

MS RESEARCH THESIS
EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE BY YOUNG WOMEN IN
ISLAMABAD: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY



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**EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE BY YOUNG WOMEN IN ISLAMABAD:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**



This Thesis is submitted to the department of the sociology,
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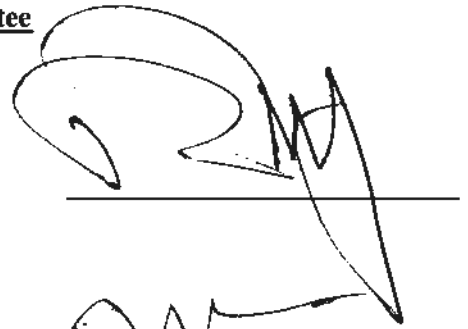
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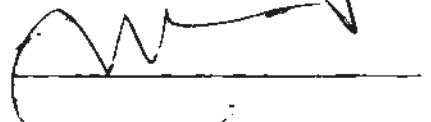
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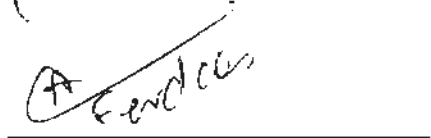
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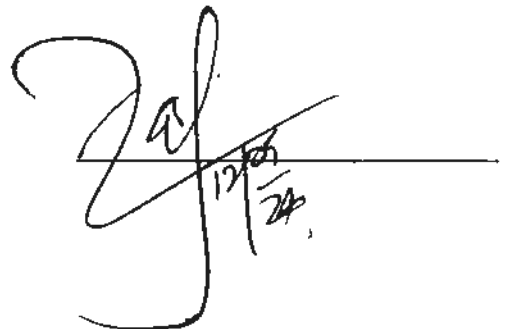
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ABSTRACT

Violence against women remains a critical issue globally, Pakistan is experiencing significant challenges in addressing this pervasive problem. This research explores the experiences of young women in Islamabad who have faced violence, aiming to uncover the underlying causes, types of violence, and coping mechanisms. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study conducts in-depth interviews with survivors. Thematic analysis is utilized to identify and interpret patterns within the data. The theoretical frameworks of intersectionality and empowerment theory guide the understanding of the complex dynamics contributing to the vulnerability of young women to violence. The findings aim to expand the understanding of violence against young women in Pakistan, contributing to the development of effective interventions and policies to combat this issue and promote gender equality and empowerment. Ethical considerations are prioritized throughout the research process to ensure the protection and well-being of participants.

Keywords: Violence against women, intersectionality, empowerment theory.

1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction chapter initiates investigate violence against young women in Pakistan and around world. It underscores the gap in understanding the experiences of this demographic and outlines the research's purpose. The chapter delves into socio-cultural and legal dimensions while emphasizing a commitment to ethical research practices. Ultimately, it sets the stage for unraveling the complexities of violence victims living within shelter homes in Islamabad and aims to amplify their voices.

1.1 Background of the Study

Understanding violence against women is a complicated issue. It's a problem for both Pakistan and all of humanity. Human rights are violated when gender-based violence (GBV) occurs. In lifetime, over six out of ten women worldwide experience some form of violence, whether it be sexual or physical (UN Women, 2019a). GBV affects productivity, human capital, and societal economic growth in addition to violating human rights (UN Women, 2019b). A growing number of nations have made an effort to create national plans of action and legislation to address the issue of GBV, although there are still gaps in some of them. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is one of them (Khan, 2020).

Violence against women and the abuse of their rights pose an issue for society worldwide, not just in Pakistan. Nearly six out of ten women worldwide experience physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives (UN Women, 2018). One in three women have encountered physical and sexual abuse, one in two have experienced sexual harassment, and one in twenty have been sexually assaulted, according to the European Union (European Union, 2014). According to research like the Thompson Reuters Foundation Annual Poll for 2018, Asia, Africa, and North America are home to ten of the world's most dangerous nations for women. The United States is classified as the third-worst country for rape and the sixth-worst for nonsexual violence, to be more precise (Goldsmith, 2018).

Pakistan has a high rate of violence against women due to misinformed and misapplied local cultural and religious teaching. Religious and cultural norms are frequently applied to restrict women in families. Many GBV-related concerns, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and traditional harmful practices like dowry and genital mutilation,

have arisen as a result of men's control over women (Khan, 2020). The accounts of survivors, rather than statistics, are thought to depict the true scope of suffering and loss.

In Pakistan, 32% of women have suffered violence. One-half of these women never sought assistance or disclosed their experiences with violence to anybody (Nawaz & Semu-Banda, 2022). Pakistan was rated as the sixth most dangerous country in the world for women by Reuters, and the fourth worst in terms of economic resources, discrimination, and the threats women face from cultural, religious, and traditional traditions. Intimate partner violence, domestic violence, detrimental traditional practices including forced marriage, "honor" killings, and other discriminatory practices based on gender are examples of gender-based violence (Reuters Foundation, 2018).

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, Pakistan ranks 132 out of 134 nations, is lowest among Asian countries, and is one of the worst countries for the gender gap due to physical and sexual violence, honor killings, and forced marriages. Since 2009, there have been unpassed private bills pertaining to women in parliament, such as ones against domestic abuse and throwing acid (Naveed, 2019).

In Pakistan, more than 8,500 violent incidents were reported in 2011, including an extensive number of rapes and acid attacks (Hadi, 2014). The Aurat Foundation reported that GBV cases increased in 2009 compared to the year before: the total number of cases climbed by 13%, from 7,571 in 2008 to 8,548 in 2009. With 5,772 instances reported, Punjab, the province of Pakistan with the most people, came in first. Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa came in second with 655 instances, followed by Baluchistan (237 cases), Sindh (1,762 cases), and Islamabad (172 cases) (Parveen, 2011).

Past years have been extremely scary for Pakistani women. From the horrific Qasoor Zainab rape case to the case of Noor Muqaddam, 27, who was brutally tortured and beheaded in the nation's capital on July 21, to the case of Ayesha Ikram, a TikTok creator who was harassed and groped on the premises of one of the country's most significant national monuments, the Minar-e-Pakistan in Lahore, on the country's Independence Day. It appears that violence against women is on the rise (Kirmani, 2021).

According to Baseer Naveed, there are currently 72 women serving in the National Assembly, and more prominent posts than ever before are being held by women, including

the Speaker of the National Assembly, Federal Ministers, and numerous deputy and provincial roles. The overall situation of women, particularly in terms of their social and economic strength, has not changed significantly, nevertheless. Women in powerful political positions are powerless to stop crimes against women, which, regrettably, have risen in comparison to earlier years (Naveed, 2019).

The violence against women has increased alarmingly, according to The Express Tribune. 3,987 women were slain and more than 10,500 women experienced sexual assault in the more than 63,367 occurrences of gender-based crimes that were reported (Ahmed, 2022). Dr. Kirmani stated that, "During the last ten years, I have noticed a trend among university students, where discussions regarding harassment are becoming more common on campuses. Even these dialogues are limited to a small segment of the society, and that too in major urban centers, due to the 8.3% female tertiary education rate (Kirmani, 2021).

The enduring societal narratives that categorize women as either the nurturing mother or the seductive temptress, as reflected in the age-old nursery rhyme, persist in shaping contemporary perceptions of femininity. In the modern era, advertisements, often criticized for perpetuating outdated role portrayals, contribute to the reinforcement of these stereotypes, positioning women predominantly as the nurturing mother or the seductress (Hung et al., 2007; Grau et al., 2007).

This discourse on women's stereotyping forms a crucial backdrop to the pervasive issue of gender-based violence (GBV) affecting women globally, with Pakistan emerging as a focal point for the examination of this deeply entrenched problem. Human rights violations occur when GBV transpires, impacting over six out of ten women worldwide during their lifetimes (UN Women, 2019b). The repercussions extend beyond individual suffering, affecting productivity, human capital, and societal economic growth (UN Women, 2019a).

While nations globally are increasingly recognizing the urgency to address GBV, there exist significant gaps in national plans of action and legislation. Pakistan stands as a pertinent example, grappling with challenges in effectively combating GBV, as evidenced by the sixth-place global ranking for danger to women by Reuters (Khan, 2020).

The global magnitude of the issue becomes even more apparent when considering statistics revealing that nearly six out of ten women worldwide undergo physical or sexual

violence at some point in their lives (UN Women, 2018). Alarming figures from the European Union and research such as the Thompson Reuters Foundation Annual Poll for 2018 underscore the gravity of the situation, identifying Asia, Africa, and North America as home to some of the world's most dangerous nations for women (Goldsmith, 2018).

Within this global context Pakistan is rated as the sixth most dangerous country for women by Reuters, grapples with a myriad of challenges ranging from economic disparities to discriminatory cultural and traditional practices. The prevalence of gender-based violence, encompassing intimate partner violence, domestic violence, forced marriages, and "honor" killings, contributes to Pakistan ranking 132 out of 134 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (Naveed, 2019).

Despite legislative efforts, Pakistani women find themselves in a precarious state, with existing laws providing only nominal security on paper. The deeply ingrained societal attitudes that view women as less than human contribute to the persisting discrimination, illustrating that the issue is not solely a legal matter but a deeply rooted societal challenge requiring a thorough evolution (Naveed, 2019).

In response to the urgent need for change, international organizations such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) strive to abolish gender-based violence by the year 2030. Their approach involves empowering women and girls with knowledge about their bodies and rights, while also educating men and boys about the negative effects of gender-based violence. Additionally, UNFPA advocates for strong legal safeguards and support systems for survivors of GBV, addressing the multi-faceted nature of this global issue (UNFPA, 2022).

As we delve deeper into the specific case of Pakistan, where more than 8,500 violent incidents, including rapes and acid attacks, were reported in 2011, it becomes evident that cultural and religious misapplications contribute significantly to the high rates of violence against women. Misguided norms, coupled with men's control over women, manifest in harmful practices such as domestic violence, sexual assault, dowry-related concerns, and genital mutilation (Khan, 2020). This thesis aims to unravel the intricacies of gender-based violence against women in Pakistan, examining its roots, societal implications, legislative shortcomings, and proposing comprehensive strategies for meaningful change.

The landscape of women's representation in the political arena of Pakistan has witnessed an apparent transformation, with 72 women currently serving in the National Assembly, holding prominent posts such as the Speaker of the National Assembly, Federal Ministers, and various deputy and provincial roles (Baseer Naveed, 2019). However, despite these strides in political participation, the overall situation of women, particularly concerning their social and economic strength, has not witnessed a significant positive shift. Regrettably, women in powerful political positions find themselves powerless to stem the rising tide of crimes against women (Naveed, 2019).

The alarming surge in violence against women in Pakistan is starkly evident in recent statistics reported by The Express Tribune. In a disturbing revelation, it is reported that 3,987 women were slain, and more than 10,500 women experienced sexual assault in over 63,367 occurrences of gender-based crimes (Ahmed, 2022). This escalation in violence poses a multifaceted challenge that demands a comprehensive understanding and strategic interventions.

Dr. Kirmani highlights a concerning trend observed over the last decade among university students, where discussions regarding harassment are becoming more common on campuses. However, these dialogues remain limited to a small segment of society, primarily in major urban centers, reflecting the challenges in addressing the pervasive issue due to the low 8.3% female tertiary education rate (Kirmani, 2019).

The term "rape" is used synonymously with sexual assault, a closely comparable but legally distinct form of attack that frequently involves non-consensual sexual behavior (Straus, 2010). The repercussions of physical or sexual abuse extend beyond immediate harm, leading to mental health issues such as anxiety, sadness, low self-esteem, and suicidal thoughts. Additionally, studies reveal that women with histories of abuse are more likely to experience physical health issues, including neurological and gynecological problems (Alirezai & Roudsari, 2022).

Human rights abuses against women in Pakistan manifest in alarming ways, with police officers often torturing and raping victims unless they can prove they did not consent. Discriminatory laws that expressly target women contribute to their vulnerability to human rights violations, subjecting them to harsh, inhuman, and humiliating punishments such as floggings and stoning to death (International A., 2019). Seeking redress for women's rights

violations in Pakistan is fraught with challenges, as law enforcement officers who violate women under their care often go unpunished, contributing to a cycle of impunity (International A., 2019).

One of the most heinous offenses against women is the act of throwing acid, as noted by Bhattacharya in 2020. This form of violence, often driven by envy or hatred, is a brutal retaliation for personal relationship issues such as failed relationships, marriage disputes, infidelity, or rejection. The aim is not necessarily to kill the victim but to inflict enduring suffering, dissolving human flesh and bones, leaving victims permanently scarred and maimed, with some experiencing ongoing disabilities, including blindness (Bhattacharya, 2020).

In essence, the issue of violence against women in Pakistan transcends historical, cultural, and religious boundaries, affecting women across various civilizations. Despite variations in its forms, this pervasive problem cuts across class, race, and religion. Addressing violence against women is imperative, given the numerous methods employed to harm and torture women, rooted in their lower and subordinate standing in the family and society (Bhattacharya, 2020). This thesis seeks to delve into the intricate layers of violence against women in Pakistan, exploring its root causes, societal implications, and proposing robust strategies for prevention and intervention.

In South Asia, particularly in rural areas, women often fall victim to various forms of violence, including dowry killings, honor killings, rape, karo kari, and attacks involving kerosene or acid. Honor killings, fueled by the belief that a female family or clan member has brought shame, are perpetrated by family members to restore perceived honor. Karo Kari, a cultural practice in Pakistan, involves killing individuals accused of adultery, with women being the primary victims and men the perpetrators.

The social fabric of Pakistan is deeply ingrained with the concept of women as property, leading to the government largely ignoring the frequent occurrences of women being killed or maimed by their families. Victims of honor killings are often the most defenseless members of the family or society, and in many cases, the victim's family may accept blood money or pardon the murderer, often a close relative, when cases reach the court (Langrial, 2017).

Dowry deaths, prevalent in South Asian nations like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, occur when young women die due to harassment or torture by husbands or in-laws seeking more dowry. These deaths, often disguised as suicide or accidents, underscore the urgent need to address violence against women in its various forms (Mobeen, 2021).

Women's empowerment emerges as a crucial response to these pervasive issues. Empowerment involves honoring, valuing, and recognizing women, enabling their participation in decision-making processes, and granting them control over their lives and communities. This extends to formal decision-making processes like politics and economic decision-making. The process of empowerment is achieved through education, awareness-building, literacy campaigns, and training, ultimately allowing women to make informed decisions regarding their lives in the face of societal challenges (Abbas et al., 2021).

In the context of South Asia, particularly India, higher education is acknowledged as a transformative tool for human growth. However, the portrayal of women's empowerment through education in India is far from ideal. A recent study emphasizes that gender empowerment is unattainable without providing quality education for all children, including females. Recognizing the profound impact of educating a girl child on the entire family, national leaders, policymakers, administrators, and bureaucrats acknowledge that empowering women through education is a societal imperative (Anonymous, 2021). This paper aims to explore the complex web of violence against women in South Asia, advocate for their empowerment, and underscore the transformative potential of education in fostering gender equality.

In the quest for gender equality and the elimination of violence against women, Mandal (2013) emphasizes the pivotal role of education. Free and compulsory education for women is deemed crucial in raising awareness of their rights and obligations. Education acts as a catalyst for self-worth, self-confidence, and self-sufficiency, fostering a holistic development of individuals and societies by expanding their intellectual, cultural, religious, and social consciousness.

Economic empowerment emerges as a pressing need, with Elliott (2008) asserting that wage employment equates to economic power. Gainful employment enables women to contribute to their households, ensuring financial security and acting as a potent weapon against poverty (Biswas, 2010). SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) underscores

the importance of economic ownership for women's awareness and visibility, positioning it as a prerequisite for empowerment.

Dr. Ali (2016) defines empowerment as a dynamic and ongoing process of personal transformation, emphasizing women's ability to bring about significant changes in power relations through struggle. This empowerment process involves granting women a greater share of control over resources and decision-making at various levels, encompassing material, human, and intellectual aspects.

Economic empowerment, according to SWEA, is achieved through equal employment opportunities, organizational benefits, and improved working conditions. When women have income, job security, and economic autonomy, they experience empowerment (Kurukshetra, 2015).

Asian women's perspectives highlight the crucial role of women in decision-making for family welfare. Women's active engagement at all decision-making levels is considered essential for achieving equality and harmony in the family and the nation (Safi FA, 2019; Asuako, 2020). Despite this, women's decision-making power is often constrained in developing countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan (Lassi ZS et al., 2021).

The patriarchal structure in Pakistani society often leads to men having more power and authority in domestic decision-making. However, the degree of knowledge is recognized as a significant factor influencing the decision-making process (Ali TS et al., 2022; Alam, 2011).

Efforts to combat violence against women involve a multi-pronged approach. Early prevention and education programs challenge harmful gender norms, promote healthy relationships, and teach conflict resolution skills (Jewkes et al., 2014). Legal measures criminalizing domestic violence and establishing protection orders, coupled with support services like helplines and counseling, are crucial elements in providing recourse and protection for survivors (Mishra et al., 2016; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015). This paper advocates for a comprehensive strategy that combines education, economic empowerment, and enhanced decision-making power as key components in the journey toward gender equality and the eradication of violence against women.

1.2 Problem Statement

Violence against women is the most serious issue prevailing in society. Violence against women occurs in many countries, but it is more prevalent in Asian countries. Global statistics suggest that India Pakistan and Bangladesh are suffering more, and this violence is mostly done by men for different reasons (World Bank, 2019). The present study aims is to examine the impact of violence against young women in Pakistan. This study basically investigates the causes, types, and coping strategies of violence. The focus population of this study is the young women who faced violence. The main purpose of this study is to analyze violent attacks against young women to disfigure them and the reasons behind such cases and impact of these cases on victims' life.

In modern societies, the increasing amount of violence against women has become an important problem. Yet in the 21st century, violence against women is at its peak. It is exceptionally necessary to study this issue. Among the violence that exists so much in today's world, it is important to take notice of this terrible misdeed. Being recognized as a victim of abuse is so shocking that most women do not report it all. It is a matter of embarrassment, dishonor, and shame for most of the victims. They frequently don't have integrity and are measured as insignificant members of society (World Health Organization, 2021).

Violence has to be highlighted, and with studies like these, people can get to know a little about the feelings of the victims and understand their problems. Though several studies have been conducted on violence against women, considering the gravity of the issue, more research needs to be conducted to further understand the issue. To meet this end, this research is focused on young girls who have experienced violence.

1.3 Significance of Research

The research on violence against young women in Pakistan hold great academic significance as it examines a pressing social issue within a particular cultural setting. It begins by addressing the urgent social issue, shedding light on the types, triggers, and effects of violence experienced by young women. The study leads to a deeper knowledge of violence and its effects on people and society by bringing attention to these issues and promoting social change. This study highlighted the necessity of laws and other measures to stop violence and advance gender equality.

The study's use of qualitative research methods enables a thorough investigation of the environmental and cultural elements that affect violence against young women in Pakistan. Researchers will obtain important insights into the lived experiences, perspectives, and socio-cultural factors that underlie violence by engaging with individuals through interviews, focus groups, and observations. This knowledge has laid the groundwork for informing decision-makers, activists, and practitioners who will fight to prevent violence, develop evidence-based regulations, and create adaptable programs and services. The study also highlights the agency and resilience of young women who have endured assault, strengthened their voices and narratives while resisted conventional power dynamics.

In conclusion, this qualitative study on violence against young women in Pakistan have academic value as it addresses an important social issue, offers insight into cultural practices, amplifies the voices of oppressed groups, informs interventions and policy, and advances theoretical frameworks. This study fill information gaps, advance the body of knowledge, and have the ability to advance gender equality, the welfare of Pakistani young women, and foster positive societal change.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To explore the underlying sociocultural causes of violence against young Pakistani women.
2. To examine how violence influence Pakistani young women's physical, and social wellbeing.
3. To look into the coping mechanisms used by Pakistani young women to deal with violence.
4. To find out the availability of support mechanism for victims of violence.
5. To map out recommendations for laws and other strategies intended to stop and cure violence against young women in Pakistan.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How does violence influence the educational opportunities and outcomes for young Pakistani women, and how does this impact their social well-being?
2. What kind of social support networks are available to the young Pakistani women who have experienced violence?

3. In what ways do societal norms, cultural values, and customs in Pakistan contribute to the persistence of violence against young women?
4. What institutional and legal obstacles prevent Pakistani young women from accessing the protection and assistance they need?

1.6 Delimitation(S) of the Study

Delimitations outline the specific boundaries and limitations of a research study. It's important to note that delimitations are meant to define the scope of the study and provide a clear focus. Researchers should carefully consider these limitations to ensure the study's feasibility and relevance.

- This study is focused solely on a specific region or city within Pakistan, as the issue of violence against young women can vary significantly across different regions due to cultural, socio-economic, and legal differences.
- This study is concentrated on violence against women aged between 15 and 25, excluding younger or older age groups. This limitation ensures a specific focus on young women and their unique experiences.
- This study is primarily explored physical and emotional violence, neglect, and psychological abuse. Other forms of violence, such as cyber bullying were not extensively covered due to their distinct nature.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review chapter acts as a guide through existing research on “Exploring violence against young women in shelter homes in Islamabad's. It synthesizes insights, theories, and empirical findings to establish a foundation for our study. By navigating past scholarship, we aim to identify gaps, challenges, and patterns, bridging the existing knowledge with the unique socio-cultural context. This chapter informs our research methodology and approach, contributing to the understanding of violence.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

The process of violence against women is as complicated as it is to comprehend. To comprehend the occurrence, numerous hypotheses have provided a number of explanations. Worldwide research studies demonstrate that violence against women still happens, however, it takes different forms depending on the country and culture. It is the most widespread yet least acknowledged violation of human rights in the entire world (Ali & Gavino, 2008).

Multiple studies consistently report a high prevalence of violence against young women in Pakistan. Ali et al. (2019) found that 80% of interviewed women experienced various forms of violence, while Javed and Ghazal (2018) highlighted alarming rates of domestic violence. Factors contributing to this issue include sociocultural norms, gender inequalities, and acceptance of violence due to patriarchal attitudes and rigid gender roles (Iqbal and Noreen, 2017; Sadiq et al., 2021). Different forms of violence identified include domestic violence encompassing physical, emotional, and economic abuse (Ahmad & Riaz, 2019), as well as sexual violence such as rape, sexual harassment, forced marriages, and digital abuse (Bukhari et al., 2020).

Around the world, 85% of women reported witnessing digital abuse, and almost 40% of them said they had directly experienced it. Online harassment and denigration of women can be distressing on a long-term psychological, emotional, and bodily level. Global figures show that 35% of women have experienced mental health problems as a result of online aggression, and 92% of women say that it negatively affects their feeling of wellbeing (Nawaz & Semu-Banda, 2022). Digital abuse of women and girls is one of the most common types of violence in today's society. Online sexual harassment, cyberbullying, and the unauthorized use of photographs and video are all examples of digital violence.

In the face of pervasive societal taboos, poverty, illiteracy, and patriarchy, Pakistan grapples with a staggering reality. With a shocking 93% of women experiencing sexual abuse in their lifetime, the country witnesses the horrors of "honor" killings, marital rape, acid attacks, and deadly acts of setting stoves on fire. Unreported and silenced, these statistics only scratch the surface of a deep-rooted problem, highlighting the urgent need for change (Saeed et al., 2020).

The consequences of violence against young women in Pakistan are severe and multifaceted. Psychological effects, such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, have been widely reported (Khan et al., 2018). Physical health issues, including injuries and reproductive health complications, have also been documented (Nasir et al., 2020). Moreover, violence has long-lasting social consequences, such as restricted mobility, limited educational opportunities, and reduced employment prospects (Ali et al., 2019).

