0.70
	Female	130	3.90	0.60
Domestic Violence Acceptance	Male	120	4.50	0.80
	Female	130	3.60	0.70

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the data to find level of patriarchal beliefs and acceptance of domestic violence among young adults. Results indicate that male participants (M = 4.80, SD = 0.70) had higher patriarchal beliefs than female

participants (M = 3.90, SD = 0.60), and these beliefs positively correlated with acceptance of domestic violence (M = 4.50, SD = 0.80 and M = 3.60, SD = 0.70 respectively).

Table 2

Correlation Analysis

Variable	PBS	DVMAS
PBS	1	
DVMAS		.52**



r = .52, p < .01.

A Pearson product-moment correlation was performed on the data to find the correlation among variables. A significant positive correlation among attitudes toward domestic violence and patriarchal beliefs was also found (r = 0.52, p <

0.05), and results further indicated that patriarchal beliefs were predictors of accepting attitudes toward domestic violence ($\beta = 0.52$, t = 8.12, p < 0.05).

Table 3

Regression Analysis

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized coefficients		t	sig
	B	St. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.20	0.32	—	3.75	.000
Patriarchal Beliefs	0.65	0.08	.52	8.12	.000

A simple linear regression analysis was run on the data to determine whether patriarchal beliefs predicted acceptance of domestic violence or not.

The results showed that patriarchal beliefs significantly predicted Acceptance of domestic violence ($\beta = 0.52$, t = 8.12)

Table 4
Independent Sample T-test

Variable	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for equality of Means									
		F	Sig.	T	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Std. Error	Df	Difference	Lower	Upper
PBS	Equal variances assumed	1.85	.175	10.23	.000	10.18	248	0.90	0.09	0.73	1.07
	Equal variances not assumed		.235	9.87	.000	9.83	240.56	0.90	0.09	0.73	1.07
	Equal variances assumed						248	0.90	0.09	0.72	1.08
	Equal variances not assumed						243.11	0.90	0.09	0.72	1.08
DVMA5	Equal variances assumed	1.42	.235	9.87	.000	9.83	240.56	0.90	0.09	0.73	1.07
	Equal variances not assumed						243.11	0.90	0.09	0.72	1.08
	Equal variances assumed						248	0.90	0.09	0.72	1.08
	Equal variances not assumed						243.11	0.90	0.09	0.72	1.08

An independent samples t-test indicated significant gender differences between attitudes toward both patriarchal beliefs and acceptance of domestic violence ($p < 0.05$). Findings suggest that

Discussion

Previous studies have shown that acceptance of domestic violence is predicted by patriarchal beliefs (Hosseini et al., 2021; Yoon et al., 2015). To check out whether this viewpoint holds in this sample, the univariate analyses and correlation were carried out to check root of this association. As representation on the figure 1, it shows that men trending to have greater patriarchal beliefs than women. The second peak is a relatively equal position of the two groups, but women placed on it are not a high level, while men are on the contrary. Correlation test revealed a strong correlation between them, which means that as an individual has a higher acceptance of patriarchal beliefs, so he/she believes that domestic violence is normal. Regression analysis between variables was performed. Results of these tests are supporting the former findings.

There is a statistically significant difference between male and female of the patriarchal beliefs and disposition to accept domestic violence. Male participants reported a higher patriarchal belief.

men who endorse traditional gender roles such as those encapsulated in patriarchal beliefs also seem to favor the aggressive control of women through partner violence.

Acceptance of domestic violence is linked to traditional gender roles, a fundamental construct of gender role theory. Societal expectations based on socially constructed ideas about masculinity or femininity shape beliefs about what individuals are supposed to do, including the relationship between the sexes. When men are socialized to see violence against women as acceptable, it becomes normalized and therefore may deter victims from seeking help. The research established a strong association between patriarchal beliefs and acceptance of domestic violence. It is essential to address gender ideology when intervening to promote gender equality. Patriarchal beliefs can influence attitudes toward domestic violence leading to some members of society believing that violence against women is normalized. In such situations, it is important to challenge these sociocultural norms to improve attitudes toward domestic violence.

Implications

Education and awareness programs ought to be run in schools to integrate gender. Besides,

awareness campaigns should be used as a means of changing the attitudes of the public towards those gender issues that promote domestic violence; this should start from early childhood. Such programs cannot be effective when they are done at the adult age. Psychological interventions entail counseling, psychoeducation, etc. It helps couples to understand that both genders are equal and should be equally represented in making decisions that affect their daily lives. Generally, psychological interventions encourage early intervention in addressing cases of domestic violence among married people, which is crucial for the altering of a person's constructed belief systems, which in this case is the belief that men are superior to women.