It is challenging to analyze aggression against women in Pakistan due to methodological and societal issues (LaBore et al., 2019). Due to their relative social weakness and ignorance of their legal rights, Pakistani women residing in rural regions are especially susceptible to violence (Zakar et al., 2015). In Pakistan, women experience sex prejudice from the moment they are born. This discrimination lasts through infancy, adolescence, and even after marriage. Early marriage is one of the main issues in Pakistan. In Pakistan, 47.8% of women between the ages of 15 and 24 who are presently married were already mothers when they got married. In Pakistan, about a third of women between the ages of 15 and 24 stated that their spouses had used CB (31.8%) and spousal abuse (31.1%) against them. To stop child marriages and spread knowledge about their detrimental effects, particularly spousal abuse, effective initiatives are required (Nasrullah et al., 2022).

Ghag, Badl-e-Sulha, Swara, Wanni, Sung Chatti, Sarpaisa, and Watta Satta are only a few examples of the numerous customary behaviors that contribute to the frequent occurrence of gender-based violence in Pakistan (Pasha, 2022). One of the most frequent abuses of human rights worldwide is violence against women. That is a serious matter of safety and health. In Pakistan, 32% of women have suffered violence. One-half of these women never sought assistance or disclosed their experiences with violence to anybody. The accounts of survivors, rather than statistics, are thought to depict the true scope of suffering and loss (UNFPA, 2022).

Physical, sexual, and digital abuse are just a few of the sneaky ways that gender-based violence manifests itself, both offline and online. Anxiety, sadness, suicidal thoughts or acts, and post-traumatic stress disorder can all be caused by violence and have an impact on the physical and emotional health of the survivors (PTSD). The sense of identity, dignity, or self-worth that survivors formerly had may be lost (Nawaz et al., 2022).

One speculates that the perceived increase in violence may be due to incidences receiving more attention. The topic is being emphasized and discussed on social media platforms, and mainstream media is more aware of it. The research also stated that just 26 of the 163 cases of women being kidnapped that were reported to the media in Islamabad and that Punjab has a high rate of sexual assault, rape, kidnapping, domestic abuse, and other violent crimes (Baksh, 2021).

Shmyla Khan, a lecturer at LUMS and the director for research and policy at (DRF), stated that "The media, especially digital media outlets, weaponized false and private information in the Dua Zehra, Noor Mukadam, and motorway rape cases to hold the victims accountable for the crimes committed against them and to assassinate their characters. In this regard, gendered misinformation has been used for a while as a voice for patriarchal views and narratives. Even while it is unique, misinformation like this has a broader impact on survivors who can observe how society views victims. Consequently, often discourages people from reporting or speaking up" (Irfan, 2022).

The landed elite, bureaucracy, a powerful army with merciless capabilities and its sights set on seizing power, as well as Muslim religious parties that want to control every aspect of a person's life, dominate Pakistani society, which is still suffering from the effects of colonial domination. "The home is the best place for women," goes a widely used and taught saying. Muslim fundamentalist organizations can divide society along sectarian lines and keep women, who make up 49.52 percent of the population of the country, in the Stone Age because they enjoy the patronage and support of the powerful (Naveed, 2019).

Young women from diverse backgrounds often experience multiple forms of discrimination, such as racism, ableism, or homophobia, in addition to gender-based violence. Intersectionality acknowledges that these intersecting identities and experiences influence the type and severity of violence faced by young women (Crenshaw, 1991). Research that

examines the intersectional nature of violence can inform more targeted and inclusive interventions.

In the ever-evolving landscape of research pertaining to violence against young women, according to Henry and Powell, 2020 there is always exist a pressing need to delve into emerging domains that warrant meticulous exploration and heightened focus. In contemporary society, marked by the widespread integration of digital technologies and the ubiquity of social media, a troubling trend has emerged: the escalation of technology-facilitated violence against young women. This multifaceted phenomenon encompasses a spectrum of distressing experiences, including cyberbullying, online harassment, the unauthorized dissemination of intimate images (commonly referred to as "revenge porn"), and the insidious practice of stalking perpetrated through digital platforms (Henry & Powell, 2020).

Recognizing and comprehending the distinctive dynamics underpinning technology-facilitated violence is of paramount importance. Equally crucial is the development of effective strategies aimed at preventing and mitigating such forms of harm, thus safeguarding the online safety and mental well-being of young women. In this literature review, we shall explore the intricate dimensions of technology-facilitated violence against young women, shedding light on the evolving nature of this issue and elucidating the imperative for comprehensive research and intervention efforts.

The existing body of research on the subject matter remains dynamic and continually expanding. To attain a comprehensive grasp of the issue at hand, it is imperative to emphasize the necessity for longitudinal investigations that meticulously track the life experiences of young women over extended periods. Such longitudinal studies hold the potential to unearth critical insights into both the risk factors and protective elements that shape these young women's lives, thereby furnishing valuable insights for the development of targeted interventions (Iqbal et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the multifaceted nature of violence against young women in Pakistan underscores the importance of acknowledging and addressing its intersectionality. It is paramount to recognize that young women hailing from marginalized communities, including those residing in rural areas, coming from low-income households, or belonging to minority groups, bear a disproportionately heavy burden of violence (Javed et al., 2023).

Consequently, interventions aimed at mitigating this issue must exhibit a heightened sensitivity to the distinct challenges faced by these specific groups and be meticulously tailored to cater to their unique needs.

This literature highlights the dynamic nature of research in the field, advocating for longitudinal studies as a means to uncover essential insights for targeted interventions. Furthermore, it highlights the critical importance of acknowledging the intersectionality of violence against young women in Pakistan, emphasizing the need for interventions that are both culturally sensitive and tailored to the specific challenges faced by marginalized communities.

The literature underscores the heightened vulnerability of young women to violence when confronted with situations of migration and displacement, wherein they become susceptible to exploitation, trafficking, and various forms of abuse (Cabezas, 2020). Delving into the distinct challenges and susceptibilities experienced by displaced young women offers a pivotal avenue for the enhancement of protection mechanisms and support services. A comprehensive grasp of the factors contributing to the resilience of these young women in the face of violence stands as a paramount prerequisite for the development of efficacious interventions. Within this context, examining coping strategies and the support systems that empower young women to navigate and recover from violence assumes paramount importance, providing valuable insights for the formulation of trauma-informed approaches (Karakurt & Cumbie, 2012).

An intersectional lens in the context of addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG) provides a holistic framework that considers the intricate interplay of various forms of inequality and oppression. These dimensions of inequality encompass sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity, indigeneity, immigration status, disability, and more (UN Women, 2012). This perspective recognizes that these multiple layers of oppression intersect and mutually influence each other, giving rise to distinct and often compounded experiences of violence endured by women and girls (Manjoo, 2014).

To illustrate, consider the case of a disabled Roma woman residing in the Western Balkans. Her life is entangled in a complex web of sexism, ableism, racism, and poverty, all of which collectively shape her individual experience of violence and oppression. This literature review explores the concept of intersectionality in addressing VAWG, highlighting

its significance in understanding and addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by marginalized women and girls in different contexts. Through an examination of existing research and scholarly works, this review aims to shed light on the transformative potential of an intersectional approach in the pursuit of gender equality and the eradication of violence against women and girls.

Incorporating an intersectional framework within the context of policy and practice is paramount for the development of tailored and effective responses to address Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG). Within this framework, it is imperative to acknowledge the absence of a hierarchy among various forms of oppression. Women should not be placed in a position where they must prioritize one form of oppression over another when seeking support services for VAWG. Instead, a comprehensive and holistic approach is warranted, recognizing that these multiple forms of oppression coexist and intersect in the lives of women and girls. This perspective aligns with the principles advocated by UN Women in 2012.

In the sphere of international standards, it is crucial to underscore the significance of adherence to principles like Article 4.3 within the Istanbul Convention. This particular article mandates that nations must adopt essential measures to proactively prevent and combat all manifestations of violence targeting women and girls, unequivocally excluding discrimination on the basis of various factors such as sex, gender, race, religion, disability, and other social statuses (UN Women, 2012). The failure to comprehensively address the multifaceted issue of violence, which includes the omission of specific forms of abuse that disproportionately affect marginalized women, runs counter to the foundational tenets articulated in the Istanbul Convention. This literature review delves into the critical importance of international standards and their implications for addressing violence against women.

In the terms of ending violence against women and girls, an intersectional approach is not only recommended but necessary. It allows policymakers to assess and address inequalities among women and recognizes that differentially positioned women experience discrimination and violence in unique ways (Manjoo, 2014). The incorporation of intersectionality into national action plans, as advocated by UN Women, underscores the importance of considering various factors that shape women's experiences of violence, including race, religion, sexual orientation, and disability, among others (UN Women, 2012).

Moreover, the Istanbul Convention's emphasis on addressing the specific needs of vulnerable individuals in diverse circumstances further underscores the significance of an intersectional perspective in tackling VAWG (UN Women, 2012).

In recent years, there has been a growing acknowledgment of the imperative need to address comprehensively and sustain efforts in combatting violence against young women in Pakistan. This pressing issue has garnered increased attention from various stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society groups, and international organizations. Their collective efforts have been instrumental in both raising awareness about this pervasive problem and advocating for substantive policy reforms. Within this context, NGOs have emerged as pivotal actors, assuming a prominent role in providing essential support and services to young women who have endured various forms of violence.

These organizations have effectively established safe spaces that serve as havens for survivors, offering them vital resources such as counseling and legal assistance. By doing so, they not only help in the immediate aftermath of traumatic experiences but also empower survivors with the tools and knowledge necessary to embark on the journey of rebuilding their lives (Awan & Malik, 2022).

Moreover, it is worth noting that certain NGOs have adopted a holistic approach to addressing gender-based violence by actively engaging with men and boys within the community. Through meticulously crafted awareness campaigns and educational workshops, these organizations endeavor to challenge prevailing norms of toxic masculinity and promote the ideals of gender equality (Hussain & Shah, 2022). This multifaceted approach not only underscores the complexity of the issue but also highlights the importance of a concerted effort involving various stakeholders to combat violence against young women effectively.

Recent years have witnessed a growing recognition of the imperative need to address violence against young women in Pakistan. NGOs and other organizations have emerged as key players in this endeavor, providing crucial support services and advocating for policy changes. Their multifaceted efforts aim not only to assist survivors in their journey to recovery but also to challenge and transform societal norms that perpetuate gender-based violence.

The contemporary landscape of activism and social mobilization among young women is increasingly characterized by the utilization of digital platforms. This shift in the mode of engagement has prompted a growing body of research aimed at assessing the impact and effectiveness of online activism. In doing so, these investigations offer valuable insights into the potential of digital spaces as potent tools for fostering empowerment and catalyzing social change, as highlighted by Kamble et al. (2019).

Still, it is imperative to recognize that violence against young women bears enduring repercussions, stretching beyond their immediate circumstances and into their adulthood, with the potential to influence subsequent generations. Thus, it becomes essential to delve into research examining the intergenerational ramifications of such violence, a facet of inquiry that can inform the development of preventive strategies aimed at dismantling the cycle of violence and nurturing healthier relationships, as emphasized by Guedes et al. (2018). This literature review aims to synthesize and critically analyze the existing body of research on these pertinent themes, shedding light on the multifaceted dimensions of digital activism's efficacy and the far-reaching consequences of violence against young women.

Examining the contemporary discourse surrounding masculinity is of paramount importance in the ongoing efforts to combat violence against young women. This imperative underscores the necessity for research investigations that delve into the multifaceted roles of various masculinities in perpetuating such violence. Moreover, the pursuit of efficacious strategies aimed at engaging men and boys in the prevention of violence holds significant promise in the endeavor to foster more equitable and non-violent societies, as articulated by Barker et al. in their seminal work from 2016.

The ramifications of violence against young women extend far beyond physical harm, often inflicting profound mental health repercussions. Consequently, it becomes imperative to underscore the need for providing these individuals with tailored support and trauma-informed care. This aspect is unequivocally underscored by the findings presented in Garcia-Moreno et al.'s comprehensive study from 2019.

For an extended period, Pakistani society has been deeply entrenched in a patriarchal framework, where men are traditionally seen as holding a superior position. This societal structure has often relegated women to more submissive roles, confining them within the

domestic sphere. Men have typically been viewed as the ones in control of affairs outside the home, while women have been expected to manage household matters.

However, in recent times, the influence of feminism has begun to permeate this traditionally male-centric society. Women in Pakistan are increasingly stepping out of their homes, pursuing education, and building careers. These shifts represent the initial rays of change in a society that has long been dominated by patriarchal norms.

Patriarchy remains the primary obstacle to the progress and empowerment of women. While the degree of dominance may vary, the fundamental belief in male authority persists. This control can manifest in various forms. Therefore, in order to systematically advocate for women's advancement, it is essential to understand the system that upholds the subordination of women and work towards dismantling its mechanisms. Recognizing and challenging patriarchy is central to fostering gender equality and creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

The patriarchal system in Pakistan presents significant challenges for women's advancement in society. This system places the blame on family institutions and social interactions for women's inferior or secondary status in a world where individuals should succeed based on their own merits. In patriarchal societies, men are granted full precedence, and women's human rights are often constrained. This male dominance, both in public and private spheres, is commonly referred to as patriarchy.

Feminists use the term "patriarchy" to describe this power structure that perpetuates gender inequalities and reinforces male dominance over women (Ranjan, 2019). Recognizing and addressing the patriarchal system is a critical step toward achieving gender equality and empowering women to thrive based on their abilities and merits, rather than being constrained by societal norms and structures that limit their opportunities.

The current research is noteworthy for its inclusion of the perspectives of women, particularly those in rural areas of a patriarchal society. In such societies, rural women often lack opportunities to publicly express their thoughts and feelings, leading them to keep their emotions and experiences to themselves. This study is significant because it provides a platform for adolescent females in rural areas who are rarely heard in research due to its specific focus on their voices and experiences.

Haque and Nasir (2023) highlight the enduring influence of the patriarchal social structure deeply embedded in traditional norms, which serves as a breeding ground for perpetuating violence. Effecting change in these norms demands a concerted effort from various segments of society, including religious leaders, educators, and influencers. In this literature review, we delve into the critical role of the healthcare system in addressing violence against young women, exploring the need for specialized training, the significance of confidentiality, and the persistent challenges posed by patriarchal norms deeply ingrained in society.

Engaging men and boys in conversations surrounding non-violence and gender equality is a fundamental component of fostering a cultural shift. Their active involvement is critical in challenging detrimental behaviors and attitudes, ultimately making them allies in the ongoing battle against violence (Ahmed & Ali, 2023). Promising outcomes have been observed through educational initiatives and community workshops that facilitate discussions among men on topics such as masculinity, consent, and healthy relationships (Khattak & Nasir, 2023).

Additionally, the media plays a significant role in shaping societal perceptions and attitudes regarding violence against young women. It is imperative to acknowledge that sensationalizing and trivializing incidents of violence can perpetuate harmful stereotypes, contributing to a culture that normalizes abuse (Mahmood & Saeed, 2023). Therefore, it is essential to encourage responsible reporting practices within media outlets, emphasizing the importance of preserving the dignity and privacy of survivors. This literature review synthesizes key research findings and insights on the pivotal role of men's engagement, educational programs, and media responsibility in promoting non-violence and gender equality.

The significance of international collaborations and partnerships in the context of addressing violence against young women in Pakistan cannot be overstated. These collaborations offer a wealth of valuable insights and support that are instrumental in tackling this pressing issue. Drawing inspiration from successful initiatives implemented in various countries, we can glean essential knowledge to inform the development of evidence-based interventions and best practices (Ali & Rahman, 2023). Moreover, the involvement of international organizations introduces the potential for both financial and technical assistance,

thereby fortifying the capabilities of local NGOs and governmental agencies dedicated to combatting this problem.

To ensure the efficacy of interventions, it is imperative to measure their impact rigorously. This process is vital not only for assessing their effectiveness but also for pinpointing areas in need of improvement. To achieve this, the establishment of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is a prerequisite (Rashid & Haider, 2023). These mechanisms play a pivotal role in tracking progress and comprehensively assessing the outcomes of programs aimed at addressing violence against young women. Embracing a data-driven approach, as advocated in this context, holds the potential to guide evidence-based policymaking and facilitate informed decisions regarding the allocation of resources.

Incorporating the perspectives and active involvement of young women themselves is a crucial aspect of designing and executing effective interventions. Empowering young women to take on roles as advocates and community leaders can be a catalyst for meaningful and sustainable change (Nazir & Qureshi, 2023). By creating platforms for young women to share their personal experiences and innovative ideas, opportunities for devising novel solutions and fostering greater ownership of the movement emerge.

Addressing violence against young women demands a multifaceted and coordinated approach that operates on multiple societal levels. It necessitates a shift from solely reactive measures to a more proactive stance that focuses on prevention and early intervention (Hassan & Aslam, 2023). Through the promotion of gender equality, the challenging of harmful societal norms, and the provision of comprehensive support for survivors, Pakistan can take significant strides toward a future where young women can flourish in an environment characterized by safety and dignity.

In the ongoing battle against violence targeting young women in Pakistan, it is imperative to acknowledge the intricate connections between this issue and broader social, economic, and political challenges. Factors such as poverty and limited economic opportunities play a significant role in rendering young women more vulnerable to violence (Khalid et al., 2023). Empowering young women economically by equipping them with essential skills, facilitating access to credit, and creating job opportunities can substantially reduce their reliance on potentially abusive partners and family members.

Moreover, it is crucial to recognize that addressing violence against young women extends beyond the individual or family level. Collective action and community engagement are pivotal in effecting enduring change (Haque & Malik, 2023). Initiatives rooted in the community, which involve religious leaders, elders, and influential community figures, have the potential to challenge detrimental norms and foster gender equality within local contexts (Tariq & Aslam, 2023). By addressing these multifaceted dimensions of the issue, Pakistan can make significant strides in its commitment to safeguarding the safety and dignity of its young women.

Understanding the complex phenomenon of violence against women is a challenge, and various theories and hypotheses have been put forth to shed light on its occurrence. Research conducted worldwide demonstrates that this form of violence persists, albeit taking different shapes depending on the country and cultural context. Remarkably, it remains one of the most widespread yet underrecognized violations of human rights globally (Ali & Gavino, 2008).

On a global scale, alarming statistics reveal the prevalence of digital abuse against women. Approximately 85% of women have reported witnessing instances of digital abuse, with nearly 40% experiencing it directly. The consequences of online harassment and the degradation of women's dignity can have profound and enduring effects on their mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Globally, 35% of women have reported experiencing mental health issues as a result of online aggression, and a staggering 92% of women have indicated that it negatively impacts their overall sense of well-being (Nawaz & Semu-Banda, 2022).

These findings underscore the gravity and persistence of violence against women across diverse contexts, warranting comprehensive attention and concerted efforts to address and mitigate its multifaceted consequences. Advertising imagery frequently presents an idealized and often unrealistic portrayal of women, exerting significant influence on how women perceive themselves. It is widely recognized that advertising, while sometimes criticized for perpetuating negative stereotypes about women, essentially mirrors and reinforces prevailing societal attitudes (Grau et al., 2007).

Ibroscheva (2007) provides findings that highlight the stigmatization of women as less educated than men, often depicted as dependent, decorative homemakers, or nurturing figures within advertising. These representations are often seen as reflections of deeply entrenched societal norms. Consequently, consumers are susceptible to the reinforcement of gender-based stereotypes through these depictions, which, in turn, contribute to shaping society's perceptions of gender-specific roles (Nassif & Gunter, 2008).

In essence, advertising plays a significant role in both reflecting and perpetuating prevailing gender norms and stereotypes, contributing to the broader discourse on gender roles and expectations in society. Women in commercials are often portrayed in limited and stereotypical ways, either as sexual objects or as decorative elements aimed at boosting product sales. This portrayal persists even as countries embrace globalization and make efforts to promote marginalized sectors of society through various policies and legislations.

In advertising, women are frequently depicted in roles that have little to do with the product being promoted. This practice has been widely documented in numerous studies, highlighting the blatant and often unfavorable stereotyping of women. For example, women are often shown primarily engaged in domestic chores, particularly cleaning tasks within the home or kitchen (Koernig & Granitz, 2006).

These portrayals not only reinforce traditional gender roles but also undermine the progress made in promoting gender equality and empowering women in various sectors of society. Recognizing and challenging such stereotypes is essential for fostering a more inclusive and equitable representation of women in advertising and, by extension, in society as a whole.

Media stereotypes have a profound impact on people's personal worldviews, contributing to the perpetuation of rigid gender roles and shaping how individuals perceive the world (Döring & Pöschl, 2006). Across various cultures, the predominant representations of women in the media often depict them as less capable individuals, objects of exploitation by men, and essential for commercial success in the advertising-driven era.

In media portrayals, women frequently assume passive roles compared to men, often being limited to depictions as housewives and homemakers. Even when employed, women are typically portrayed in roles that align with traditional female positions, where they are

subordinate to men and hold limited status or influence. These media-driven stereotypes not only reinforce gender inequalities but also hinder progress toward more equitable and inclusive societies. Recognizing and challenging these stereotypes is crucial for advancing gender equality and dismantling the limitations imposed by traditional gender roles.

Rather than relying solely on statistics, the narratives of survivors are often considered the most poignant and accurate depictions of the extensive suffering and profound losses associated with violence. In Pakistan, for instance, it is disheartening to note that 32% of women have endured some form of violence. Alarming, half of these women have chosen not to seek assistance or confide in anyone about their experiences of violence (Nawaz & Semu-Banda, 2022).

While interpersonal violence is a global concern, it disproportionately affects developing nations. In countries like Pakistan, where deeply ingrained societal taboos, widespread poverty, low levels of education, and entrenched patriarchy prevail, a staggering 93% of women have encountered sexual abuse at some point in their lives. The deadliest manifestations of this violence include "honor" killings, rape, including within marriage, acid attacks, and instances where family members set stoves on fire. It's essential to note that these statistics likely represent only the tip of the iceberg, as the majority of such cases go unreported due to the fact that many women endure abuse silently and choose not to speak out (Saeed et al., 2020).

These harrowing accounts underline the urgent need for comprehensive efforts to address and combat violence against women in Pakistan and similar contexts. The true extent of suffering, often hidden behind a wall of silence, underscores the gravity of this issue and the imperative to dismantle the structures that perpetuate it.

The alarmingly high prevalence of violence against women in Pakistan not only jeopardizes their own health but also poses a significant threat to the well-being of their households. Analyzing this pervasive issue in Pakistan is a complex task, largely due to methodological challenges and deeply ingrained societal factors that contribute to its persistence (LaBore et al., 2019). Particularly vulnerable to such violence are Pakistani women living in rural areas, who, often face heightened susceptibility due to their relative social vulnerability and limited awareness of their legal rights (Zakar et al., 2015).

The discriminatory treatment of women in Pakistan begins early in life and persists throughout various stages, including infancy, adolescence, and even after marriage. Early marriage, a prevalent issue in Pakistan, is a concerning aspect of this discrimination. Shockingly, 47.8% of women aged 15 to 24 who are currently married were already mothers when they entered into marriage. Furthermore, a significant portion of women in this age group reported experiencing coercive behavior (CB) and spousal abuse (31.8% and 31.1%, respectively). Effective initiatives aimed at combating child marriages and raising awareness about their detrimental consequences, particularly spousal abuse, are urgently needed (Nasrullah et al., 2022).

A multitude of customary practices in Pakistan, such as Ghag, Badl-e-Sulha, Swara, Wanni, Sung Chatti, Sarpaisa, and Watta Satta, contribute to the widespread occurrence of gender-based violence (Pasha, 2022). Violence against women is not only a grave violation of human rights but also a severe threat to safety and health, making it a matter of utmost concern. In Pakistan, where 32% of women have endured violence, the voices and experiences of survivors provide a more profound understanding of the extent of suffering and loss, surpassing the limitations of statistics (UNFPA, 2022).

Gender-based violence, in its various forms including physical, sexual, psychological, and digital abuse, is a pervasive issue that manifests both in offline and online spaces. The consequences of such violence can have a profound impact on survivors' physical and emotional well-being, often leading to conditions like anxiety, sadness, suicidal thoughts or actions, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Furthermore, survivors may experience a profound loss of their sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth (Nawaz et al., 2022).

The perceived increase in the visibility of gender-based violence may, in part, be attributed to a heightened focus on these issues. Social media platforms and mainstream media outlets are playing a more prominent role in shedding light on and discussing these matters. However, it's essential to note that the rise in attention does not necessarily equate to an increase in the actual incidence of violence. It's likely that many cases go unreported or unnoticed, making it challenging to capture the full extent of the problem.

Research findings also underscore the prevalence of gender-based violence in certain regions. For example, the study mentioned that out of 163 reported cases of women being kidnapped in Islamabad, only 26 received media attention. Additionally, Punjab was noted for

having a high rate of sexual assault, rape, kidnapping, domestic abuse, and other forms of violent crimes (Baksh, 2021). These findings highlight the urgent need for comprehensive efforts to address and combat gender-based violence across different contexts and regions.

Shmyla Khan, a lecturer at LUMS and the director for research and policy at (DRF), stated that "The media, especially digital media outlets, weaponized false and private information in the Dua Zehra, Noor Mukadam, and motorway rape cases to hold the victims accountable for the crimes committed against them and to assassinate their characters. In this regard, gendered misinformation has been used for a while as a voice for patriarchal views and narratives. Even while it is unique, misinformation like this has a broader impact on survivors who can observe how society views victims. Consequently, often discourages people from reporting or speaking up" (Irfan, 2022).

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The past few years have been extremely scary for Pakistani women. From the horrifying Qasoor Zainab rape case and the case of Noor Muqaddam, 27, who was brutally tortured and beheaded in the country's capital on July 21, to Ayesha Ikram, a TikTok creator who was harassed and groped on the grounds of one of the nation's most important national monuments, the Minar-e-Pakistan in Lahore, on Independence Day. There appears to be an epidemic of violence against women (Kirmani, 2021).

As the fight against violence against young women in Pakistan progresses, it is important to address the unique challenges faced by those living in conflict-affected regions. In areas where armed conflict or extremism is prevalent, young women face heightened risks of violence, including sexual violence, abduction, and forced marriage (Khan & Rahman, 2023). Humanitarian organizations working in these regions must prioritize the protection and support of young women, ensuring access to safe spaces and specialized services.

Additionally, fostering male allyship is crucial in the efforts to combat violence against young women. Engaging men and boys in gender equality initiatives can help break down barriers and challenge toxic masculinity (Saeed & Malik, 2023). Male advocates can play a significant role in influencing their peers and community members, encouraging positive behavior change and standing against violence.

A comprehensive approach to addressing violence against young women necessitates the consideration of intersectionality, acknowledging the compounding effects of various forms of discrimination and oppression (Zaman & Haider, 2023). Young women who belong to marginalized groups, such as religious minorities, individuals with disabilities, or from the other marginalized community, may confront unique challenges and specific forms of violence that warrant tailored interventions and support.

In addition to policy implementation, robust support systems must be established within educational institutions to assist young women who may encounter violence. These support mechanisms should provide a safe space for disclosure and access to resources for those in need.

At the community level, initiatives should be directed towards challenging harmful cultural practices that perpetuate violence against young women. Raising awareness about the detrimental consequences of practices such as child marriage, dowry-related violence, and honor-based violence is of utmost importance. These efforts play a vital role in driving a transformation in attitudes and behaviors within communities (Rahman & Nasir, 2023). By addressing these issues at both institutional and community levels, we can make significant strides in preventing violence against young women and promoting gender equality.

Efforts to combat violence against young women must extend beyond urban areas and encompass rural communities, recognizing the unique challenges and cultural dynamics they face (Haque & Iqbal, 2023). Within these rural contexts, community-based organizations and local leaders are instrumental in driving positive change.

However, to ensure the sustainability and scalability of interventions, there is an imperative need for sustained funding and resource allocation. Governments, donors, and international organizations must prioritize investments in programs and initiatives specifically aimed at addressing violence against young women in Pakistan (Siddiqui &

Hussain, 2023). By committing resources and support to these efforts, we can aspire to create safer and more equitable environments for young women, irrespective of their geographic location.

In the year 2016, women encountered various challenges when participating in economic endeavors, as reported by Gallup and the International Labor Organization. To illustrate, in developing nations, workplace discrimination emerged as a significant hurdle, while in emerging and well-established economies, the foremost obstacle pertained to achieving a satisfactory work-family balance. Notably, only in developed economies did concerns about family members' attitudes and access to childcare services jointly emerge as major issues of concern (Mann & Harter, 2016).

Women have played a pivotal role in shaping the course of history since the earliest days of human civilization. A crucial barometer of a nation's overall progress lies in the elevated status afforded to women in the workforce and their contributions within their respective fields. It is an indisputable fact that a nation's political, economic, and social advancement hinges upon the active participation of women in all facets of life. However, it is both regrettable and paradoxical that, despite their increasing presence and contributions, female professionals often find themselves lacking the due prestige, respect, and acknowledgment from their colleagues, superiors, and society at large.

While women have increasingly ventured out of their homes to work across various domains, they continue to grapple with disparities in social, cultural, and economic spheres. This enduring imbalance underscores the pressing need for a paradigm shift in societal perspectives to foster a more equitable environment (Ramasetu et al., 2015).

One significant challenge confronting woman in the workforce revolves around the pervasive issue of harassment. It is disconcerting to note that a substantial proportion of working women report encountering harassment within their professional domains, irrespective of whether they are employed in structured or unstructured sectors, possess varying levels of literacy, or hold positions with varying compensation levels. Harassment takes on various forms, encompassing offensive behaviors such as physical intimidation, commentary on one's physical appearance, explicit discussions of sexual topics, and other unwelcome actions. It is important to recognize that any negative comment or physical

intrusion that induces a sense of vulnerability in a woman constitutes an act of harassment (Breant, 2017).

While efforts aimed at violence prevention are crucial, it is equally imperative to allocate resources towards research endeavors that can illuminate emerging trends and evolving forms of violence. Notably, cyberbullying and online harassment have emerged as significant concerns; with young women being disproportionately affected (Rashid & Siddiqui, 2023). Conducting research and analysis in this domain is essential to inform the development of policies and interventions tailored to combat these evolving challenges effectively.

Empowering young women to navigate digital platforms safely takes on paramount importance in this digital age. Offering digital literacy and online safety workshops can equip young women with the necessary skills and knowledge to protect themselves from cyber violence and harassment. Simultaneously, these initiatives can harness the potential of digital spaces as platforms for advocacy and support (Nazir & Khan, 2023). Thus, investing in research and educational programs is instrumental in ensuring the well-being and safety of young women in the ever-evolving digital landscape.

Institutionalizing gender equality and violence prevention within educational institutions holds immense potential for fostering lasting change. It is imperative that schools and colleges adopt zero-tolerance policies towards all forms of violence and harassment while actively nurturing a culture rooted in respect and gender sensitivity (Javed & Rashid, 2023). Such institutional changes can create safe and equitable learning environments where young women can thrive.

To advance these critical objectives, it is imperative that we embark on further explorations within the realm of mental health interventions specifically designed for young women who have encountered violence. These explorations hold the potential to catalyze enhancements in the existing support services, ultimately promoting the well-being of those who have experienced such traumatic ordeals.

In recent years, there has been a notable surge in government initiatives aimed at addressing the pervasive issue of violence against young women. These endeavors have primarily revolved around legislative reforms, which have been introduced with the intention

of fortifying legal measures against various forms of violence, including domestic abuse, sexual harassment, and honor crimes (Khalid & Ali, 2022). Nonetheless, the formidable obstacle in this arena remains the effective implementation and enforcement of these laws, often encountering resistance from conservative factions within society (Rasheed & Khan, 2023).

Education stands as a potent instrument for breaking the cycle of violence against young women. To achieve this, it is imperative to incorporate comprehensive sex education into school curricula, thereby fostering awareness about crucial topics such as consent, healthy relationships, and reproductive rights (Raza & Siddiqui, 2023). Additionally, education plays a pivotal role in empowering young women to recognize their rights and seek assistance when confronted with violence, thus mitigating the barriers they may face in accessing support services (Khan & Zaman, 2023).

Understanding and addressing gender inequality in education at the local level is a crucial step before tackling this issue on a global scale. Education plays a central role in promoting holistic development, fostering peace, and driving social change. Women's education, in particular, is a cornerstone for a nation's progress. There is extensive evidence supporting the idea that educated women make substantial contributions to a country's advancement, and their role is particularly influential in shaping a nation's social and political development (World Bank, 2020). Recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by women and girls in education is fundamental to achieving gender equality and facilitating the overall development of societies.

Unfortunately, in developing countries like Pakistan, the higher education sector often remains significantly underfunded, despite the principle of equal educational opportunities for both boys and girls in industrialized nations. This underinvestment in education, especially in higher education, stands as one of the primary challenges faced by developing nations. It results in a dearth of highly educated and technically proficient women who could otherwise drive positive change in various sectors (Khan, 2019).

Pakistan, since its inception, has grappled with a multitude of issues within its education system, struggling to adequately meet the needs of its population. These challenges, including issues of access, quality, and gender disparities in education, have hindered the nation's progress (World Bank, 2020).

Education is a fundamental aspect of human existence, playing a pivotal role in enabling individuals, organizations, and nations to actualize their values and aspirations. To ensure the progress and development of society, it is imperative to guide the behaviors of diverse social groups, with education emerging as the central driving force in this endeavor. Within this context, institutions of higher education are often regarded as crucibles for individuals' intellectual and personal growth. A key objective for students in these institutions is to gain a profound understanding of the complexities of the real world (Schwartz, 2007).

Islam, with its foundational tenet of "education for all," embarked on a historic journey toward promoting widespread literacy. This commitment to education can be traced back to the first verse of the Quran, which marked the inception of a profound literacy drive. Encyclopedia Britannica highlights that Islam, more than any other faith, has elevated the significance of education, effectively democratizing access to knowledge (Muhibbu-Din, 2019).

The dearth of information can lead individuals towards atheism, a disposition where they may construct myths about the Divine and persuade others to venerate entities other than the Almighty. Both the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the Quran place a profound emphasis on the dissemination and acquisition of knowledge, as evidenced by numerous verses and teachings. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon every Muslim, as elucidated by the Holy Prophet (PBUH), to actively pursue knowledge (Chusna et al., 2020).

Within this context, the education of women is accorded significant importance, as it represents a pivotal juncture in the broader educational landscape of a family. The formative years of a child's life are often spent within the confines of traditional Pakistani households, where the maternal influence serves as the genesis of human education. The concept of basic education is widely entrenched as an inherent right, transcending gender boundaries, and is deemed as a birthright for all individuals (Malik & Courtney, 2011).

In rural areas of Pakistan, where access to formal education may be constrained, the establishment of community centers and mobile education units emerges as a vital strategy for providing education and support to young women (Mahmood et al., 2023). These initiatives extend their scope beyond traditional academic pursuits, also focusing on the promotion of vocational skills and entrepreneurial opportunities. By doing so, they enable young women to attain economic independence, thereby reducing their vulnerability to

violence. This multifaceted approach underscores the transformative potential of education in safeguarding the well-being and rights of young women.

The healthcare system plays a crucial role in addressing violence against young women, necessitating specialized attention. Yasin et al. (2023) emphasizes the importance of training medical professionals to identify signs of abuse and provide appropriate support to survivors. Moreover, healthcare facilities must prioritize confidentiality and sensitivity when handling cases of violence, as survivors often harbor fears of stigmatization and judgment. Despite notable progress in tackling violence against young women in Pakistan, formidable challenges persist.

The effective implementation and scalability of interventions in the battle against violence targeting young women in Pakistan are contingent upon partnerships between local organizations and government agencies. Such collaborations yield benefits including improved resource allocation, reduced redundancy, and enhanced outreach to marginalized communities (Javed & Khan, 2023). Government agencies, in addition to facilitating resource allocation, play a crucial role in supporting legislative reforms and advocating for policy changes.

Within this context, the justice system assumes a critical role in addressing violence against young women. To enhance its effectiveness, it is imperative to provide training for law enforcement officials, judges, and prosecutors, enhancing their comprehension of gender-based violence and the specific needs of survivors (Hussain & Riaz, 2023). The establishment of specialized courts and expedited procedures further ensures the expeditious and sensitive handling of cases concerning violence against young women.

In recent times, positive developments have emerged in public attitudes toward violence against women in Pakistan. These changes can be attributed to public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives that have contributed to reshaping societal norms and perceptions (Zia & Rasool, 2023). By leveraging the influence of media figures, celebrities, and role models, these campaigns extend their reach and foster a culture characterized by respect and empathy.

Nevertheless, the battle against violence targeting young women in Pakistan remains an ongoing endeavor. It is imperative for society to reject victim-blaming attitudes and,

instead, stand in solidarity with survivors, ensuring they are not silenced or stigmatized (Siddiqui & Khan, 2023). By fostering an environment where survivors feel supported and heard, the cycle of violence can be disrupted, empowering young women to seek justice and healing.

Violence against young women in Pakistan is a complex and deeply ingrained issue with significant consequences for individual lives and societal well-being. It demands a collective and sustained effort from all stakeholders, including the government, civil society, educators, healthcare professionals, media, and individuals, to create a culture of non-violence and gender equality. Through comprehensive interventions, awareness-raising, legal reforms, and targeted support, Pakistan can work towards a future where young women can live free from violence and discrimination, realizing their full potential as active and empowered members of society.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework aims to explore violence against young women in Pakistan through the lens of intersectionality theory. Intersectionality theory emphasizes the interconnected nature of multiple social categories, such as gender, race, class, and religion, and how they intersect to shape an individual's experiences and social position. By applying intersectionality theory to the study of violence against young women in Pakistan, we seek to understand the complex dynamics that contribute to their vulnerability and experiences of violence.

2.2.1 Application of Intersectionality theory

The idea of intersectionality, first presented by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s, contends that people encounter privilege and discrimination because of the intersections of several social identities, including race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. This idea was presented by Crenshaw in order to draw attention to the cumulative and overlapping consequences of many types of discrimination, with a particular emphasis on the unique experiences that these intersections provide for those who are marginalized. This theory, which emphasizes that traditional approaches to social justice frequently ignore the nuanced ways in which multiple social identities interact, evolved from critical race theory and feminist theory.

The identification of several social identities and their interconnectedness are among the key tenets of intersectionality theory. It asserts that a person's experience of privilege or discrimination cannot be adequately explained by a single group, such as gender or ethnicity. Rather, the intersection of these categories results in a multifaceted matrix of benefits and drawbacks that influence a person's social experience. Given that social identities can interact differently in a variety of social, cultural, and historical settings, intersectionality theory also emphasizes the significance of context.

Important factors to take into account when using intersectionality theory to violence against women are geographical variations, socioeconomic position, ethnicity, and religion. While ethnicity and religion can determine cultural norms and behaviors connected to gender roles and violence, socioeconomic position can affect how people are able to access resources and opportunities. Regional variations may impact the accessibility of legal safeguards and support services. Through the analysis of these interrelated elements, scholars may get a thorough comprehension of the diverse experiences of violence faced by women from various backgrounds, resulting in more efficient and all-encompassing interventions and policies.

Intersectionality theory recognizes that an individual's experiences cannot be understood solely through a single social category. In the context of violence against young women in Pakistan, intersectionality acknowledges that gender alone is not sufficient to explain the variations and nuances of violence experienced by young women. Instead, the theory suggests that factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, and regional differences intersect with gender to shape the experiences of violence.

Violence against young women in Pakistan is a multifaceted issue influenced by various intersecting factors. Intersectionality theory helps to identify and analyze these factors, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. It recognizes that young women from different backgrounds may experience violence differently due to their unique intersections of identities and social positions (Ahmad & Sarwar, 2020).

Socioeconomic status is a significant determinant of vulnerability to violence. Intersectionality theory suggests that young women from marginalized socioeconomic backgrounds may face heightened risks of violence due to limited access to resources and opportunities (Hassan et al., 2018). The theory helps to examine how economic disparities intersect with gender to shape young women's experiences of violence in Pakistan.

Religion plays a crucial role in shaping social norms and practices, which can contribute to violence against young women. Intersectionality theory helps to explore how religious beliefs and practices intersect with gender to create specific forms of violence. For example, young women from minority religious groups may face unique challenges and forms of violence compared to those from the dominant religious group (Niazi & Waseem, 2022).

Culture plays a significant role in shaping attitudes, beliefs, and norms surrounding gender roles and violence. Intersectionality theory helps to examine how cultural practices intersect with gender, contributing to violence against young women (Ali, 2021). By understanding the cultural context in which violence occurs, this framework can shed light on the interplay between cultural factors and gender-based violence in Pakistan.

Geographic location can influence young women's experiences of violence due to variations in cultural norms, legal frameworks, and accessibility to support services. Intersectionality theory allows for an exploration of how geographic location intersects with gender to shape the patterns and dynamics of violence against young women across different regions in Pakistan (Ahmad, 2014).

Applying intersectionality theory to the study of violence against young women in Pakistan provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex dynamics at play. By examining the intersections of gender with various social categories, such as socioeconomic status, religion, culture, and geographic location, this framework enhances our understanding of the multifaceted nature of violence against young women (Zaman, 2022). It emphasizes the need for tailored interventions and policies that address the specific challenges faced by young women with diverse intersecting identities in Pakistan, ultimately working towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

2.2.2 Application of empowerment theory

The idea behind women's empowerment theory is to give them the authority to take charge of their life and make decisions that will impact both their own and their communities' well-being. Its main goals are to increase women's autonomy, give them access to resources, and acknowledge their accomplishments. In addition to focusing on personal development,

empowerment also entails confronting and altering institutional and societal frameworks that support gender inequity.

Notable academics with a wealth of writing on women's empowerment include Srilatha Batliwala, Amartya Sen, and Naila Kabeer. Amartya Sen makes a key contribution to the empowerment debate with his capacity approach, which focuses on enhancing individuals' skills to attain the life they value. The work of Srilatha Batliwala highlights the significance of group activity in attaining empowerment as well as the grassroots mobilization of women. The understanding and implementation of empowerment theory have been significantly influenced by Naila Kabeer's substantial study on gender, poverty, and social exclusion.

Prominent gender and development expert Naila Kabeer has made a substantial contribution to the theoretical underpinnings of women's empowerment. According to Kabeer's definition of empowerment in her seminal work "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment," empowerment is the growth of an individual's capacity to make wise decisions in life when it was previously unavailable to them. The author highlights three interconnected aspects of empowerment, namely: accomplishments, agency, and resources.

1. **Resources:** According to Kabeer, resources encompass not only financial assets but also social and human resources like social networks, education, and skill sets. These resources are essential in giving women the tools they need to exercise agency and accomplish their goals.
2. **Agency:** The capacity to identify and carry out one's goals is referred to in this dimension. It includes the ability to make decisions as well as the ability to bring about desired results. Agency is the result of both individual and group efforts that question existing power structures and bring about revolutionary change.
3. **Achievements:** Using resources and exerting agency result in achievements. They demonstrate the degree to which women's well-considered decisions pay off in the form of increased engagement in public life, better social standing, and overall well-being.

The framework developed by Kabeer emphasizes that empowerment is a process as well as a result. It entails altering the power dynamics that limit women's agency and access to resources, as well as creating an atmosphere that is supportive of women's decisions and activities. Her strategy highlights how empowerment differs across various social, cultural, and economic contexts and is context-specific.

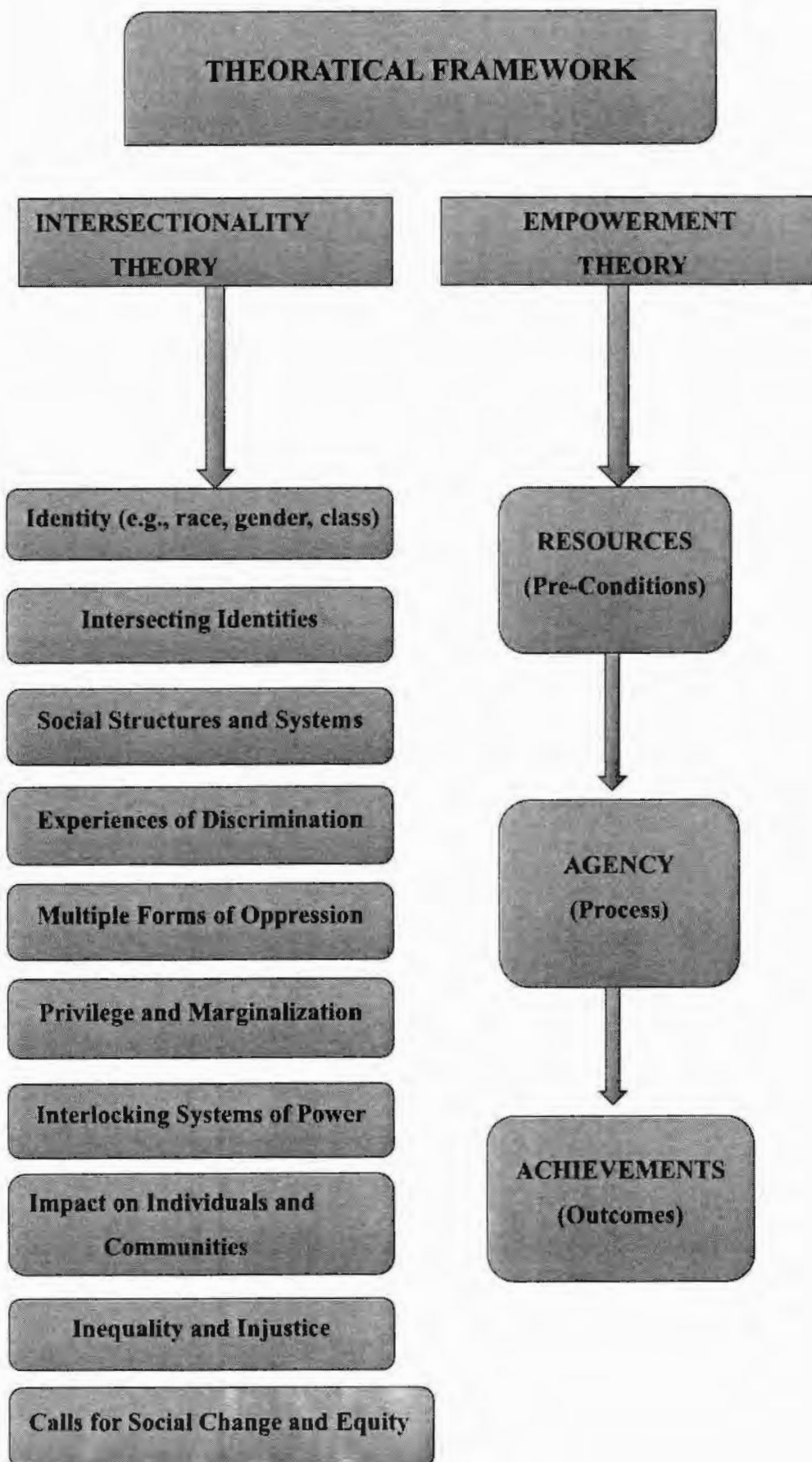
Applying Naila Kabeer's empowerment theory is particularly relevant when addressing the issue of violence against young women in Pakistan (Kabeer, 1999). Kabeer's framework highlights the significance of agency, resources, and achievements in promoting gender equality and reducing violence. In this context, empowering young women with the ability to make informed choices and assert their rights is crucial (Kabeer, 1999). Educational and awareness programs can be effective tools in informing young women about their rights and options when facing violence.