Limitations

Convenience sampling technique was used in this study, hence the generalizability of the findings is limited. Self-report questionnaires were used to collect the data which might have been effected by the social-desirability bias. Especially, due to the sensitive nature of domestic violence related items. Since this was a cross-sectional study, it did not allow for the interpretation of a causal relationship between patriarchal beliefs and acceptance of domestic violence. Also this study focused only on college and university students aged between 18-30 which limited the acceptability of results to other age groups and non-students. Using the online data collection format (Google Forms) may have limited the control over participant attention and response accuracy.

Conclusion

The results of the study provide strong positive relationship between patriarchal beliefs and acceptance of domestic violence. Male participants report significantly higher levels of patriarchal beliefs than do female participants. Young people who learn that men can and should have power readily accept the notion that violence is an acceptable means of maintaining that power. In turn, these negative beliefs about masculinity normalize abusive behaviors in the home, making it difficult for both men and women to escape these traditional gender roles. The study

concludes that in order to reduce acceptance of domestic violence and to diminish its occurrence in future, efforts must focus on addressing patriarchal ideology, promoting gender equality and emphasizing the need for healthier relationships for young people is necessary.

Recommendation

The current study comes with its limitations. The study sample can be larger and more diverse. Longitudinal approaches may prove useful, as would qualitative and mixed methods. Including influential variables such as media coverage, parenting styles, religious beliefs, and personality traits to the scope of the study can further enhance the findings. Finally, future studies can also build upon these findings on what influences the uptick in violence including domestic violence relationships and further investigate them.

Declaration

Funding: No financial funding was provided for this study.

Conflict of Interest: The authors have no competing interests to disclose.

Availability of Data: The datasets remain confidential and are not publically accessible due to privacy agreements.

Ethical Approval: The study received ethical clearance from the appropriate institutional review board and informed consent was obtained from participants before the data collection.

REFERENCES

- Amir-ud-Din, R., Fatima, S., & Aziz, S. (2021). Is attitudinal acceptance of violence a risk factor? An analysis of domestic violence against women in Pakistan. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *36*(1), 809. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518787809>
- Ali, T. S., Karmaliani, R., Khuwaja, H. M. A., Shah, N. Z., Wadani, Z. H., Aijaz, S., & Kulane, A. (2020). Community stakeholders' views on reducing violence against women in Pakistan.

- BMC *Women's Health*, 20(98).
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-020-00961-3>
- Buriro, A. A., Khoso, P. A., & Khatoon, Z. (2020). Men's perception about domestic violence in rural Sindh, Pakistan. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal*, 4(2), 331-344.
<https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.lassij/4.2.26>
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice Hall.
- Hadi, A. (2019). Patriarchy and Gender-Based Violence in Pakistan.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318536680_Patriarchy_and_GenderBased_Violence_in_Pakistan
- Hadi, A. (2017). *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research*, 10(2), 297-304.
<https://doi.org/10.26417/ejser.v10i2.p297-304>
- Ijaz, S., & Butt, M. M. (2026). Ambivalent sexism, objectification, and justification of intimate partner violence in a patriarchal, collectivist society. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605261435915>
- Kazmi, S. M. A., & Rauf, K. (2024). "A No means No": Rape myth acceptance, victim blaming and hostile sexism as predictors of acceptance towards rape on a date among Pakistani adults. *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, 35(2), 171-190.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14789949.2024.2305125>
- Madhani, F. I., Karmaliani, R., Patel, C., Bann, C. M., McClure, E. M., Pasha, O., & Goldenberg, R. L. (2015). Women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence: An observational study from Hyderabad, Pakistan. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 32(1), 76-100.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260515585533>
- Population Council. (2018). *Gender, power, and violence: A systematic review*.
<https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org>
- Peters, J. (2003). *The domestic violence myth acceptance scale: Development and psychometric testing of a new instrument* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Maine). University of Maine Electronic Theses and Dissertations.
- Rehman, S., Saleem, S., Zahra, S. T., & Jabeen, A. (2025). Modes of dating violence in young adults within Pakistani culture: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Violence and Victims*, 40(5), 756-776.
<https://doi.org/10.1891/VV-2024-0132>
- Tabassum, N., Tabassum, H., & Afzal, T. (2017). Relationship between patriarchy and customary social practices affecting women's life in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies*, 14(1), 35-50.
- Walby, S. (1990). *Theorizing patriarchy*. Basil Blackwell.
- World Health Organization. (2021). *Violence against women prevalence estimates*.
<https://www.who.int>
- Yoon, E., Adams, K., Hogge, I., Bruner, J., Surya, S., & Bryant, F. B. (2015). Development and validation of the Patriarchal Beliefs Scale. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 62(2), 264-279.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000065>