Access to resources, as emphasized in Kabeer's theory, is another essential aspect in the context of Pakistan (Kabeer, 1999). Economic dependency and limited access to economic opportunities can increase young women's vulnerability to violence. Empowerment initiatives should focus on providing skills training and creating job opportunities to promote economic independence (Kabeer, 1999). Additionally, social resources, such as support networks and community solidarity, play a vital role in addressing violence against young women (Kabeer, 1999). Programs that raise community awareness and provide support for survivors can empower young women to seek help and protection.

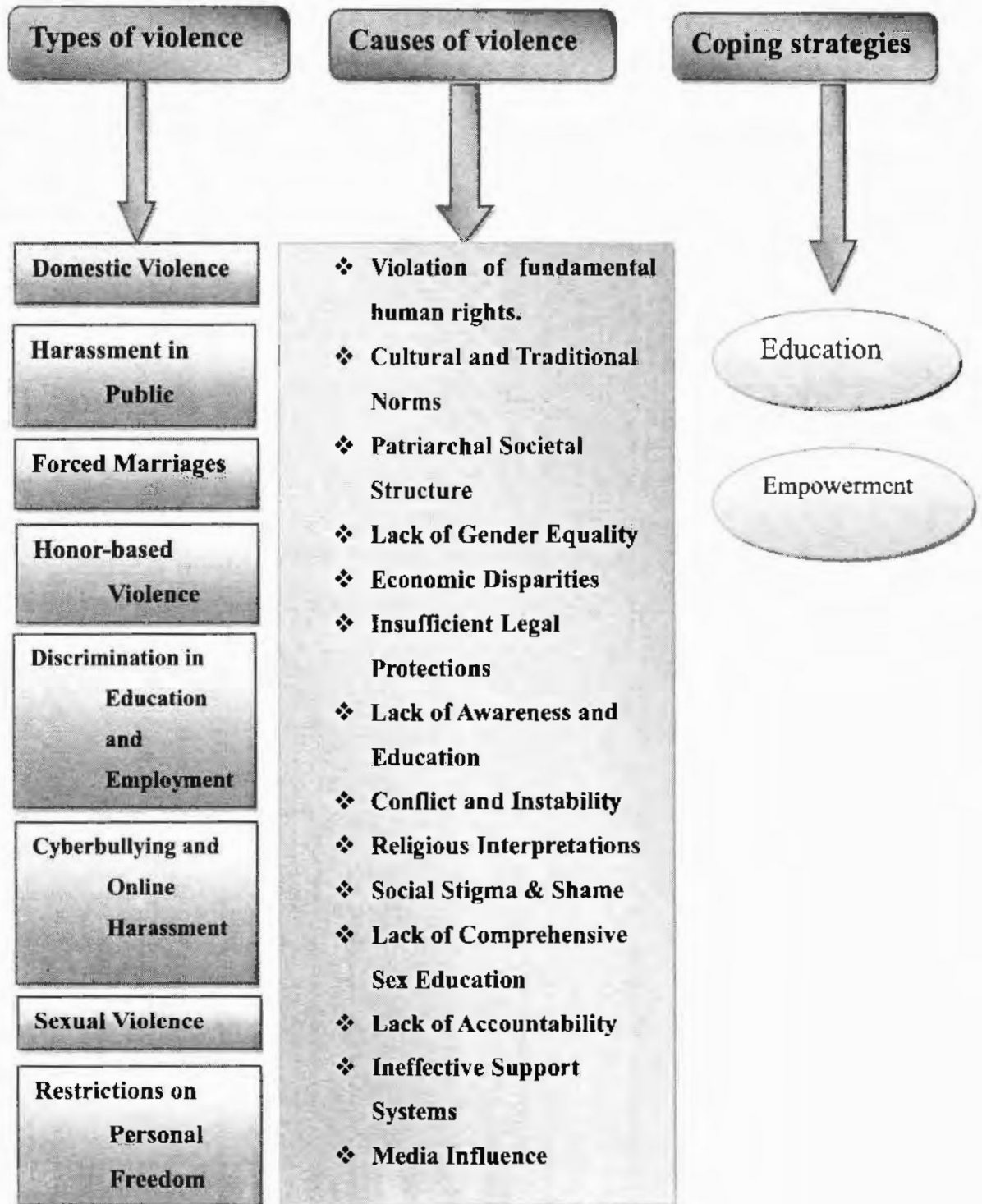
Recognizing and valuing the achievements of young women is a central component of Kabeer's empowerment theory (Kabeer, 1999). In Pakistan, gender norms often devalue the contributions of women, which can perpetuate violence and discrimination. Empowerment efforts should challenge these norms by highlighting the achievements of young women in various domains, such as education, work, and community leadership (Kabeer, 1999). Recognizing their accomplishments can boost self-esteem and reduce the likelihood of violence.

In conclusion, applying Naila Kabeer's empowerment theory to the issue of violence against young women in Pakistan offers a comprehensive approach to addressing this critical problem (Kabeer, 1999). By focusing on agency, resources, and achievements, initiatives can empower young women to assert their rights, access resources, and challenge harmful gender

norms. These strategies have the potential to reduce violence and create a more equitable and safer environment for young women in Pakistan.



Conceptual Framework



3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to investigate and understand the phenomenon of violence against young women in Pakistan. By utilizing qualitative research methods, this study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the experiences, perceptions, and social factors contributing to violence against young women.

3.1 Research Design

In order to provide a comprehensive knowledge of young women's experiences and perspectives about violence, this study used a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research emphasizes actual experiences and subjective interpretations, making it possible to explore intricate social issues. I researched the real-life experiences of young girls who were victims of violence in Pakistan. In order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and viewpoints of young women in Pakistan who have experienced violence, this study used a qualitative research methodology. I employed a variety of techniques to accomplish this, including participant observation in shelter houses to see interactions and support systems, and in-depth interviews with survivors to provide detailed personal experiences. After that, themes within the gathered data were found and examined using thematic analysis, which guaranteed a thorough comprehension of the problem. Together, these techniques sought to convey the complex experiences of young women and offer perceptions into the social and cultural forces shaping their lives.

3.2 Procedure

The goal of this qualitative study was to comprehend the experiences of fifteen teenage girls who were victims of violence in Islamabad. Convenient and snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit participants in conjunction with nearby NGOs and shelter facilities. Additional insights were supplied by key informants, which included advocates for women's rights and legal professionals.

The research team gained informed consent from participants by approaching them through Ministry of Human Rights NGOs and shelter homes, outlining the goal of the study. To gather in-depth personal narratives and professional insights, standardized interview guides were used for the in-depth interviews. Focus groups with survivors and support groups were arranged in secure settings to promote candid communication and pinpoint recurring

themes. Additional background on everyday reality and support mechanisms was obtained through participant observation in shelter houses.

Thematic analysis was used to examine information gathered from focus groups, interviews, and observations. To guarantee an in-depth comprehension of the participants' experiences, this procedure comprised getting acquainted with the data, coding, and theme creation. By capturing the complex and varied experiences of young women in Pakistan who are victims of violence, these techniques hope to provide important insights into the social and cultural processes at work.

3.3 Population

The population selected for this study is the 15 young girls who faced violence in Islamabad. The sample comprised young women who have experienced violence and are receiving support from NGOs and shelter homes across Islamabad.

3.4 Sampling

Convenient sampling/ Snow ball sampling technique is used to select participants who have experienced violence. Ministry of Human rights helped finding shelter homes and gave the consent to perform research.

3.5 Instruments

In-depth interviews conducted to comprise of their life histories and experiences of violence.

3.6 Data Collection

In this research, a structured interview guide was employed to gather data from the interviewees. Below is a detailed explanation of the research instruments used, the data collection process, and the development of these instruments.es.

Development of Research Instruments:

The development of the structured interview guide began with an extensive review of existing literature on violence against women. This review helped identify key themes,

common issues, and gaps in the current research, which informed the design of the interview questions.

Consultations with experts in the field of gender studies and qualitative research were conducted to refine the interview guide. These experts provided valuable insights into the formulation of questions to ensure they were culturally appropriate and capable of eliciting in-depth responses.

Before the final implementation, the interview guide was pilot-tested with a small group of participants. This process helped identify any ambiguities or difficulties in the questions, allowing for necessary revisions to improve clarity and effectiveness.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face in a safe and private setting to ensure the comfort and confidentiality of the participants. Each interview was recorded with the participant's consent and later transcribed for analysis.

3.7 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is used in this research for data analysis. Thematic analysis, as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), is a widely utilized qualitative research method that involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes or patterns within a dataset. The process begins with familiarization with the qualitative data, which includes thoroughly reading and becoming acquainted with transcripts, field notes, interview recordings, or any other relevant sources.

The next step in the thematic analysis is the initial coding stage. Researchers systematically label or tag relevant sections of the data with descriptive codes. These codes can take the form of words, phrases, or short sentences that capture the meaning of the content.

Once a substantial portion of the data has been coded, the process moves to generating initial themes. At this stage, the researcher reviews the codes and starts identifying potential broader patterns or concepts that emerge from the coded data. The focus is on finding similarities, connections, and recurring ideas that may suggest underlying themes.

Reviewing and refining themes follows as the researcher compares the initial themes with the coded data. This step involves ensuring that the themes fit together coherently and

represent meaningful and distinct aspects of the data. It may be necessary to combine, split, or discard themes to accurately reflect the data.

Clear definitions and names are provided for each finalized theme. The researcher writes concise descriptions of what each theme represents and gives each theme a clear and informative name that captures its essence.

To facilitate understanding of the relationships between themes, a thematic map or diagram is created. This visualization aids in comprehending how the identified themes relate to each other and contribute to the overall narrative of the data. In the subsequent step, a comprehensive narrative is written to present the findings of the thematic analysis. This narrative includes relevant quotes or excerpts from the data that support each theme. The goal is to ensure that the narrative is coherent, logical, and effectively conveys the essence of the themes.

Reviewing and refining the analysis is essential to ensure its accuracy, clarity, and rigor. Seeking feedback from peers or experts in qualitative research can enhance the credibility of the findings.

Finally, the researcher finalizes the report, which typically includes an introduction, methodology, findings section with the identified themes and supporting quotes, and a discussion or interpretation of the themes. Thematic analysis is an iterative process, and researchers may need to revisit earlier steps as they progress through the analysis to maintain a systematic and rigorous approach, ultimately ensuring the validity and reliability of their findings.

3.7 Ethical Considerations:

During this study on violence against young women in Islamabad, strict ethical guidelines were adhered to ensure the safety, dignity, and rights of participants. Informed consent was obtained, emphasizing voluntary participation and providing comprehensive information about the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using pseudonyms and securely storing data. To minimize harm, sensitive topics were approached with care, and participants were informed about available support services. The research aimed to maximize benefits by contributing to the understanding of violence against young women and informing effective interventions. Respect for participants' autonomy was upheld,

allowing them to withdraw at any time and refuse to answer any questions. Cultural sensitivity was ensured by respecting the social and cultural contexts of the participants. The research received ethical approval and oversight from an ethics committee, and participants were debriefed post-interview to address any concerns and mitigate distress. These ethical considerations were essential in maintaining the integrity and success of the research.

4 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The organization of this chapter aims to offer a thorough examination of the participants' personal stories with a particular emphasis on their encounters with violence. This chapter offers a thorough analysis of fifteen different life tales, each with its own special circumstances and points of view. After these accounts, a thematic analysis is carried out to find and examine recurring themes in the stories told by the participants. The more general trends and social dynamics affecting their experiences are shown by this investigation.

This chapter's three-to-four-page discussion section connects the major themes found in the thematic analysis with previously published works. The first part of this section goes into the theories—intersectionality and empowerment theory, in particular—that served as the study's inspiration. These ideas offer a prism through which to view the complex dynamics of violence against Pakistani youth. The theory of intersectionality emphasizes the ways in which several social categories—like gender, financial class, and religion—intersect to influence how each person experiences violence. Empowerment theory places a strong emphasis on the role that accomplishments, resources, and agency play in escaping repressive environments.

Every major theme found in the thematic analysis is linked to earlier studies in the discussion, providing a thorough grasp of the problem. This method highlights the study's contributions to the area while also placing the findings within the larger academic conversation. The chapter ends with a discussion of how these discoveries can influence laws and other initiatives meant to stop violence against Pakistani youth.

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

4.1 LIFE HISTORY: Respondent 1

The narrative centers on respondent 1, a woman who has faced significant challenges in her life, particularly in her marriages. She's, a resident of Islamabad with roots in Punjab, shares her life story, detailing her upbringing, marriages, family dynamics, and struggles. She shares her experiences of being cheated on by her first husband and then enduring abuse and addiction issues with her second husband. Despite these hardships, she demonstrates resilience and determination to protect herself and her daughter from further harm.

Marriage and Relationships

1st Marriage

Respondent 1 recounts her first marriage with a mixture of nostalgia and regret. She describes her initial happiness and the sense of freedom she felt before marriage, reminiscing about carefree days spent exploring the world around her. *"My life was super fun before marriage,"* she recalls, emphasizing the stark contrast between her pre-marital freedom and the challenges she faced afterward. Despite her fond memories of her early life, Respondent 1 acknowledges that problems arose once she entered into marriage.

As she delves into the details of her first marriage, Respondent 1 reveals a deep sense of betrayal and hurt. She recounts how her husband, whom she describes as kind and hardworking, ultimately succumbed to temptation and betrayed her trust. *"He was my cousin, and he was, unlike him, a very hardworking, religious, and kind person,"* she reflects, highlighting the disillusionment she experienced upon discovering his infidelity. Respondent 1 narrative is tinged with sadness as she reflects on the loss of what she once believed to be a happy family.

Despite the pain of her husband's betrayal, Respondent 1 grapples with feelings of guilt and regret over the dissolution of her first marriage. She wonders whether she could have done more to salvage the relationship, lamenting the impulsive decisions she made in the heat of the moment. *"Now I regret my decision to leave my first husband,"* she admits, acknowledging the complexity of her emotions. Respondent 1 reflection on her first marriage highlight the nuanced nature of human relationships, underscoring the difficulty of navigating love, trust, and forgiveness in the face of betrayal.

Throughout her narrative, Respondent 1 resilience shines through as she confronts the pain of her past and seeks to rebuild her life. Despite the heartbreak of her first marriage, she remains determined to protect herself and her daughter from further harm. *"My daughter is my everything,"* she asserts, emphasizing her commitment to providing a better future for her child. Rukhsana's story serves as a poignant reminder of the strength of the human spirit and the capacity for healing and growth, even in the face of adversity.

2nd Marriage

Respondent 1 recounts her second marriage with a mixture of regret and resilience. She describes meeting her second husband while working as a security guard at a mall, initially finding solace in their relationship. However, tragedy struck when her husband was involved in a bike accident, leaving him injured and unable to work. This event marked the beginning of their downward spiral.

She recalls her husband's descent into drug addiction following the accident, which had a devastating impact on their marriage. *"He started taking drugs and became hedonistic,"* Respondent 1 recalls, highlighting how his addiction led to financial strain and emotional turmoil. She recounts how he would sell household essentials to fund his habit, leaving them without basic necessities.

As her husband's addiction worsened, so did the abuse she endured. *"After coming back from work every day, I find him drunk,"* she says, detailing the cycle of violence and manipulation she experienced. She describes instances where her husband would beat her mercilessly, leaving her physically and emotionally scarred.

Despite the abuse, Respondent 1 initially hesitated to leave her husband due to societal stigma and fear of judgment. *"I was compromising on everything,"* she reflects, illustrating the internal struggle she faced in balancing her safety with societal expectations. However, she ultimately found the strength to leave for the sake of herself and her daughter.

"I am still thankful to Allah for giving me the courage to leave home along with my daughter," Respondent 1 admits, expressing gratitude for the shelter home that provided safety and support during her darkest moments. She acknowledges the challenges of rebuilding her life as a single mother but remains determined to prioritize her daughter's well-being above all else.

Through her story, Respondent 1 highlights the pervasive impact of addiction and domestic violence on individuals and families. She serves as a testament to the resilience of survivors and the importance of seeking help and support in times of crisis. *"Nobody should marry a person who is addicted to drugs,"* she asserts, imparting a powerful message about the importance of recognizing and addressing red flags in relationships.

Family

Respondent 1 relationship with her family is a complex and evolving aspect of her narrative. Initially, her family, particularly her brother, expressed disapproval and frustration regarding her decisions, especially her second marriage. Respondent 1 mentions, *"My brother used to get so angry at me that people will say that my sister loves doing marriages or that she wants to do a third marriage."*

Despite the initial resistance, there is a notable transformation in her family's understanding and support. Respondent 1 reflects on this shift, stating, *"But now he is a bit calm, as my mother told him that he was the wrong person, a drug addict; it's not your sister's fault."* This evolution in her brother's perspective suggests a growing awareness within her family about the challenges Respondent 1 faced and the necessity of her decisions for her and her daughter's safety.

Respondent 1 also acknowledges the support she currently receives from her family, particularly her mother and brother. *"Now my brother is supporting me too. When I see girls whose parents and family are not supporting them, I feel bad, as I have this perk at least."* This newfound support contrasts with the initial resistance, highlighting the importance of open communication and understanding within familial relationships.

Moreover, Respondent 1 emphasizes the pivotal role her mother plays in her life, stating, *"My mother is visiting me over here; she brought groceries (milk and fruits) for me as well as my brother. Now my brother is supporting me too."* This suggests a source of strength and comfort for Respondent 1, reinforcing the significance of familial bonds during challenging times.

While her relationship with her family undergoes transformations, Respondent 1 focus remains on ensuring a stable future for her daughter. She shares, *"I am happy that at least I have my mother on earth, where I can go anytime."* This sentiment underscores the importance of family as a sanctuary and support system, especially when faced with the trials that Respondent 1 has encountered throughout her life.

Violence & Abuse

Respondent 1 story is marked by a harrowing narrative of abuse and violence, both physical and emotional, inflicted upon her by her second husband. Throughout her recounting, she provides poignant insights into the traumatic experiences she endured:

Physical Abuse: Respondent 1 vividly describes instances of physical violence perpetrated against her by her second husband. She recounts, *"He used to throw anything coming his way at me,"* highlighting the random and unpredictable nature of the violence she faced. She further reveals that, *"Now my whole body is full of stitches,"* indicating the severity of the injuries inflicted upon her.

Emotional Abuse: In addition to physical violence, Respondent 1 grapples with emotional abuse and manipulation. She shares, *"He used to beat me this much, only slaps sometimes or small fights,"* illustrating the cycle of abuse characterized by intermittent periods of calm followed by outbursts of violence. Furthermore, she laments, *"He started doubting my character... I was not comfortable with this thing,"* underscoring the erosion of trust and the psychological toll of unfounded accusations.

Impact on Mental Health: Respondent 1 candidly reflects on the profound impact of the abuse on her mental health, stating, *"Due to all these scenarios in my life, I went into depression, and my mental health got disturbed very badly."* She acknowledges the struggle to cope with the trauma, admitting, *"I treated myself more than medicines,"* highlighting the resilience and self-reliance required to navigate the aftermath of abuse.

Cycle of Abuse: Despite attempts to leave the abusive relationship, Respondent 1 reveals the cyclical nature of abuse, stating, *"I used to leave him and go to my mother's home. Then he used to come behind me, take me back, and do the same things again."* This pattern underscores the complexities of leaving an abusive partner and the challenges survivors face in breaking free from the cycle of violence.

Through her narrative, Respondent 1 sheds light on the insidious nature of abuse and violence within intimate relationships. Her story serves as a poignant reminder of the urgent need for support, resources, and systemic interventions to address domestic violence and empower survivors to seek safety and healing.

Gender Dynamics

Respondent 1 first marriage reflects the influence of cultural expectations, particularly concerning fidelity and loyalty within marital relationships. Her revelation of her first husband's secret second marriage highlights the societal pressures on women to endure such situations quietly. As she recounts, *"I caught him. Then I left him and told him to stay with the*

second wife. I can't live my life with a man who is cheating on me and married to someone else while being with me."

In her second marriage, Respondent 1 grapples with the consequences of her husband's drug addiction, which exacerbates power imbalances and further intensifies the gender dynamics in their relationship. The addiction becomes a catalyst for domestic violence, leading Respondent 1 to a breaking point where she seeks refuge in a shelter home. *"Now my whole body is full of stitches. He used to throw anything coming his way at me,"* she states, providing a visceral account of the physical toll of gender-based violence.

Respondent 1 decision to leave her second husband and prioritize her daughter's safety reflects her agency in challenging traditional gender roles. Her resolve is evident as she asserts, *"I am still strongly standing by my decision for the sake of my own and my daughter's safety and wellbeing."* This choice signifies her rejection of societal expectations that often pressure women to endure abusive relationships for the sake of family honor.

Despite the challenges, Respondent 1 story also portrays a transformative journey towards empowerment. Her newfound determination to rebuild her life and protect her daughter illustrates resilience in the face of gendered adversity. *"I will never marry again. I am scared of marriage now. The first marriage deceived me, and the second broke all the limits of destruction. Now I hate man-made creatures. I will never marry again,"* she emphatically declares, signaling a departure from societal norms that may have once dictated her path.

Through Respondent 1 narrative, we witness the intricate interplay of cultural expectations, societal norms, and individual agency in navigating the complex terrain of gender dynamics. Her story becomes a testament to the strength required to challenge traditional roles and forge a path towards self-determination and independence.

Resilience and Empowerment

Respondent 1 story epitomizes resilience and empowerment in the face of overwhelming adversity. Despite enduring betrayal, abuse, and addiction in her marriages, she demonstrates remarkable strength and determination to protect herself and her daughter.

In her own words, Respondent 1 reflects on her journey with resilience: *"I treated myself more than medicines... I told myself that I would live my life on my own... I would keep in touch with kids and earn for them."* Despite the deep wounds inflicted by her past experiences, she refuses to succumb to despair, choosing instead to forge her path forward with unwavering resolve.

Throughout her narrative, Respondent 1 takes proactive steps to assert her independence and rebuild her life. She seeks help from a shelter home, despite the societal stigma surrounding divorce and single motherhood. She acknowledges her own agency, stating, *"I have the courage to stop bad things, bad humans, and problems coming my way."*

Respondent 1 determination to provide for her daughter's future is evident in her commitment to education and self-sufficiency. She prioritizes her daughter's well-being above all else, declaring, *"My daughter is everything for me... I want her to study... I will teach her how to survive in our society and make things easy for her."*

In the face of criticism and judgment from others, Respondent 1 remains steadfast in her convictions. She refuses to be defined by societal expectations or the opinions of others, asserting, *"I want to live freely now... Nobody should marry a person who is addicted to drugs... A normal man can make his life."*

Respondent 1 story serves as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the power of self-determination. Through her journey, she emerges as a symbol of empowerment, inspiring others to confront their own challenges with courage and conviction.

Overall, the narrative provides a comprehensive understanding of Respondent 1 experiences, highlighting the complexities of her life and the societal factors that shape her circumstances. It underscores the importance of empathy, support, and empowerment in addressing the challenges faced by women in similar situations. Through her experiences of marital turmoil, domestic abuse, and financial instability, she emerges as a symbol of strength and determination. Her journey highlights the intersectionality of gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural norms in shaping women's lives. Despite the hardships she faces, Respondent 1 story is a testament to the power of resilience, support, and self-determination. As she navigates through legal proceedings, seeks refuge in a shelter home, and reflects on her past decisions, Respondent 1 embodies the capacity for healing and empowerment. Her

unwavering commitment to her daughter's well-being and her own independence serves as an inspiration, reminding us of the importance of empathy, solidarity, and advocacy in supporting women like her on their journey towards self-fulfillment and empowerment.

4.3 LIFE HISTORY: Respondent 2

The narrative provided offers a poignant glimpse into the life of a young woman from Chakwal, grappling with societal norms, familial pressures, and the pursuit of education and autonomy. Amidst the backdrop of a rural village with limited educational opportunities and entrenched gender roles, the respondent recounts her journey to Islamabad in search of support and opportunity. Her narrative reflects the complex interplay of societal expectations, familial dynamics, and personal aspirations, highlighting the resilience and determination required to navigate challenges and forge a path towards self-improvement and empowerment. Through her account, themes of education, gender, family, and hope emerge, providing valuable insight into the experiences of marginalized individuals striving for a better future.

Seeking Education and Support:

Seeking education and support amidst societal constraints, the young woman from Chakwal reflects on her journey with a mixture of determination and uncertainty. She recounts, *"I wanted to study very badly,"* highlighting her fervent desire for education despite the challenges in her village. Recognizing the limitations of her local education system, she sought assistance from relatives, recalling, *"We asked our uncle for help."* Her decision to relocate to Islamabad was fueled by hope and opportunity, as she remembers being told, *"She helps girls with their education, keeps them at her home, and feeds them."* Despite the daunting transition to city life, she embraced the chance to pursue her dreams, affirming, *"I came to Islamabad thinking of it as a big city full of opportunities."* Through her narrative, it becomes evident that her pursuit of education is not just about personal advancement but also about challenging societal norms and realizing her potential against all odds.

Transition to Urban Life

Transitioning from her rural village to the bustling city of Islamabad, the respondent experiences a whirlwind of emotions and challenges. She reflects, *"I feel like I am all alone on my own; I don't have anyone with me over here except Allah."* The unfamiliarity of city

life compounds her feelings of isolation and uncertainty, as she admits, *"I have never been to this big city or any other before, as I am from a small village."* Despite the daunting nature of her new surroundings, she finds solace in the support of the woman who took her in, acknowledging, *"She helped me a lot; she gave me room in her home; and she kept me safe from every difficulty."* This juxtaposition of fear and gratitude encapsulates her complex journey of adaptation and resilience in navigating the urban landscape.

Support System and Challenges

The respondent finds solace in the support system provided by a woman in Islamabad, who offers guidance and material assistance. Reflecting on her initial encounter, she recalls, *"She bought me books and other essentials for living and sent me over here."* This act of kindness underscores the importance of tangible support in her journey towards education and independence. Despite the generosity, she grapples with the challenges inherent in her new environment. Expressing her struggles with education, she laments, *"I need proper tutoring... The staff over here is all educated women's around... The doctor, ma'am, is very generous and helps me study a lot. But how much can she help me with her job?"* This quote encapsulates her longing for academic support beyond what is currently available, highlighting the limitations she faces in achieving her educational goals. Despite the support system's presence, the respondent faces significant obstacles, reflecting the complex interplay between support and challenges in her pursuit of a better future.

Emotional and Psychological Struggles

The narrative delves into the emotional and psychological struggles of the young woman as she grapples with the challenges of her circumstances. She articulates her feelings of loneliness and isolation, expressing, *"I feel like I am all alone on my own; I don't have anyone with me over here except Allah."* This sense of solitude is compounded by her unfamiliarity with the bustling urban environment, as she reflects, *"I have never been to this big city or any other before, as I am from a small village."* Homesickness and longing for her family weigh heavily on her mind, as she describes, *"I start thinking of my family. I will start missing them."* The pressure to perform academically amidst distractions and societal expectations adds to her anxiety, evident in her admission, *"I get nervous about things easily while thinking absurdly."* Despite her resolve to persevere, doubts and regrets about past decisions linger, as she confesses, *"I feel guilty and regret that I should have completed my*

second year from there." These sentiments paint a poignant picture of her inner turmoil as she navigates the complexities of her situation, striving to maintain hope and resilience in the face of adversity.

Future Aspirations and Coping Mechanisms

In the face of daunting challenges and societal pressures, the respondent exhibits remarkable resilience and determination, encapsulated by her unwavering aspirations for the future. She fervently expresses her resolve, stating, *"I will complete my second year, and after that, I will start a job through which I can make myself financially stable."* Despite the uncertainties surrounding her path, she remains steadfast in her faith and conviction, affirming, *"I am hopeful that [Allah] will ease every situation for me. Insha'Allah."* Amidst the emotional turmoil and isolation, she experiences, she clings to the belief that better days lie ahead, reflecting, *"But now I am hopeful and satisfied that if I am here, I am here for a good and big reason, and I need to find that. And I will do that."* Despite the challenges ahead, her determination to forge her own path and uplift her family underscores her resilience and inner strength.

Societal Pressures and Gender Dynamics

Societal pressures and gender dynamics weigh heavily on the respondent, shaping her experiences and choices. She reflects on the limitations imposed by her community, stating, *"In our society, they do not understand the feelings of females; everything we do becomes a matter of respect and life or death."* This sentiment underscores the suffocating expectations placed upon women, where decisions regarding education, marriage, and autonomy are fraught with judgment and consequence. She further laments, *"To keep their own dignity high, they manipulate and underrate the girls,"* highlighting the pervasive sexism and disregard for female agency prevalent in her community. These quotes encapsulate the pervasive gender inequalities and societal norms that constrain her aspirations and freedom, emphasizing the need to challenge entrenched patriarchal structures to enable women's empowerment and autonomy.

Perceptions of Urban Spaces and Support Structures

The respondent's perceptions of urban spaces and support structures reflect a mixture of hope, uncertainty, and reliance on faith. She expresses initial optimism about opportunities

in Islamabad, stating, *"I came to Islamabad thinking of it as a big city full of opportunities."* However, this optimism is tempered by the challenges she faces in navigating the unfamiliar urban environment, as she mentions *"I don't know anyone here, and I have no idea how things work over here."* Despite these challenges, she finds solace in the support provided by the woman in Islamabad, acknowledging, *"I found good people on my journey as well, like this auntie. She helped me a lot."* This indicates a sense of gratitude towards the support structures she encounters in the city, despite her struggles. Overall, her perceptions highlight both the allure and complexities of urban life, as well as the importance of supportive relationships in navigating unfamiliar terrain.

The narrative analysis of the respondent's journey unveils a profound tale of resilience, determination, and the complexities of societal expectations. Through her poignant recounting, we witness the arduous path she traverses, from the limitations imposed by her rural upbringing to the daunting challenges of urban life. Her quest for education and independence is met with both encouragement and obstacles, reflecting broader societal dynamics that constrain women's autonomy and opportunities. Yet, amidst the struggles, there shines a beacon of hope – her unwavering faith, the support of empathetic individuals, and her steadfast resolve to carve a better future for herself and her family. The narrative not only underscores the profound impact of societal norms and gender dynamics but also celebrates the resilience and agency of individuals striving to defy these constraints. It serves as a poignant reminder of the transformative power of education, the importance of supportive networks, and the indomitable spirit of those determined to forge their own path, regardless of the challenges they face.

LIFE HISTORY: Respondent 3

The life history of Respondent 3 provides a poignant and harrowing account of the challenges faced by a young woman trapped in a cycle of forced marriage, domestic abuse, and familial pressure. Born into a complex family dynamic, Respondent 3's early life was marked by tragedy and dependence following the loss of her father. Her mother's decision to arrange her marriage to a cousin, motivated by a desire for security and support, thrust her into a tumultuous relationship characterized by substance addiction and violence. Through her narrative, we witness the profound impact of societal expectations, familial obligations, and gender norms on her life trajectory. Despite enduring years of abuse and isolation, Respondent 3's resilience shines through as she strives for independence and a better future

for herself and her children. This analysis delves into the key themes and implications of Respondent 3's story, shedding light on the urgent need for support systems and resources to empower individuals facing similar circumstances.

Forced Marriage and Family Dynamics:

Forced marriage and complex family dynamics emerge as central themes in Respondent 3's life history, illustrating the profound impact of familial obligations and societal pressures on individual autonomy and well-being. Despite her own desires and aspirations, Respondent 3 found herself entangled in a marriage arranged by her mother, driven by a need for security and support after the loss of her father. Reflecting on this, she laments, *"It wasn't my choice,"* highlighting the lack of agency she had in determining her own life path. The familial dynamics further complicated her situation, as she navigated relationships with step-siblings from both her parents' previous marriages. This intricate web of familial connections shaped her experiences and decisions, ultimately leading to a marriage with a cousin whom she scarcely knew. As she recalls, *"My mother found a boy for me... she wanted someone to marry me and get settled with us in our home."* This quote encapsulates the transactional nature of the marriage, emphasizing the familial expectation for the husband to provide support and stability within the household. However, the reality of the situation soon became apparent as Respondent 3 discovered that her husband was a drug addict, plunging her into a cycle of abuse and dependency. Despite her mother's intentions, the forced marriage only served to perpetuate her vulnerability and exacerbate her hardships, highlighting the detrimental consequences of familial pressure and societal norms.

Domestic Abuse and Violence

Domestic abuse and violence permeate Respondent 3's narrative, casting a long shadow over her life and well-being. From the outset of her forced marriage, she found herself ensnared in a cycle of physical and emotional torment inflicted by her husband, compounded by his addiction to drugs. Describing her ordeal, she recounts, *"After marriage, we got to know that he was addicted to drugs from the very start... He started hitting me at home with every small argument."* The abuse extended beyond her to her blind mother, who also bore the brunt of her son-in-law's violent outbursts. *"If my mother says something to stop us, he slaps her as well and beats her too,"* she reveals, underscoring the pervasive nature of the violence within her household. Despite her attempts to seek help and file for divorce, her

husband's manipulative tactics and threats of further harm have kept her ensnared in the abusive relationship. *"Often during our fights, he has divorced me, but when I told my family, he refused that I was lying and did not give me any divorce,"* she laments, highlighting the complexities and challenges faced by victims of domestic abuse in breaking free from their abusers. Through her testimony, Respondent 3 shines a light on the insidious nature of domestic violence, its devastating impact on victims and families, and the urgent need for support, resources, and systemic change to break the cycle of abuse.

Isolation and Lack of Support

Respondent 3's narrative vividly illustrates the profound sense of isolation and lack of support she has experienced throughout her tumultuous journey. Despite facing relentless abuse and hardship, her family's response has been characterized by abandonment and distance. As she recounts, *"Even my siblings left me alone because of these daily dramas... they told me they are not into this anymore."* This abandonment extends beyond her immediate family, with her husband's siblings also failing to provide the support she desperately needs. Respondent 3's isolation is further exacerbated by societal norms and expectations, which often prioritize family reputation over the well-being of individuals. Despite initial attempts to intervene, support dwindles over time, leaving her feeling abandoned and alone in her struggle. This lack of support intensifies the challenges she faces, amplifying feelings of helplessness and despair. As she navigates her path towards independence, Respondent 3's story serves as a stark reminder of the critical need for robust support systems and resources to empower individuals in similar circumstances.

Financial Dependence and Independence

Financial dependence and independence emerge as pivotal themes within Respondent 3's narrative, shedding light on the intricate relationship between economic constraints and personal agency. Throughout her life history, she grapples with the repercussions of limited financial resources, particularly within the confines of her tumultuous marriage. Despite harboring aspirations for education and self-sufficiency, Respondent 3 finds herself bound by circumstances beyond her control. She reflects, *"I have studied till matriculation...I tried to continue my education but could not do so as I got married after completing my matriculation."* This underscores the profound impact of familial obligations and societal expectations, which often prioritize marriage over personal development.

The constraints of financial dependence become even more pronounced within the context of her abusive marriage. Respondent 3 laments, *"I used to ask my mother to pay...most of them and my husband used to lie...I was earning 40,000 per month."* Here, financial deception exacerbates her vulnerability, as she grapples with the burden of providing for her children amidst an environment of deceit and manipulation. Her inability to access adequate resources further entrenches her within the confines of her abusive relationship, amplifying feelings of powerlessness and despair.

However, amidst the adversity, Respondent 3 demonstrates resilience and determination to break free from the shackles of financial dependence. She articulates her resolve, stating, *"I am finding a job...where I can be safe from him and be financially independent."* This pursuit of employment symbolizes her quest for autonomy and self-reliance, as she endeavors to carve out a path towards economic empowerment. Despite the challenges ahead, she remains steadfast in her commitment to securing a better future for herself and her children, underscoring the transformative potential of financial independence in the face of adversity.

Hope and Resilience

Hope and resilience stand as guiding beacons amidst the turbulent storm of Respondent 3's life history. Despite enduring years of harrowing abuse and oppressive circumstances, she clings steadfastly to the belief that a brighter future is within reach. In her own words, she expresses this unwavering determination, stating, *"I am hopeful and have full faith in Allah."* This faith serves as a source of inner strength, empowering her to navigate the darkest moments with resilience and courage. Even amid the suffocating grip of despair, she refuses to relinquish her dreams of a better life, remarking, *"Life is very confusing... It's in between death and life."* This poignant reflection encapsulates the profound uncertainty and turmoil she faces, yet within this uncertainty lies a glimmer of hope—a beacon of possibility amidst the chaos. Despite the overwhelming odds stacked against her, Respondent 3 persists in her quest for liberation, declaring, *"I have to stand up for myself... I will try to find tailoring jobs in factories."* These words echo the resolute determination of a woman determined to carve out her own path, no matter the obstacles in her way. In her unwavering resolve lies a testament to the indomitable spirit of hope and resilience—a spirit that refuses to be extinguished, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges.

Reflections on Marriage and Decision-Making

Reflecting on Respondent 3's narrative unveils profound insights into the dynamics of marriage and decision-making, particularly within the context of cultural expectations and familial pressures. One striking aspect is the stark contrast between the idealized notion of marriage and the stark reality she faces. Forced into matrimony at a tender age, her experience underscores the profound impact of familial influence on marital choices. She reflects, *"My marriage was due to my mother; it wasn't my choice, but now that time has passed, I am taking the stand for me that I should have taken before."* This acknowledgment highlights the weight of societal expectations and familial obligations that often override personal autonomy in traditional settings.

Moreover, Respondent 3's narrative offers poignant insights into the complexities of decision-making within abusive relationships. Despite enduring years of physical and emotional torment, she grapples with the daunting task of breaking free from the cycle of abuse. Her reflections unveil the internal conflict she faces, torn between societal norms advocating for marital endurance and the pressing need to prioritize her own well-being. As she contemplates her next steps, she articulates, *"I have cleared my limits, and money is not more important to me than respect."* This declaration encapsulates her evolving priorities, signaling a pivotal shift towards reclaiming agency over her life.

Furthermore, Respondent 3's narrative sheds light on the multifaceted nature of decision-making within the confines of abusive relationships. Despite enduring relentless violence and manipulation, she grapples with the complexities of leaving her marriage, weighed down by societal stigma and familial expectations. She candidly admits, *"Even my mother has permission for whatever I want."* This acknowledgment reflects the internal struggle she faces, torn between familial loyalty and the imperative to safeguard her own well-being and that of her children.

In essence, Respondent 3's narrative serves as a sobering reminder of the intricate interplay between societal expectations, familial pressures, and individual agency in the realm of marriage and decision-making. Her journey underscores the profound challenges faced by individuals navigating abusive relationships within traditional settings, while also highlighting the resilience and courage required to break free from oppressive circumstances.

Through her reflections, we are reminded of the imperative to uphold the autonomy and dignity of individuals, particularly within the context of marriage and familial relationships.

Respondent 3's life history provides a sobering reflection on the complexities of marriage, decision-making, and resilience in the face of adversity. Her narrative underscores the pervasive influence of societal norms and familial expectations on individual autonomy, particularly within traditional settings. Through her journey, we witness the profound impact of forced marriage and domestic abuse on personal well-being, as well as the daunting challenges inherent in breaking free from oppressive circumstances. Despite enduring years of torment, Respondent 3's unwavering determination to reclaim agency over her life serves as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. Her story serves as a clarion call for societal support systems, legal protections, and resources to empower individuals facing similar struggles. As we reflect on Respondent 3's journey, we are reminded of the importance of upholding the dignity and autonomy of every individual, regardless of societal expectations or familial pressures.

4.4 LIFE HISTORY: Respondent 4

In this narrative analysis, we delve into the life history of Respondent 4, a resilient individual who has traversed a tumultuous journey marked by adversity, trauma, and personal growth. Born into a family fraught with dysfunction and neglect, Respondent 4 recounts their struggles with abusive relationships, religious conversion, and the quest for identity and belonging. Despite enduring profound hardships, including familial rejection and marital abuse, the respondent demonstrates remarkable resilience and determination in navigating their tumultuous path. Through their narrative, we explore themes of trauma, resilience, maternal responsibility, and the search for love and acceptance amidst profound familial discord. This analysis seeks to unravel the complexities of Respondent 4's life story, shedding light on their journey of self-discovery, survival, and resilience in the face of adversity.

Struggle with Identity and Belonging

The respondent's journey reflects a profound struggle with identity and belonging, marked by a transformative shift from Christianity to Islam. Their narrative highlights the challenges of reconciling personal faith with familial expectations, leading to a sense of isolation and rejection. Reflecting on their decision to embrace Islam, the respondent states, *"I fell in love with one boy who was Muslim. I told him that I would study Islam before understanding it, and then I would take any decision regarding religious change and marry you."* This decision, driven by a quest for spiritual fulfillment, ultimately leads to their exclusion from their family and the need to seek refuge in a shelter home.

The respondent's experience underscores the complexities of cultural and religious identity within a familial context. *They recount, "My family excluded me from home... Staff from this shelter home helped me the most to handle myself."* This ostracization highlights the tension between individual autonomy and familial expectations, as the respondent grapples with the repercussions of their religious conversion.

Furthermore, their journey sheds light on the emotional toll of estrangement from one's family and community. The respondent expresses, *"My family was not good to me... My brothers never cared about me; they only cared about other daughters."* This sense of alienation and neglect underscores the profound impact of familial rejection on one's sense of self-worth and belonging.

Despite these challenges, the respondent demonstrates resilience and determination in forging their own path. They assert, *"I am happy now that he accepted my kids as well; they are living with us."* This newfound sense of belonging within their marital unit signifies a hopeful transition towards a community that accepts and embraces their identity.

Abusive Relationships and Trauma

The respondent's narrative paints a harrowing picture of their experiences within abusive relationships, marked by physical violence, emotional manipulation, and psychological torment. They recount enduring unimaginable hardships, such as being subjected to violence and coercion by their former spouse: *"He started being extremely violent; he started beating me and then using my body without my consent, which was unbearable."* This quote encapsulates the profound trauma inflicted upon the respondent, highlighting the violation of their bodily autonomy and the sheer brutality of their former partner's actions.

Moreover, the respondent describes a pattern of escalating abuse within their marriages, from initial phases of affection and care to later stages characterized by distrust, violence, and gaslighting. They recount feeling trapped and powerless in the face of their partner's aggression, as evidenced by their account of enduring physical abuse and coercion: *"He used to beat me up a lot. Then I went to my aunt's house; we rented a home near her so she could take care of me and I could take care of her."* This passage underscores the respondent's desperate attempts to escape the cycle of abuse and seek refuge in the care of their extended family.

Furthermore, the respondent's narrative highlights the pervasive impact of psychological trauma on their mental health and well-being. They describe struggling with fear, anxiety, and hopelessness as a result of their traumatic experiences, revealing the profound toll that abuse has taken on their psyche: *"Sometimes things get difficult, but we spend life like this: sometimes crying, sometimes laughing—that's all part of life."* This emotional reflection underscores the respondent's resilience in the face of adversity, as they navigate the complexities of their trauma while striving to rebuild their life and find moments of joy amidst the pain.

Maternal Concerns and Responsibilities

The respondent's narrative is deeply entrenched in their maternal concerns and responsibilities, showcasing a profound commitment to their children's well-being amidst personal turmoil and adversity. Despite enduring abusive relationships and familial neglect, the respondent prioritizes the needs of their children above all else. They express a deep sense of responsibility towards their offspring, demonstrating unwavering dedication and sacrifice.

"My kids were in need of love, which is why my elder brother became angry and sensitive." This quote highlights the respondent's acute awareness of their children's emotional needs, recognizing the impact of familial instability on their well-being. Despite facing criticism and opposition from family members, the respondent remains steadfast in their determination to provide a stable and loving environment for their children.

"I have to earn money for my kids and give them a better life. That's all." Here, the respondent succinctly captures the essence of their maternal responsibilities, emphasizing the paramount importance of securing a better future for their children. Despite facing personal hardships and mental health struggles, the respondent's unwavering commitment to their children's welfare serves as a driving force in their life journey.

Throughout their narrative, the respondent's maternal instincts shine through, guiding their decisions and actions even in the face of adversity. Their resilience, resourcefulness, and selflessness exemplify the profound bond between a parent and their children, underscoring the enduring strength of maternal love and responsibility.

Family Dysfunction and Lack of Support

Throughout the respondent's narrative, a pervasive theme emerges of familial dysfunction and a profound lack of support, contributing significantly to their hardships and emotional turmoil. *"My childhood was very good. I had food time as a kid in Narowal."* This nostalgic recollection stands in stark contrast to the subsequent revelations of familial neglect and mistreatment. *"My family excluded me from home, so I came to this shelter home."* The respondent's own family, meant to provide love and support, instead rejected them upon their embrace of Islam, forcing them to seek refuge elsewhere.

"My elder brother became angry and sensitive." The lack of familial support is evident in the respondent's struggles to provide emotional stability for their children, as they grapple with mental health issues exacerbated by their upbringing. *"My parents used to*

badmouth about me and curse me." The respondent recounts enduring verbal abuse and mistreatment from their parents, highlighting a toxic family environment that eroded their self-esteem and sense of worth. *"My brothers never gave me the love and respect that was my right."* Despite being siblings, the respondent's brothers consistently neglected and belittled them, prioritizing other family members over their own flesh and blood.

"My mother didn't even let me make my ID card; they didn't give me an identity." This poignant statement speaks to the respondent's struggle for autonomy and recognition within their own family, denied even the most basic forms of agency and validation. Overall, the respondent's narrative paints a distressing picture of familial dysfunction and emotional neglect, where love and support were conspicuously absent, leaving deep scars and contributing to their ongoing struggles for acceptance and self-worth.

Quest for Personal Growth and Autonomy

The respondent's quest for personal growth and autonomy is a central theme in their narrative, permeating their journey through various challenges and obstacles. Despite facing adversity, they demonstrate a strong determination to carve out their own path and assert their independence.

"...I went to this shelter home... My family excluded me from home... I embraced Islam with my kids and did circumcisions for my 3 boys... I spent months here; it was a difficult time, but their help made it somehow easy... I am happy now that he accepted my kids as well; they are living with us. We have rented a home here and are living happily..."

From leaving their family home to embracing Islam and establishing a new life with their children, the respondent exhibits a proactive approach to pursuing personal growth and autonomy. They make deliberate choices to break away from oppressive circumstances and create a more fulfilling existence for themselves and their family. *"...I tried my best to manage and move my life, and I am doing so, and I will keep doing it... What kind of parents they are. Even elders should learn to accept their mistakes and apologize for what they expect from younger people, even when they are not wrong... I tried a lot, but they never understood me."*

Despite facing resistance and lack of understanding from their family, the respondent remains steadfast in their determination to assert their autonomy and assert their own identity.

They recognize the importance of self-determination and refuse to be constrained by societal expectations or familial pressures. *"...I tried a lot, but they never understood me."* This quote encapsulates the respondent's frustration with the lack of support and understanding from their family. Despite their efforts to communicate their needs and desires, they encounter resistance and rejection. Nevertheless, they persevere in their quest for personal growth and autonomy, refusing to be defined by others' perceptions or expectations.

Quest for Search for Love and Acceptance

The quest for love and acceptance permeates the respondent's life history, reflecting a deep longing for validation and belonging amidst tumultuous relationships and familial discord. *"I fell in love with one boy who was Muslim. I told him that I would study Islam before understanding it, and then I would take any decision regarding religious change and marry you."* From the outset, the respondent's journey is marked by a pursuit of love intertwined with religious exploration. Their willingness to embrace Islam for the sake of love underscores the profound desire for acceptance and connection.

"But for my current husband, my kids respect him more than I do and love him too." Despite past betrayals and disappointments, the respondent finds solace and acceptance in their current marriage. The recognition of their children's affection towards their spouse highlights the significance of familial bonds in fulfilling the need for love and belonging. *"I was in a relationship with another boy for more than a year, but he bothered me. I was too much into him; he used to take care of me because of him and not see anyone out of his love, but nobody cares about commitments these days, and honesty is not on everyone's plate these days."*

The respondent's reflection on past relationships reveals a yearning for genuine connection and commitment. Their disillusionment with the transient nature of modern relationships underscores the depth of their longing for enduring love and acceptance. *"Sometimes when we argue, I keep quiet or try to make things better, as he is the one and only person in my life."* In moments of conflict, the respondent prioritizes preserving their relationship, underscoring the significance of their spouse in fulfilling their need for love and companionship. Their unwavering devotion reflects a steadfast commitment to finding acceptance and stability in their marital bond.

Resilience and Self-Determination

The narrative exemplifies a remarkable display of resilience and self-determination amidst profound adversity. Despite enduring abusive relationships, familial neglect, and societal ostracization, the respondent demonstrates an unwavering commitment to forging their own path towards a better future. As they recount their struggles, the respondent reflects, *"I taught myself how to move without family,"* underscoring their ability to adapt and thrive in the face of abandonment. Moreover, their resolve to seek justice and autonomy is evident in their pursuit of divorce and newfound religious identity, as they assert, *"I tried my best to manage and move my life, and I am doing so, and I will keep doing it."* Despite the lack of support from their own kin, the respondent's resilience shines through in their determination to provide a stable and loving environment for their children, encapsulated by their statement, *"I have to earn money for my kids and give them a better life. That's all."* Through their resilience and self-determination, the respondent emerges as a testament to the human spirit's capacity to endure and triumph over adversity.

The life history of Respondent 4 is a testament to the human capacity for resilience and self-determination in the face of overwhelming challenges. Their narrative reflects the struggles of navigating abusive relationships, familial neglect, and societal rejection, yet through it all; they exhibit remarkable strength and perseverance. Despite enduring trauma and hardship, the respondent remains steadfast in their pursuit of a better life for themselves and their children. Their journey underscores the importance of resilience, self-belief, and the power of the human spirit to overcome adversity and emerge stronger on the other side. As they continue to navigate life's complexities, the story of Respondent 4 serves as a poignant reminder of the indomitable nature of the human will and the possibility of finding hope and redemption even in the darkest of times.

4.5 LIFE HISTORY: Respondent 5

The life history of Respondent 5 offers a compelling insight into the challenges faced by many women in navigating complex familial dynamics, marital strife, and societal expectations. Through her narrative, Respondent 5 recounts her journey of love, marriage, and subsequent struggles against familial opposition and domestic abuse. Her story unfolds as a testament to resilience, as she confronts adversity with courage and determination. From her pursuit of justice to her reflections on personal regrets and hopes for the future,

Respondent 5's narrative encapsulates the emotional turmoil and societal pressures experienced by individuals caught in tumultuous familial relationships. This analysis delves into the intricate layers of her narrative, providing insight into the broader social and cultural factors that shape her experiences and highlighting themes of agency, resilience, and the quest for a peaceful and stable existence.

Marital Issues and Family Dynamics

Marital issues and family dynamics play a central role in Respondent 5's narrative, profoundly shaping her experiences and challenges. She describes her marriage as initially happy, but tensions arose when she and her husband were compelled to move in with her in-laws due to a change in job location. Respondent 5 recounts facing hostility and violence from her in-laws, who disapproved of her love marriage and subjected her to physical abuse. She expresses her frustration, stating, *"Their behavior was way too bad for me,"* and highlights instances where conflicts escalated, leading to her mistreatment and eventual expulsion from the family home. Despite her husband's initial support, she feels abandoned by him as he prioritizes his mother's wishes over her well-being. Respondent 5's quotes such as, *"He wants to settle down with his family, but he does not understand that they don't want us,"* underscore the power dynamics and conflicts within the marital and familial relationships. These quotes illuminate the complex interplay between societal expectations, familial pressures, and individual agency in navigating marital strife and seeking resolution.

Struggle for Justice and Independence

The narrative of Respondent 5 underscores her profound struggle for justice and independence in the face of formidable obstacles. She recounts her efforts to seek recourse through legal channels, stating, *"I went to the police directly. I filed a complaint against them... Then I went to court and filed a case to take my kids back."* These actions demonstrate her unwavering determination to assert her rights and protect herself and her children from abuse and mistreatment. Despite facing challenges in navigating the legal system, she remains resolute in her pursuit of justice, expressing her intent to *"file another case for my husband to get my rights and my kid's rights."* Moreover, Respondent 5's quest for independence is evident in her decision to seek employment and provide for her family autonomously. She expresses her resolve to *"find a job for myself, and... stand up for myself and my kids,"* indicating a steadfast commitment to reclaiming agency and stability in her

life. Through her actions and determination, Respondent 5 embodies the resilience and fortitude necessary to overcome adversity and forge a path toward a brighter future.

Emotional Turmoil and Reflections

Respondent 5's narrative delves deep into the emotional turmoil she experiences as she reflects on her life's challenges. Her words resonate with a sense of regret and longing for a peaceful existence, as she navigates the aftermath of her tumultuous marriage. She articulates her inner conflict with poignant honesty, stating, *"I regret my decision to marry him every day and every night."* This regret is further underscored by her recollection of rejecting a previous marriage proposal, leaving her to ponder whether her current hardships are a consequence of that decision. Such reflections reveal the weight of her choices and the toll they have taken on her well-being. Despite her struggles, Respondent 5 remains resilient, expressing hope for a better future while grappling with the reality of her circumstances. Her narrative serves as a poignant reminder of the complexities of life and the enduring human spirit that persists amidst adversity.

Hope and Resilience

Respondent 5's narrative is a testament to the enduring power of hope and resilience in the face of adversity. Despite facing immense challenges within her marriage and familial relationships, she maintains a steadfast belief in the possibility of a better future. She reflects, *"I am still hopeful for everything and looking forward to him understanding me and taking a stand for our kids."* This unwavering hope serves as a guiding light, propelling her forward even in her darkest moments. Furthermore, her resilience shines through as she navigates the complexities of seeking justice, rebuilding her life, and providing for her children amidst immense hardship. She acknowledges the difficulty of her situation yet remains determined to overcome it, stating, *"This time shall pass too."* Respondent 5's story is a poignant reminder that hope and resilience can empower individuals to persevere through even the most challenging circumstances, inspiring others to find strength in the face of adversity.

Social and Cultural Influences

Social and cultural influences play a significant role in shaping Respondent 5's experiences and responses to her marital challenges. She describes the pressure to conform to traditional gender roles and familial expectations, noting that her love marriage was met with

disapproval from both sides of the family. Reflecting on her decision to marry against her family's wishes, Respondent 5 expresses regret and acknowledges the cultural stigma associated with going against societal norms. She remarks, *"People from my part don't understand these things; they are full of prejudices; they are not like us kindhearted; they can't understand that the next person is also a human being."* This highlights the entrenched cultural attitudes that contribute to her sense of isolation and lack of support. Additionally, Respondent 5's narrative underscores the power dynamics within her marital home, where her husband's family exerts control over her and perpetuates abuse with impunity. Despite her educational background and aspirations for independence, societal expectations and familial obligations compel her to navigate a precarious balance between asserting her rights and preserving familial harmony. As she navigates her journey, Respondent 5 grapples with the tension between individual agency and cultural constraints, illustrating the complex interplay between social norms and personal autonomy in her life.

Respondent 5's narrative provides a profound insight into the intricate interplay of social and cultural forces in shaping her experiences of marital conflict and resilience. Her story reflects the pervasive influence of traditional gender roles, familial expectations, and societal stigmas surrounding marriage and divorce. Despite facing immense challenges and enduring abuse, Respondent 5 demonstrates remarkable strength and agency in her pursuit of justice and independence. Her journey highlights the complexities of navigating cultural norms and personal aspirations, underscoring the need for greater recognition of individual rights and support systems for those facing similar circumstances. Through her resilience and determination, Respondent 5 not only seeks to reclaim her own agency but also advocates for a more equitable and compassionate society where women are empowered to assert their rights and live free from violence and oppression.

4.6 LIFE HISTORY: Respondent 6

The life history of Respondent 6 offers a emotional glimpse into the lived experiences of women grappling with the intersection of gender-based violence, familial expectations, and societal norms in Pakistan. Through her narrative, we are confronted with the stark realities of forced marriage, marital abuse, economic dependency, and the struggle for autonomy and agency within the confines of oppressive patriarchal structures. Respondent 6's journey encapsulates the complexities and challenges faced by countless women in similar circumstances, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive support systems,

empowerment initiatives, and societal change to address systemic inequalities and promote gender justice. As we delve into the narrative analysis of Respondent 6's life history, we gain valuable insights into the multifaceted dynamics shaping women's lives in Pakistan and the resilience and determination exhibited in the face of adversity.

Forced Marriage and Deception

Forced marriage and deception are central themes in Respondent 6's narrative, highlighting the lack of agency and autonomy experienced by many women in patriarchal societies. Reflecting on her marriage, Respondent 6 recalls being married off at a young age without her consent, illustrating the prevalence of arranged marriages and the disregard for individual preferences. She states, *"When I completed my matriculation, my parents did my marriage, and I left studies."* This quote encapsulates the reality faced by many young women who are pressured or coerced into marriage, often sacrificing their educational and personal aspirations. Moreover, Respondent 6's account reveals the deception and manipulation she experienced within her marriage. Despite being led to believe that her husband had secure employment prospects, she later discovers the falsehood of these claims, stating, *"But when I got married, I got to know that he was doing nothing; he had no job till 3 years after our marriage."* This deception reflects the power dynamics inherent in forced marriages, where women are often subjected to exploitation and mistreatment by their spouses. Forced marriage and deception not only strip women of their autonomy but also subject them to ongoing hardship and abuse, as seen in Respondent 6's narrative.

Marital Abuse and Economic Dependency

Marital abuse and economic dependency are recurring themes in Respondent 6's narrative, illustrating the profound impact of gender-based violence and financial control within her marriage. She describes enduring years of mistreatment and violence at the hands of her husband, stating, *"He used to beat me and curse me, saying that I should die so he could be free."* This verbal and physical abuse created a hostile and oppressive environment, leaving Respondent 6 feeling helpless and trapped in her marriage. Moreover, her husband's manipulation and neglect exacerbated her vulnerability, as she struggled to provide for her family's basic needs due to his lack of employment and financial support. She recounts, *"I tried my best to fulfill kid's needs, but how can we do it without money?"* This economic dependency further perpetuated her reliance on her husband and intensified her sense of

powerlessness and subjugation. Despite her efforts to seek employment and gain financial independence, she faced resistance and hostility from her family and societal norms, reinforcing the cycle of abuse and control. Respondent 6's narrative highlights the interconnectedness of marital abuse and economic vulnerability, underscoring the need for comprehensive support and resources to empower survivors and break free from cycles of violence and dependency.

Family Pressure and Stigma

Family Pressure and Stigma weigh heavily on Respondent 6's journey, exacerbating her struggles and complicating her efforts to seek support and autonomy. She recounts her family's lack of understanding and empathy, as they pressure her to endure the abuse and societal judgment associated with divorce. She expresses her frustration, stating, *"My parents didn't allow me to stay with them; they didn't allow me to take divorce, as it's taboo in our society, and if I took it, it would stain my life."* This reflects the deeply ingrained societal norms and stigma surrounding divorce in Pakistani culture, which often places the burden of maintaining familial honor and reputation squarely on women's shoulders. Despite her suffering, her family's response remains unsympathetic, with her sister reacting harshly and accusing her of deceit: *"When I reached here safely, I called my sister and told her, and she instantly started scolding me and picking up fights with me. She said that I am lying. I ran away with a man, and I am manipulating them."* This illustrates the pervasive victim-blaming mentality and lack of support for women facing abusive marriages, perpetuating a cycle of silence and shame. As a result, Respondent 6 feels isolated and unsupported by those closest to her, compounding her sense of helplessness and despair.

Seeking Support and Empowerment

Respondent 6's journey towards seeking support and empowerment reflects her resilience and determination to break free from the cycle of abuse and oppression. Despite facing immense challenges within her marriage and family, she found the strength to seek refuge in a shelter home, where she received assistance and guidance in navigating her options and asserting her rights. Reflecting on her decision to seek support, Respondent 6 expresses gratitude towards the shelter home, stating, *"Shelter Home is helping me out a lot."* She acknowledges the importance of having a safe space where she can freely express herself and make decisions about her future without fear of judgment or reprisal. Moreover, she

emphasizes the significance of self-advocacy and empowerment, asserting, *"I compromised so many times that nobody got anything and understood my situation, and never did my husband change for good, so I am certain of my decision."* This highlights her resolve to prioritize her well-being and pursue a path towards autonomy and self-determination, despite familial pressures and societal expectations. In seeking support and empowerment, Respondent 6 demonstrates courage, resilience, and a commitment to reclaiming agency over her own life.

Hope and Resilience

In the narrative of Respondent 6, hope and resilience emerge as prominent themes amidst her harrowing experiences. Despite enduring years of abuse, neglect, and societal pressure, Respondent 6 maintains a steadfast determination to overcome adversity and pursue a better future for herself and her children. She reflects on her journey with a sense of resilience, stating, *"I am satisfied that I have done my best for my kids, and I tried my best to do the best, which I couldn't do, and I will keep trying and doing good for them."* This resilience is underscored by her willingness to seek refuge in a shelter home, where she found support and assistance in navigating her path to independence and self-empowerment. She acknowledges the challenges she has faced but remains hopeful for the future, expressing her determination to rebuild her life and pursue education and employment opportunities: *"I know my kids will question me in the future; they don't know reality, and my husband manipulates them in front of me, so how much will he be doing now or when I will fake divorce? But I will manage."* This resilience is further exemplified by her refusal to succumb to societal expectations or familial pressures, as she asserts her right to make her own decisions and pursue her own happiness: *"If they don't care for me, I don't care for them either."* In her narrative, Respondent 6 embodies the indomitable spirit of hope and resilience, serving as a testament to the strength and resilience of women facing adversity.

Respondent 6's life history narrative provides a poignant illustration of the challenges faced by women in patriarchal societies and the importance of seeking support and empowerment in overcoming adversity. Her journey underscores the pervasive issues of forced marriage, marital abuse, economic dependency, and societal stigma that constrain women's lives and limit their agency. However, through her resilience and determination, Respondent 6 navigates through these obstacles, ultimately finding refuge and support in a shelter home. Her decision to assert her rights and pursue autonomy reflects a broader

struggle for gender equality and justice. By sharing her story, Respondent 6 highlights the critical need for comprehensive support services, legal protections, and societal change to address the root causes of gender-based violence and discrimination. Her courage serves as an inspiration to other women facing similar challenges, reaffirming the importance of solidarity, empowerment, and collective action in the fight for gender equality and women's rights.

4.7 LIFE HISTORY: Respondent 7

The life narrative of Respondent 7 paints an emotional picture of resilience amidst adversity, shedding light on the profound struggles faced by individuals trapped in oppressive family dynamics and societal norms. From the onset, Respondent 7's story unveils a world fraught with gender discrimination, familial abuse, and stifled aspirations. Born into a family marked by dominance and neglect, Respondent 7 recounts the suffocating constraints imposed by her relatives, particularly her uncles, following the untimely death of her father. Her journey unfolds as a testament to the enduring human spirit, characterized by unwavering resolve to reclaim agency and pursue education in the face of overwhelming odds. As we delve deeper into her narrative, we unravel layers of societal critique and calls for systemic change, encapsulating the struggles of countless individuals navigating patriarchal structures. Thus, Respondent 7's story emerges not only as a personal testimony but also as a powerful catalyst for reflection and advocacy in the pursuit of gender equality and social justice.

Family Dynamics

Family dynamics in Respondent 7's narrative are characterized by oppression, abuse, and the perpetuation of patriarchal norms. Despite being a victim herself, Respondent 7's mother remains passive and fails to protect her children from the tyranny of their male relatives. Respondent 7 describes her uncles as dominating figures who subjected her and her siblings to both physical and mental torment. She recounts, *"My uncles were very dominating... they used to beat me, they used to beat my mother."* This dominance extends to controlling the family's decisions and enforcing strict rules, particularly regarding the behavior and mobility of the girls. Respondent 7's mother, though aware of the abuse, chooses silence over confrontation, exemplified by her response when her daughter is slapped for using a phone: *"She told me to keep quiet and bear."* This perpetuates a cycle of oppression, where the mother's inability to challenge patriarchal norms leads to further

suffering for her daughters. The family's structure, influenced by traditional values and joint familial ties, exacerbates the power dynamics, leaving little room for individual agency or autonomy. As Respondent 7 reflects, *"Our society shouldn't be this way... they should support girls for their education, for their decisions, for their life."* This underscores the urgent need for societal reform to dismantle oppressive family structures and empower individuals to break free from cycles of abuse and discrimination.

Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination permeates every aspect of Respondent 7's life, shaping her experiences from childhood to adulthood. She recounts how her family's conservative beliefs dictate oppressive rules solely based on gender, denying her fundamental rights and opportunities. In her own words, she expresses the suffocating nature of these restrictions, stating, *"They only use to bound us in their homes...they only know to dominate us."* This highlights the systemic nature of gender-based control within her family dynamic. Moreover, she vividly describes instances where she is subjected to physical and emotional abuse simply because of her gender, lamenting, *"They use to torture me mentally and physically."* This underscores the entrenched misogyny that dictates her family's behavior. Despite her academic achievements and aspirations, she faces resistance and dismissal, as evidenced by her uncle's disbelief and accusation when she seeks education, *"He slapped me multiple times...told me I am making up stories."* This reveals the deeply ingrained belief that women are inherently inferior and unworthy of pursuing education or autonomy. Throughout her narrative, Respondent 7's experiences serve as a stark indictment of the pervasive gender discrimination that robs women of their agency and dignity.

Education Struggles

Respondent 7's journey is marked by relentless perseverance in the pursuit of education, despite formidable barriers erected by her conservative family. She reflects on her struggles, stating, *"I begged my mother to buy me one [a phone] but she told me clearly that she cannot afford it."* This statement encapsulates the financial hurdles she faces, symbolizing the broader challenges of accessing educational resources in her context. Furthermore, the protagonist's plea for education is met with resistance and oppression from her family, as evidenced by her uncle's violent reaction to her desire to attend school: *"He slapped me multiple times and took my phone and went back."* This incident highlights the familial

opposition she encounters, where even the aspiration for education is met with physical violence and coercion. Despite these adversities, Respondent 7 remains resolute in her pursuit, demonstrating a profound commitment to her educational aspirations amidst the tumultuous circumstances.

Escaping Abuse

Escaping abuse is a harrowing journey that requires immense courage and determination. In Respondent 7's narrative, the decision to flee from her oppressive family environment to seek refuge in a shelter home is a testament to her unwavering resilience. As she recounts, *"I left home after that incident."* This pivotal moment marks her defiance against the cycle of violence and control perpetuated by her relatives. Despite facing threats and intimidation from her family members, she summons the strength to break free from the shackles of abuse. The act of seeking refuge in a shelter home symbolizes her quest for safety and autonomy, as she strives to reclaim agency over her own life. *"With the help of one friend, I came to Islamabad to this shelter home,"* she recalls, underscoring the importance of supportive networks in facilitating her escape. This courageous act not only signifies her determination to break free from the cycle of abuse but also highlights the critical role of shelters in providing sanctuary for survivors of violence. In taking this bold step, Respondent 7 embodies the resilience and empowerment inherent in the journey towards freedom from abuse.

Resilience and Empowerment

Respondent 7's journey is a testament to the remarkable resilience and unwavering empowerment that can emerge from even the darkest of circumstances. Despite enduring years of abuse and oppression, she refuses to relinquish her inner strength and determination to forge her own destiny. As she reflects on her experiences, Respondent 7 poignantly states, *"I wasted so many years sitting in home listening to what they are saying and obeying to what they are asking for. I am tired of it all."* This declaration encapsulates her resolve to break free from the shackles of societal expectations and reclaim control over her life. Moreover, her decision to seek refuge in a shelter home, despite facing threats from her own family, exemplifies her courageous pursuit of autonomy and safety. *"I will find a job for myself and continue my studies,"* she asserts, highlighting her unwavering commitment to education and self-empowerment. Through her resilience and empowerment, Respondent 7 serves as a

beacon of hope and inspiration, challenging the status quo and advocating for a future where every individual, regardless of gender, can thrive and flourish on their own terms.

Social Commentary

Respondent 7's narrative provides a compelling social commentary on the entrenched patriarchal norms and systemic injustices prevalent within society. Through her lived experiences, she exposes the harsh realities faced by many women, particularly those from conservative backgrounds. One poignant aspect of her commentary is the perpetuation of gender-based violence and discrimination within familial structures. As she recounts the dominance of her uncles and the submission of her mother, Respondent 7 laments, *"Our society shouldn't be this way. They should support girls for their education, for their decisions, for their life."* This reflects her disillusionment with societal expectations that prioritize the control and restriction of women, relegating them to subordinate roles within the family unit.

Furthermore, Respondent 7's narrative sheds light on the pervasive culture of victim-blaming and the normalization of abuse. Despite enduring physical and emotional torment at the hands of her relatives, she recalls how her mother admonished her to *"keep quiet and bear"* the suffering. This underscores the deeply ingrained notion that women are expected to endure mistreatment silently, perpetuating a cycle of oppression and silence. Respondent 7's defiance against this silence is evident in her decision to seek refuge in a shelter home, symbolizing her rejection of societal norms that prioritize family honor over individual well-being.

Moreover, the narrative highlights the systemic barriers that hinder women's access to education and autonomy. Respondent 7's struggle to continue her studies amidst financial constraints and familial opposition reflects broader disparities in educational opportunities for women. Her determination to pursue education despite these obstacles challenges the prevailing narrative that relegates women to domestic roles, underscoring the transformative power of education in enabling women to assert their independence and agency.

Respondent 7's narrative provides a sobering reflection on the pervasive influence of patriarchal norms and systemic injustices within society. Through her courage and resilience, she challenges the status quo and advocates for the empowerment of women to break free

from cycles of abuse and oppression. Her story underscores the urgent need for societal transformation, where women are afforded the dignity, autonomy, and opportunities they rightfully deserve. Respondent 7's journey serves as a testament to the power of resilience and determination in the face of adversity, inspiring hope for a future where gender equality is not just a distant aspiration, but a tangible reality. As she continues to pursue her dreams and assert her agency, Respondent 7 stands as a beacon of hope, reminding us of the importance of amplifying women's voices and dismantling the barriers that hinder their full participation in society. Her narrative serves as a call to action for collective efforts towards a more just and equitable world for all.

4.8 LIFE HISTORY: Respondent 8

Respondent 8's life history presents a poignant introduction to a narrative marked by hardship, resilience, and the search for autonomy. Born into a family shattered by early loss, Respondent 8's childhood was colored by the absence of a father figure and the burden of familial expectations. The absence of male siblings left her and her sisters vulnerable to the dictates of a patriarchal society, where decisions about their futures were made without their consent. Forced into adulthood prematurely, Respondent 8 embarked on a journey from her rural upbringing in Rajanpur to the bustling city of Islamabad in search of opportunities for work and education. However, her aspirations collided with the oppressive demands of family, as she found herself entangled in a web of coercion and manipulation, culminating in a forced marriage that would become the crucible of her suffering. This opening paragraph sets the stage for a narrative that delves into the complexities of familial relationships, societal norms, and the quest for agency in the face of adversity.

Family Trauma and Manipulation

Family trauma and manipulation play a central role in Respondent 8's life story, shaping her experiences from childhood to adulthood. Let's delve into this theme, supported by quotes from the respondent's narrative: From a tender age, Respondent 8 faced the harsh reality of familial loss and coercion. She recalls, *"My name is Respondent 8. I was born in Rajanpur. When I was very young, my father died. I was 7 years old that time."* The loss of her father left a void in her life, leaving her vulnerable to the influences of her remaining family members.

As one of four sisters, Respondent 8 found herself thrust into a situation where she lacked male siblings, a circumstance that may have exacerbated societal pressures on her family. She recounts, *"We are four sisters without any brother."* This gender dynamic likely intensified the expectation for Respondent 8 to fulfill traditional roles and adhere to patriarchal norms within her family. The absence of a paternal figure also left Respondent 8 susceptible to manipulation by her remaining relatives, particularly her mother and aunt. Despite her own aspirations, she was coerced into a marriage she vehemently opposed. She reflects, *"I told them that I don't want to marry him, but they did not listen to me."* This disregard for her autonomy reflects a systemic issue within her family, where decisions were made without considering her wishes or well-being.

Furthermore, Respondent 8's family employed tactics of isolation and confinement to enforce their will. She recalls, *"When they took me back to home from Islamabad, they used to lock me up in the room... so I could not run anywhere out of the fear of this marriage."* This restriction of freedom underscores the extent to which Respondent 8's family exerted control over her life, denying her agency and subjecting her to emotional manipulation and coercion. The trauma inflicted by her family's actions reverberates throughout Respondent 8's narrative, leaving a lasting impact on her mental and emotional well-being. Despite her attempts to resist, she ultimately succumbed to their pressure, enduring a marriage marked by abuse and neglect.

Forced Marriage and Abuse

Forced marriage and abuse are central themes in Respondent 8's narrative, illustrating the devastating impact of familial coercion and marital violence. Here's a concise overview, incorporating quotes from the respondent: Respondent 8's story revolves around the harrowing experience of being forced into marriage against her will. She recounts, *"They manipulated me and took me to the village with them,"* highlighting the lack of agency and autonomy she had in the decision-making process. Despite her resistance, she was coerced into an unwanted engagement and subsequently wedded to a husband who proved to be abusive and neglectful.

The respondent describes her husband's behavior, stating, *"My husband never gives me love for even a second,"* underscoring the emotional deprivation and mistreatment she endured in the marriage. His drug addiction and verbal abuse further compounded her

suffering, creating a hostile and toxic environment. Throughout her ordeal, Respondent 8 faced not only physical and emotional abuse but also societal pressures to conform to traditional gender roles and expectations. She reflects on her family's stance, lamenting, *"Even my mother is angry with me for leaving my abusive husband and toxic home,"* highlighting the lack of support and understanding she received from her own kin.

The narrative also sheds light on the insidious nature of familial betrayal and manipulation, as Respondent 8's family colluded in her forced marriage and subsequently turned against her when she sought to break free. She recounts her mother's actions, stating, *"When my mother received my divorce notice, they filed a case against the uncle and aunty who had helped me,"* illustrating the betrayal and ingratitude she faced from those closest to her.

Lack of Support from Family

Respondent 8's life story is marked by a profound lack of support from her own family, particularly her mother and siblings, despite facing immense hardships. She describes how her family disregarded her wishes and coerced her into a marriage she did not want. In her own words, she expresses her frustration and betrayal, stating, *"I was not agreeing with their decision...I was not going to my home in village because of the fear that they will let me marry with him."*

Even when she sought refuge from her abusive marriage and turned to her mother for understanding, she was met with dismissal and justification. She recounts, *"even when I went to my mother and told her what is happening to me in that house, she told me it's all okay and normal."* This lack of empathy and validation from her own family further isolated her and compounded her suffering. Despite her pleas for autonomy and support, her family remained indifferent to her well-being, prioritizing societal expectations over her happiness and safety. Respondent 8's narrative underscores the devastating impact of familial betrayal and the importance of compassionate support networks outside of one's immediate family in times of crisis.

Support from External Figures

Support from external figures played a pivotal role in Respondent 8's journey, providing her with the strength and resources to navigate through her traumatic experiences.

Despite the betrayal and manipulation, she faced from her own family, she found solace and assistance from compassionate individuals, particularly her aunt and uncle.

Respondent 8 expressed gratitude for their unwavering support, describing them as *"Angels from heaven"* who went above and beyond to help her. She recounted how they not only provided financial assistance but also acted as mentors, guiding her through difficult decisions and encouraging her to pursue her education and independence. In her own words, Respondent 8 shared, *"Aunty used to treat me like their daughter and share her daily routine with me."* This demonstrates the deep bond and familial connection she developed with her aunt, who became a source of comfort and guidance in her tumultuous life.

Furthermore, Respondent 8 highlighted the practical support her aunt and uncle offered, such as helping her continue her studies and providing shelter when she needed it most. Despite facing backlash and accusations from her own family, her aunt and uncle stood by her side, defending her against false allegations and supporting her through legal proceedings. In reflecting on their impact, Respondent 8 expressed her immense gratitude, stating, *"Uncle and aunty were very disturbed after my mother's blames because they were too good to us."* This illustrates the profound disappointment her external support system felt in response to her family's betrayal, emphasizing the depth of their care and concern for her well-being.

The support from external figures served as a lifeline for Respondent 8, empowering her to break free from a toxic environment and pursue a brighter future. Their unwavering support and guidance enabled her to navigate through adversity with resilience and hope.

Legal and Social Challenges

Respondent 8's narrative vividly portrays the legal and social challenges she faced throughout her ordeal, reflecting the broader struggles many individuals confront in similar situations. Despite seeking refuge in shelters and pursuing legal avenues for escape, she encountered significant barriers to justice and safety.

1. **Legal Obstacles:** Respondent 8 describes the difficulty of navigating legal processes amidst familial opposition. She recounts, *"Even when my mother accused uncle and aunty for nothing, they got even disappointed...so if they found me from their home,*

they can create a big mess for them and me as well." This highlights the fear of reprisal and the complexities of seeking legal recourse in the face of familial backlash.

2. **Social Stigma:** The stigma associated with divorce and marital discord further compounded Respondent 8's challenges. She expresses her disillusionment, stating, *"I distrust the Institution of marriage...even if I find a good man now, I don't think so I will be able to marry again."* This reflects the societal pressure to conform to traditional marital norms, despite experiencing profound trauma within marriage.
3. **Isolation and Vulnerability:** Respondent 8's isolation from her support network, coupled with her family's hostility, left her vulnerable to further exploitation. She recalls, *"I was living with them for 2 years and they did not do any bad to me so how can they do it now...they are even disheartened by my family."* This highlights the betrayal she experienced from both her family and society at large.
4. **Dependence on External Support:** Despite the challenges, Respondent 8 found solace and assistance from external sources, particularly from her aunt and uncle. She acknowledges their crucial role, stating, *"Uncle and aunty were very disturbed...they went out of the way for our help."* This underscores the importance of supportive networks in mitigating the impact of legal and social barriers.

Resilience and Hope

In Respondent 8's narrative, resilience shines through amidst adversity, offering a beacon of hope for a brighter future. Despite enduring unimaginable hardships, she remains steadfast in her pursuit of liberation and self-determination. Her journey is a testament to the human spirit's capacity to endure and overcome even the most daunting challenges.

Respondent 8 reflects on her experiences, stating, *"I feel safe here and I found friends who are just like me."* This highlights her resilience in finding solace and camaraderie despite the trauma she has endured. She draws strength from the support she receives from compassionate individuals, particularly her aunt and uncle, who have become her pillars of support in her darkest moments. Despite facing threats and accusations from her own family, Respondent 8 perseveres in seeking legal recourse to break free from her oppressive marriage. Her determination is evident as she navigates legal processes and societal stigmas, refusing to succumb to despair.

In the face of shattered trust in the institution of marriage, Respondent 8 remains hopeful for a better future. She expresses her aspirations for independence and empowerment, stating, *"I want to study hard...and build my future."* This resilience and optimism underscore her unwavering belief in the possibility of a life filled with agency, dignity, and fulfillment. Respondent 8's story is a poignant reminder of the resilience inherent within us all, even in the face of unimaginable adversity. Her journey exemplifies the transformative power of hope, resilience, and the unwavering human spirit in the pursuit of freedom and dignity.

Reflection on Marriage and Trust

Reflecting on her tumultuous journey, Respondent 8 expresses profound skepticism towards the institution of marriage. She articulates a deep-seated distrust, forged by the traumatic experiences she endured. In her own words, she laments, *"I distrust the Institution of marriage and I don't think so I will ever to trust it again."* Her sentiment is punctuated by a poignant observation: *"Even if I find a good man now, I don't think so I will be able to marry again."*

These reflections are grounded in the harsh realities she faced, where marriage became a tool for coercion and control rather than a union of love and partnership. Her ordeal underscores the profound betrayal of trust, as she recounts being forced into a marriage she vehemently opposed. This betrayal echoes in her words as she recounts her family's disregard for her well-being, despite their duty to protect her: *"My mother is angry on me that I left my abusive husband and a mentally toxic home."*

Through her narrative, Respondent 8 reveals a shattered faith in the institution of marriage, shaped by her lived experiences of abuse, manipulation, and betrayal. Her journey serves as a poignant reminder of the lasting scars left by systemic failures and interpersonal trauma, highlighting the urgent need for support systems and empowerment initiatives to break cycles of violence and rebuild trust in relationships.

The life history of Respondent 8 encapsulates a harrowing journey marked by familial manipulation, forced marriage, and abuse. Despite facing immense adversity, she demonstrates remarkable resilience and courage in seeking freedom and a better life for herself. Through the support of compassionate individuals and the determination to navigate legal and social challenges, Respondent 8 emerges as a symbol of hope amidst adversity. Her

story serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring impact of systemic injustices, the importance of support networks, and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. As she embarks on a journey towards healing and self-empowerment, Respondent 8's narrative highlights the need for societal change and support structures to ensure the rights and well-being of all individuals, especially those vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

4.9 LIFE HISTORY: Respondent 9

The life history of Respondent 9 unveils a deeply moving narrative of resilience, betrayal, and survival amidst societal constraints and familial violence. Born into a conservative and patriarchal community in Chiniot, Respondent 9's early years were shaped by the loss of her father and the oppressive gender norms that confined her aspirations for education and autonomy. However, her journey takes a harrowing turn when she becomes a victim of manipulation and exploitation by a peer, leading to accusations of impropriety and severe abuse at the hands of her own family members. Forced to confront the harsh realities of societal stigma and familial betrayal, Respondent 9 embarks on a quest for refuge and empowerment, ultimately finding solace in a shelter home as she navigates the complex intersections of gender-based violence, resilience, and self-determination. Through her narrative, she offers profound insights into the enduring struggles faced by countless individuals in societies where gender inequality and victim-blaming culture prevail.

Familial Violence and Betrayal

Familial violence and betrayal loom large in Respondent 9's harrowing life story, casting a dark shadow over her relationships and sense of security. Within her own family, she faced brutality and abandonment instead of the protection and support she needed. She recounts her brother's violent reaction upon learning of her interactions with a boy, describing how he subjected her to physical assault: *"When I use to go to school there was boy who use to stand on my way and try to talk to me... he got my mother number and tries calling me... my brother they earn and they run the family. My mother she works as housekeeper... The day my brother got to know about this thing he came home and he called me he asked me about this matter when I said no, I do not know him he started slapping me on my face and then he took one stick and starting beating me with that."* Moreover, her mother, rather than offering solace, became a passive participant in the violence: *"My mother tried to protect me but he hit my mother as well and starting cursed that she did not take care of us well."* This betrayal

from her own kin left Respondent 9 feeling utterly alone and defenseless, as she recalls, " I kept crying and begging that Bhai I did not do anything wrong try to understand me. But he did not stop and I got fainted."

The aftermath of this familial violence only served to deepen her isolation, with her mother succumbing to societal pressure and her relatives turning against her: *"After that may be for 1 week nobody spoke to me nobody, came to me except my mother. And she was even not believing me... even my uncle slapped me."* The lack of familial support compounded her trauma, leaving her with nowhere to turn for comfort or protection.

Societal Stigma and Gendered Expectations

In Respondent 9's life history, societal stigma and gendered expectations emerge as formidable barriers to her autonomy and well-being. Growing up in a conservative environment in Chiniot, she navigated restrictive norms that enforced strict gender roles and limited her opportunities for education and self-expression. Respondent 9 vividly articulates the suffocating atmosphere of her community, stating, *"People mind there are very conservative. They do not like that, females come out and go for schools."*

This entrenched conservatism fostered an environment where any deviation from societal norms, particularly in interactions with the opposite gender, was met with severe consequences. Respondent 9 recounts the harrowing experience of being falsely accused of engaging with a boy, leading to violent retribution from her family: *"When they called my brother, he started cursing them for keeping me here and asked me to come back or they will kill me."* This quote exemplifies the extreme measures taken by her family to uphold the honor and reputation of the family, irrespective of the truth.

Moreover, Respondent 9's narrative sheds light on the insidious nature of gendered expectations, where women are often held responsible for the actions and behaviors of men. Despite being a victim of manipulation and coercion by a peer, she faced blame and condemnation from her family and community. Reflecting on the injustice of her situation, she expresses, *"Yes, I was talking to him but he was manipulating me. It was not something out of love. Nobody understood me."*

The societal stigma surrounding women's interactions with men not only perpetuates victim-blaming but also perpetuates a culture of silence and shame. Respondent 9's

experience of being ostracized and mocked by her community further illustrates the pervasive nature of gender-based discrimination and the pressure to conform to rigid expectations.

Manipulation and Exploitation

Manipulation and exploitation are central themes in Respondent 9's life history narrative, illustrating the insidious tactics used to control and victimize vulnerable individuals. Throughout her story, Respondent 9 recounts instances of manipulation and exploitation that have profoundly impacted her life, leaving her feeling powerless and betrayed.

One poignant example of manipulation is evident in Respondent 9's interactions with a peer from her community. She recounts, *"He tried to abuse me as well. He used to blackmail me a lot. I was scared of him."* This peer utilized coercion and threats to manipulate Respondent 9, exploiting her fears and vulnerabilities for his own gain. Despite her resistance, she found herself trapped in a cycle of manipulation, unable to break free from his control.

Respondent 9's narrative also highlights the role of societal stigma and victim-blaming in perpetuating exploitation. She explains, *"People started talking about me...ladies used to come to my mother and mock her and ask me inappropriate questions about that boy."* Here, societal gossip and judgment further compounded Respondent 9's suffering, subjecting her to additional scrutiny and shame. This societal stigma not only enabled the manipulation to persist but also contributed to her sense of isolation and despair.

Furthermore, Respondent 9's family members played a pivotal role in perpetuating manipulation and exploitation. She recounts, *"My brothers...beat me...based on false accusations and societal pressure."* Here, familial betrayal and violence demonstrate how individuals in positions of authority can abuse their power to control and coerce others. Respondent 9's brothers' actions highlight the devastating impact of familial betrayal, as they prioritized societal expectations over her well-being, perpetuating a cycle of abuse and trauma.

Overall, Respondent 9's narrative underscores the pervasive nature of manipulation and exploitation in her life. From interpersonal relationships to societal norms, she faced relentless pressure and coercion, leaving her feeling isolated and vulnerable. By sharing her

story, Respondent 9 sheds light on the urgent need to address the root causes of manipulation and exploitation, advocating for justice, empowerment, and societal change.

Seeking Refuge and Empowerment

In Respondent 9's life history, the theme of seeking refuge and empowerment emerges as a central narrative thread. Despite facing immense adversity and betrayal from her own family, Respondent 9 demonstrates remarkable resilience and agency in her pursuit of safety, dignity, and self-determination. Respondent 9's decision to seek refuge in a shelter home represents a pivotal moment of empowerment, where she takes decisive action to break free from the cycle of abuse and oppression. Reflecting on her journey, she shares, *"I stole some money from her purse and left her at the hospital and came to the bus stop. It was the most difficult travel of my life as I was very young and I had never traveled alone before for this long distance."* This bold and courageous act underscores her determination to reclaim control over her own life and seek a safer, more dignified existence.

Arriving at the shelter home, Respondent 9 recounts her initial struggles to find the right place of refuge, illustrating the challenges she faced in navigating unfamiliar territory. She recalls, *"I asked the taxi driver to take me to a shelter home, and he brought me to Edhi center, but that was for disabled people."* Despite these obstacles, her unwavering resolve leads her to persist until she finds the appropriate support and assistance she needs. Once within the shelter home, Respondent 9's journey towards empowerment continues as she receives the necessary resources, support, and advocacy to assert her rights and pursue a life free from violence and coercion. Through the intervention of legal aid and the provision of a safe space, she begins to rebuild her sense of self-worth and agency.

In her own words, Respondent 9 expresses her determination to chart a new path forward: *"I will stay over here and live until they stop coming behind me and I have no fear from them. Then I will start studying somewhere and I will work at someone's home where they can provide me a space to live as well."* This declaration of independence reflects her resilience and optimism as she looks towards a future defined by autonomy, education, and economic empowerment.

Respondent 9's journey exemplifies the transformative power of seeking refuge and empowerment in the face of adversity. Through her courage and determination, she serves as

a beacon of hope for survivors of gender-based violence, demonstrating that even in the darkest of circumstances, there is always the possibility of reclaiming one's agency and rebuilding a life of dignity and purpose.

Reflections on Society and Resilience

Respondent 9's narrative unveils a profound reflection on the societal norms and structures that perpetuate gender-based violence and oppression. Despite facing unimaginable adversity, she demonstrates remarkable resilience and agency in navigating these challenges. Here's an exploration of her reflections on society and resilience, including quotes from the respondent:

1. **Societal Stigma and Gender Expectations:** Respondent 9 poignantly highlights the restrictive gender norms and expectations that governed her life, lamenting, *"People mind there are very conservative... They do not like that, females come out and go for schools."* This observation underscores the deeply entrenched societal stigma surrounding female autonomy and education, which exacerbates vulnerability to exploitation and abuse.
2. **Victim-Blaming Culture:** Reflecting on the aftermath of false accusations, Respondent 9 remarks, *"People started talking about me... asking me inappropriate questions about that boy."* This experience exposes the pervasive victim-blaming culture that places the onus on survivors to justify their actions, perpetuating shame and isolation instead of support and understanding.
3. **Resilience amid Adversity:** Despite facing systemic injustices and familial betrayal, Respondent 9 exhibits remarkable resilience and determination. She affirms, *"I give myself courage that it's just an exam of life I have to stay strong."* This resilience reflects her unwavering commitment to reclaiming agency and dignity in the face of overwhelming challenges.
4. **Desire for Justice and Change:** Respondent 9's narrative underscores a profound desire for justice and societal change to address the root causes of gender-based violence. She expresses her fervent hope for accountability, stating, *"Our society is too bad... our small gossips can destroy someone's life."* This recognition of the

pervasive harm caused by gossip and stigma emphasizes the urgent need for collective action to dismantle harmful societal norms.

5. **Empowerment through Self-Advocacy:** Through her decision to seek refuge in a shelter home and assert her autonomy, Respondent 9 embodies the transformative power of self-advocacy. She asserts her agency, declaring, *"I do not want to go back... They cannot be my family, my brothers."* This assertion of independence and self-worth reflects a profound commitment to breaking free from cycles of abuse and reclaiming her voice and agency.

Desire for Justice and Healing

Respondent 9's narrative is imbued with a palpable desire for justice and healing, reflecting the profound impact of her traumatic experiences on her psyche. Despite enduring relentless abuse and betrayal, she exhibits a resilient spirit and a fervent yearning for redress and restoration. Respondent 9 expresses her longing for justice through her poignant reflections on the injustices she has suffered at the hands of her family and society. She laments, *"They did so badly to me. Over an assumption they believed other people not me. They have beaten me up because of what I did not even think of doing."* This acknowledgment of the unjust treatment she has endured underscores her deep-seated need for accountability and rectification.

Moreover, Respondent 9's quest for justice is intertwined with her journey towards healing and empowerment. She recognizes that healing cannot occur without addressing the root causes of her trauma and holding perpetrators accountable. In her words, *"Sometimes I cry that what I have done wrong that this all is happening to me. But then I give myself courage that it's just an exam of life I have to stay strong."* This poignant reflection reveals her inner resolve to confront her pain and adversity head-on, seeking solace in the belief that resilience and fortitude will ultimately pave the path towards healing.

Central to Respondent 9's desire for justice and healing is her yearning for societal recognition and validation of her worth and dignity. She laments the pervasive stigma and victim-blaming culture that permeates her community, asserting, *"Our society is too bad we never think that way that our small gossips can destroy someone's life."* This recognition of

the insidious impact of societal norms and prejudices underscores her fervent plea for societal change and collective accountability.

Respondent 9's narrative poignantly illustrates the intertwined nature of her desire for justice and healing. Through her resilient spirit and unwavering determination, she embodies the transformative power of advocacy, solidarity, and self-empowerment in the pursuit of justice and restoration. As she navigates her journey towards healing, Respondent 9's story serves as a poignant testament to the enduring strength of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

The life history of Respondent 9 sheds light on the pervasive issues of gender-based violence, familial betrayal, and societal stigma that continue to plague many communities. Her story highlights the profound impact of systemic injustices and patriarchal norms on the lives of vulnerable individuals, particularly young women like herself. Despite facing unimaginable hardships and betrayal from those closest to her, Respondent 9's resilience and courage shine through as she takes steps towards reclaiming her agency and seeking refuge in a shelter home.

Her narrative underscores the urgent need for societal change, including greater awareness, accountability, and support structures to address the root causes of gender-based violence and empower survivors to break free from cycles of abuse. It also serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of solidarity, empathy, and advocacy in creating a more just and equitable society where all individuals can live with dignity, safety, and autonomy. As Respondent 9 navigates her journey towards healing and empowerment, her story serves as a powerful testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative potential of collective action in challenging oppressive systems and fostering meaningful change. Ultimately, her narrative calls upon us to listen, learn, and stand in solidarity with survivors of gender-based violence as we work towards a future where every individual can live free from fear, violence, and discrimination.

4.10 LIFE HISTORY: Respondent 10

The life history of Respondent 10 offers a compelling insight into the complexities of familial dynamics, societal pressures, and the pursuit of justice and autonomy in the face of adversity. Through her narrative, we delve into the journey of a woman whose life is upended

by a bitter land dispute between her family and in-laws, ultimately leading to her expulsion from her marital home and separation from her children. Amidst familial conflict and betrayal, Respondent 10 grapples with the erosion of trust, emotional turmoil, and the quest for legal recourse and empowerment. Her story unveils the intricate interplay of familial expectations, gendered norms, and the resilience of the human spirit in navigating tumultuous circumstances. As we explore the intricacies of her narrative, we gain valuable insights into the broader themes of agency, resilience, and the pursuit of justice within familial relationships and societal structures.

Arranged Marriage and Initial Happiness

Respondent 10's narrative begins with the backdrop of an arranged marriage, a common cultural practice in many societies. Despite the predetermined nature of her union, she expresses initial happiness and contentment with her marital arrangement. She describes her husband as a *"good man"* and reflects on their shared optimism for the future: *"I was happy. My husband was a good man. He was having a good job and we started our new life happily."* This sentiment of contentment is further emphasized by Respondent 10's acknowledgment of the positive trajectory of their early married life. They embarked on their journey together with hope and enthusiasm, laying the foundation for what seemed to be a promising partnership: *"We had a very good life though."*

The portrayal of her husband as supportive and their marital union as a source of happiness underscores the initial allure of arranged marriages within certain cultural contexts. Respondent 10's narrative reflects the belief in the potential for love and companionship to blossom within the framework of arranged unions, as evidenced by her statement: *"He was a good man."*

This depiction of arranged marriage as a source of initial happiness and fulfillment provides insight into the complexity of marital dynamics within traditional societies. Despite the predetermined nature of their union, Respondent 10's narrative highlights the potential for mutual respect, affection, and shared aspirations to thrive within the confines of arranged marriages, offering a nuanced perspective on this culturally ingrained practice.

Family Conflict and Land Dispute

Respondent 10's narrative revolves around a pivotal conflict stemming from a land dispute between her family and her in-laws. This dispute becomes a central catalyst for familial discord, ultimately leading to profound repercussions in her life. Respondent 10 vividly describes the intensity of the conflict, stating, *"Both families were having a conflict on a land issue." The dispute escalates to the point where it not only strains her marital relationship but also pits her family against her husband's. She explains, "They pressurized my husband to divorce me, and my family pressurized my husband to cut off with his parents."* This tug-of-war between two families puts immense strain on Respondent 10's marriage and tests the bonds of loyalty and allegiance.

The land dispute takes on a deeply personal dimension for Respondent 10, as the contested land was originally gifted to her by her father upon her marriage. She recounts, *"That land was belonging to my father, and he gifted it to me on my marriage, but my brother-in-law he took it for himself."* This betrayal of trust and usurpation of her property exacerbate the conflict, fueling feelings of injustice and resentment. As the dispute intensifies, Respondent 10 finds herself caught in the crossfire, with both sides pressuring her husband to take decisive action. She laments, *"Our happy life got disturbed because of this so much... We started fighting, and our kids got frightened of this thing."* The conflict not only disrupts her marital bliss but also threatens the well-being of her children, underscoring the profound impact of familial discord on family dynamics and emotional stability.

In the face of mounting pressure and tension, Respondent 10's marriage and familial relationships hang in the balance, with the land dispute casting a long shadow over her life. She reflects, *"Now I am just waiting for things to take a good turn, otherwise I would have to take some steps which I will never like but for the sake of my kids."* This lingering uncertainty and the specter of potential drastic actions underscore the far-reaching consequences of unresolved family conflicts and land disputes.

Isolation and Struggle for Rights

In Respondent 10's narrative, isolation and the struggle for rights are central themes that profoundly shape her experience amidst familial conflict. She finds herself caught in the midst of a bitter dispute between her family and her in-laws, leading to her expulsion from her in-laws' home and the separation from her children. Respondent 10 expresses her anguish, stating, *"Days ago my in-laws they kicked me out of home and took my children from me."*

This sudden and forceful separation leaves her feeling abandoned and powerless, as she desperately seeks to reunite with her children and assert her rights.

Despite her efforts to reconcile with her husband and negotiate for her children's return, Respondent 10 encounters resistance and indifference from both her own family and her husband's. She recounts, *"I asked my husband for kids and home if he will give me my rights it's okay otherwise, I will take my kids from them legally."* This statement reflects her determination to assert her rights and reclaim her role as a mother, even in the face of familial pressure and societal expectations.

Respondent 10's isolation is further compounded by the lack of support from her family members, as she laments, *"My parents even came behind me and ask me to come back but everyone's ego is bigger than my life."* This sense of abandonment and betrayal underscores the emotional toll of familial conflict and the erosion of trust within her support network.

As she navigates the complexities of her situation, Respondent 10 seeks refuge and legal assistance from a shelter home, recognizing the need for external intervention to safeguard her rights and reunite with her children. She expresses her resolve to take decisive action, stating, *"I will not approve this thing... I am just waiting for things to take a good turn otherwise I would have to take some steps which I will never like but for the sake of my kids."* This statement reflects her unwavering determination to prioritize the well-being of her children and assert her agency in the face of adversity.

Seeking Shelter and Legal Recourse

In the narrative of Respondent 10, seeking shelter and legal recourse emerges as a critical turning point in her journey towards reclaiming agency and advocating for her rights amidst familial turmoil. Her decision to turn to a shelter home for support reflects both her desperation and her recognition of the need for external intervention to navigate the complexities of her situation. Respondent 10 articulates her sense of desperation and isolation, stating, *"I begged them not to do this thing to me... I instantly ran to my father's house."* Despite her pleas, she finds herself without recourse within her familial network, as her father expresses reluctance to intervene, citing his own pride: *"He told me he cannot beg in front of anyone for anything."*

Realizing the limitations of familial support, Respondent 10 seeks assistance from a friend, who directs her towards a shelter home. She recounts, *"I asked one of my friends for help... she told me about this shelter home that they can legally and safely help me with this."* Here, the shelter home represents a lifeline, offering not only physical refuge but also access to legal resources and advocacy. Upon arriving at the shelter home, Respondent 10 finds a supportive environment where her needs are recognized and addressed. She describes her interaction with the shelter staff, stating, *"They asked about my whole story and called a lawyer for me. They told me it's mandatory to do so."* This demonstrates the proactive approach of the shelter in providing comprehensive support to survivors of familial conflict.

Moreover, the shelter home serves as a safe space for Respondent 10 to articulate her grievances and assert her rights. She asserts her determination to reclaim her children and pursue legal action if necessary, declaring, *"I am missing kids every time... I asked him for kids and home if he will give me my rights it's okay, otherwise I will take my kids from them legally and will never look back."*

Emotional Toll and Erosion of Trust

The emotional toll and erosion of trust experienced by Respondent 10 in her life history narrative are palpable, revealing the profound impact of familial conflict and betrayal on her well-being. Here's an exploration of this theme with quotes from the respondent:

- 1. Emotional Distress:** Respondent 10's ordeal is marked by profound emotional distress, as she grapples with feelings of abandonment, disillusionment, and longing for her children. She expresses her anguish, stating, *"I am missing my kids every time."* This sentiment reflects the deep emotional void created by the separation from her children and the turmoil within her familial relationships.
- 2. Betrayal and Disillusionment:** The erosion of trust within her family is evident as Respondent 10 recounts her experiences of betrayal and indifference. She reflects on her husband's response to the situation, noting, *"My husband was not at home that moment... they told him I left the kids while saying that I do not need him and his kids."* This distortion of truth deepens her sense of betrayal and disbelief, as those closest to her prioritize their own interests over her well-being.

3. **Isolation and Helplessness:** Respondent 10's sense of isolation and helplessness exacerbates her emotional distress, as she finds herself caught between warring factions within her family. She expresses her frustration, stating, *"No one is thinking about me and my kids; they all are thinking about themselves."* This sentiment encapsulates her profound sense of abandonment and the lack of support from those she once relied on.
4. **Longing for Resolution:** Despite the turmoil she faces, Respondent 10 retains a sense of hope and determination, driven by her longing for resolution and reunification with her children. She articulates her resolve, stating; *"Now I am just waiting for things to take a good turn... for the sake of my kids."* This resilience underscores her commitment to reclaiming her agency and rebuilding her fractured family bonds, despite the overwhelming odds stacked against her.

Empowerment and Resolve

In Respondent 10's narrative, amidst the turmoil and despair caused by familial conflict and betrayal, her journey is marked by moments of empowerment and unwavering resolve. Despite facing immense challenges, she demonstrates a remarkable strength of character and determination to advocate for herself and her children.

Respondent 10's resolve is evident in her decision to seek help from a shelter home, recognizing the need for legal recourse and support in reclaiming her rights. As she recounts, *"I asked one of my friends for help she told me about this shelter home that they can legally and safely help me with this."* This proactive step reflects her determination to assert her autonomy and navigate the complexities of her situation with courage and determination.

Moreover, Respondent 10 exhibits a fierce determination to confront the injustices she faces and demand accountability from those who have wronged her. She articulates her resolve with clarity, stating, *"I asked him for kids and home if will give me my rights it's okay otherwise I will take my kids from them legally and will never look back."* This declaration underscores her unwavering commitment to securing a better future for herself and her children, regardless of the obstacles she may encounter.

In the face of familial pressure and societal expectations, Respondent 10 remains steadfast in her pursuit of justice and empowerment. She refuses to allow her life and the

lives of her children to be dictated by the egos and self-interests of others, asserting her agency and autonomy with conviction. As she reflects on her situation, she recognizes the need to take decisive action, stating, *"No one is thinking about me and my kids they all are thinking about themselves."* This acknowledgment underscores her awareness of the power dynamics at play and her determination to challenge them in order to secure a better future for herself and her family.

The life history of Respondent 10 poignantly illustrates the far-reaching impact of familial conflict and societal expectations on individual lives. Her narrative underscores the complexities inherent in navigating arranged marriages, familial disputes, and the struggle for autonomy, particularly for women caught in the crossfire. Despite facing betrayal, isolation, and emotional turmoil, Respondent 10 demonstrates resilience and determination in seeking justice and reclaiming her rights. Her decision to seek refuge in a shelter home reflects both her vulnerability and her empowerment, highlighting the crucial role of external support and legal recourse in navigating complex familial dynamics. As she waits for resolution and reunification with her children, Respondent 10's story serves as a powerful reminder of the enduring strength of the human spirit in the face of adversity, and the importance of advocating for one's rights and well-being, even in the midst of familial discord and societal pressures.

4.11 LIFE HISTORY: Respondent 11

The narrative of Respondent 11 intricately weaves together themes of gender dynamics, familial expectations, professional challenges, and the pursuit of independence amidst adversity. Through her life story, we witness the struggles and triumphs of a young woman navigating societal norms and personal hardships in pursuit of education, career advancement, and personal autonomy. From defying familial restrictions to endure patriarchal workplaces and ultimately breaking free from an abusive marriage, Respondent 11's journey exemplifies resilience, determination, and the quest for self-empowerment in the face of systemic oppression. This narrative analysis seeks to delve into the multifaceted experiences of Respondent 11, shedding light on the complex interplay of social, cultural, and personal factors shaping her life trajectory.

Challenging Gender Norms and Pursuing Education

Respondent 11's narrative illustrates a compelling journey of defiance against entrenched gender norms and a steadfast commitment to educational advancement. Despite facing familial opposition and societal expectations, she remained resolute in her pursuit of knowledge and professional development.

Reflecting on her academic journey, Respondent 11 recalls, *"I was the topper in my school, and in college, I excelled, particularly in the subject of chemistry."* Her academic achievements served as a testament to her intellect and determination, even in the face of adversity. Despite lacking familial precedent in the field of medicine, she found inspiration from her brother's friend, a doctor, who suggested pharmacy as a viable career path. Undeterred by the absence of familial guidance, she proactively sought advice from her uncle, a doctor, to validate her career choice.

However, traditional gender roles-impose barriers to her educational aspirations. She recounts, *"They always told me that I cannot go to co-education."* This restriction, rooted in societal norms dictating separate educational spheres for men and women, posed a significant challenge to her academic ambitions. Despite the limitations imposed by her family, Respondent 11 remained undeterred, advocating for herself and persisting in her pursuit of education.

Her journey to the University of Lahore marked a significant milestone in her quest for knowledge. Despite encountering logistical obstacles, she reflects, *"They never made any hurdle on my way for education."* Her determination to overcome familial resistance and access higher education underscores her unwavering commitment to personal and intellectual growth.

Respondent 11's narrative exemplifies the transformative power of education in challenging gender norms and empowering individuals to transcend societal constraints. Her resilience in the face of adversity serves as a beacon of inspiration for aspiring women seeking to chart their own paths and defy societal expectations. As she aptly states, *"I am an educated independent girl who knows how to stand for herself."*

Navigating Patriarchal Workplaces

Respondent 11's journey through patriarchal workplaces reflects the systemic challenges faced by women in male-dominated professional environments. Despite her

qualifications and dedication, she encountered discrimination and unequal treatment, highlighting the pervasive nature of gender bias.

Reflecting on her experiences, Respondent 11 remarked, *"It was hard to complete [the job] as it was all patriarchal place handled and run by men's. They never accepted that one female is coming and working with us by shoulder to shoulder."* This sentiment underscores the resistance she faced in gaining equal footing within her workplace, where gender norms perpetuated a culture of exclusion and marginalization.

Furthermore, she encountered disparities in pay and opportunities, with men around her receiving higher compensation despite being less educated. *"At my first job, I used to get a 20,000 salary only while men around me, they were less educated than me and getting paid more,"* she lamented, highlighting the injustice and inequity prevalent in her professional sphere.

Respondent 11's experience also shed light on the prevalence of workplace harassment and intimidation. She recounted an incident where false accusations were levied against her, stating, *"Once one man, he tried to defame me by blaming on me that I stole the medicines which were worth it to 10 lakhs."* This attempt to tarnish her reputation reflects the vulnerability of women in patriarchal workplaces, where power dynamics are exploited to undermine their credibility and autonomy.

Despite these challenges, Respondent 11 demonstrated resilience and determination in confronting patriarchal norms and asserting her right to fair treatment. Her decision to resign from her job in the face of discrimination and mistreatment underscores her refusal to tolerate injustice and her commitment to preserving her integrity and self-worth.

Marriage and Family Dynamics

In Respondent 11's narrative, marriage emerges as a pivotal but tumultuous aspect of her life, marked by complex family dynamics and personal challenges. Initially, she describes her marriage as a hopeful union, stating, *"I got married at the age of 26. It was an arranged marriage but I was happy."* However, this optimism quickly gives way to discord as conflicts with her in-laws over property disputes strain the relationship.

The strain intensifies when Respondent 11's marital home becomes a battleground for familial disputes, particularly between her and her husband's family. She recounts, *"Days ago my in-laws they kicked me out of home and took my children from me,"* illustrating the power dynamics at play within the extended family structure. As she grapples with accusations and isolation, her sense of belonging erodes, leaving her vulnerable and displaced.

Moreover, Respondent 11's marriage is characterized by financial instability and unequal power dynamics. Despite her academic achievements and professional aspirations, she faces resistance from her husband, who discourages her from working and prioritizes his own interests over hers. She laments, *"He never understood that I left my family for him...he always prioritized his friends over me."*

The narrative also underscores the impact of familial expectations and societal norms on marital dynamics. Respondent 11's family's disapproval of her marriage due to caste differences further complicates her situation, leading to estrangement and abandonment. She reflects, *"My siblings, they are not good to me...they want me to stay away from home...nobody is loyal to me."*

Through her narrative, Respondent 11 sheds light on the intricate interplay of family dynamics, societal expectations, and personal agency within the context of marriage. Her story serves as a poignant reminder of the complexities inherent in familial relationships and the resilience required navigating them in pursuit of autonomy and dignity.

Seeking Safety and Independence

Throughout her life journey, Respondent 11 has demonstrated remarkable resilience and determination to secure her safety and independence in the face of adversity. Faced with abusive dynamics in her marriage, she made the courageous decision to seek refuge in a shelter home, prioritizing her well-being above all else. Reflecting on her experiences, she shares, *"I knew when he sees like this it means they will do that to me and hurt me."* This acknowledgment of the danger she faced and her proactive response underscores her agency and determination to protect her from further harm.

Despite threats and coercion from her husband, Respondent 11 remained resolute in her decision to break free from the cycle of abuse. She recalls, *"He told me he will do whatever he wants it will not care about anyone and he will show me my place in his home."*

In the face of such intimidation, she chose to assert her autonomy and seek assistance from a shelter home, recognizing that her safety and well-being were non-negotiable.

Moreover, her commitment to reclaiming her independence extends beyond mere physical safety. Respondent 11 expresses her resolve to rebuild her life and regain financial autonomy through employment and self-sufficiency. She articulates, *"I am planning to stay here in this shelter home which is a safe place for me...after that I will shift to private hostel and continue my job and make myself independent and powerful."* This determination to forge her path forward, free from the constraints of abusive relationships and societal expectations, exemplifies her strength and resilience.

In seeking safety and independence, Respondent 11 confronts not only the immediate threats to her physical well-being but also the broader systemic challenges that perpetuate gender-based violence and inequality. Her story serves as a powerful testament to the resilience of survivors and the importance of access to safe spaces and supportive resources in empowering individuals to break free from abusive situations and pursue lives of dignity and self-determination.

Empowerment and Resilience

Respondent 11's narrative is a testament to the power of resilience and empowerment in overcoming adversity and reclaiming agency over one's life. Despite facing numerous challenges, she exhibits remarkable strength and determination to navigate through difficult circumstances and pursue a path towards independence and self-empowerment.

Respondent 11 reflects on her journey with a sense of resilience, stating: *"I am an educated independent girl who knows how to stand for herself."* This declaration encapsulates her unwavering commitment to self-empowerment and underscores her refusal to succumb to societal expectations or gender-based limitations.

Throughout her narrative, Respondent 11 demonstrates a steadfast resolve to challenge patriarchal norms and assert her rights, asserting: *"I have no hopes from my family, from my father, from my siblings, from my mother, or my husband. I know I have to take a stand for my own self, and I will do so."* This assertion reflects her empowerment and determination to break free from the constraints imposed upon her by societal and familial expectations.

In the face of marital abuse and familial disapproval, Respondent 11 exhibits resilience by making the courageous decision to leave her abusive marriage and seek refuge in a shelter home. Despite facing threats and coercion from her husband, she remains steadfast in her commitment to prioritize her safety and well-being, affirming her agency and autonomy.

Moreover, Respondent 11's resilience is evident in her plans for the future, as she articulates her aspirations to regain financial independence through employment and savings: *"I will do online teaching and do some savings... I will show this cruel world what I am capable of."* This determination to rebuild her life and assert her independence speaks volumes about her inner strength and resilience.

The life history of Respondent 11 reflects a profound journey marked by resilience, empowerment, and the pursuit of self-determination. Despite facing formidable challenges, she emerges as a symbol of strength and courage, refusing to be defined by societal norms or constrained by gender-based expectations. Through her unwavering resolve and determination to break free from abusive relationships and patriarchal constraints, Respondent 11 exemplifies the transformative power of resilience and empowerment in overcoming adversity. Her narrative underscores the importance of asserting agency, prioritizing self-care, and charting a path towards independence and empowerment. As she embarks on a journey towards reclaiming her autonomy and shaping her own destiny, Respondent 11 serves as an inspiring beacon of hope, demonstrating that with resilience and determination, one can overcome even the most daunting of challenges and emerge stronger on the other side.

4.12 LIFE HISTORY: Respondent 12

The life history of Respondent 12 offers a poignant glimpse into the lived experiences of many women in patriarchal societies, where systemic gender inequality, interpersonal violence, and societal stigma intersect to shape individual destinies. Born in Taxila, she recounts a narrative marked by early marriage at the age of 16, thrust into a union arranged by her parents without her consent. Over the years, her marital bliss was overshadowed by her husband's descent into substance abuse and verbal abuse, leaving her trapped in a cycle of mistreatment and powerlessness. Despite the hardships she faced, Respondent 12's story is one of resilience and determination, as she navigates the complexities of seeking refuge in a

shelter home, grappling with societal judgment, and ultimately, finding the courage to pursue legal recourse against her abuser. Through her narrative, she sheds light on the pervasive challenges faced by women in abusive relationships, while also highlighting the strength and agency that empower survivors to reclaim their autonomy and forge a path towards justice and healing.

Identity and Agency

Respondent 12's narrative underscores the profound impact of societal norms and familial expectations on individual agency and identity. From an early age, she was thrust into a marital union without agency or autonomy, a decision made by her parents without regard for her desires. Reflecting on her early marriage, she states, *"I don't know about my age, I think like I am 40 years old. I am an uneducated lady and I'm born in Taxila. I was 16 years old when I got married."*

The lack of choice in her marital arrangement stripped her of the opportunity to define her own path in life, leaving her feeling powerless and voiceless. She expresses the sense of resignation that permeates her narrative, saying, *"I kept living like this but now at the end of my patience, I can't live like this anymore."*

Furthermore, Respondent 12's experiences within her marriage illustrate the erosion of her identity and agency in the face of abuse and mistreatment from her husband. Despite enduring years of verbal abuse and accusations, she initially remained silent, a testament to the disempowerment that many women face within oppressive marital dynamics. She recounts, *"He started taking drugs and after doing drugs, he used to abuse me a lot verbally. He used to tell me and doubt me that I am not loyal to him."*

However, as her narrative progresses, there is a subtle shift as Respondent 12 begins to reclaim agency and assert herself in the face of adversity. Her decision to seek refuge in a shelter home and file a petition against her husband signifies a newfound determination to break free from the cycle of abuse and reclaim control over her own life. She declares, *"I came out of home thinking that I will go to my brother's house but then I called him multiple times but he did not pick up... then I came to this shelter home."*

Despite the challenges she faces and the uncertainty of her future, Respondent 12's story serves as a powerful testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the enduring quest for agency and self-determination, even in the face of overwhelming odds.

Interpersonal Dynamics and Abuse

Respondent 12's narrative is fraught with instances of interpersonal dynamics marred by abuse and mistreatment. She recounts the deterioration of her marital relationship, revealing the insidious nature of verbal and emotional abuse inflicted upon her by her husband. She describes how his substance abuse fueled accusations and doubts about her loyalty, leaving her feeling powerless and demoralized. She articulates the impact of this abuse on her sense of self-worth, stating, *"He kept doubting me that I am bad with other men... whom I'm not able to be if somebody is doubt on my self-respect and my loyalty."* This quote encapsulates the erosion of trust and dignity experienced by Respondent 12 within her marriage.

Furthermore, Respondent 12 reflects on the lack of support from her children, highlighting the pervasive nature of abuse within her familial relationships. Despite enduring mistreatment, she finds herself isolated and abandoned by those closest to her, stating, *"My all kids this took by their father's side... they did not take my side."* This statement underscores the betrayal and neglect experienced by Respondent 12 at the hands of her own family members, compounding her sense of vulnerability and despair.

Overall, Respondent 12's narrative underscores the complex dynamics of interpersonal relationships marked by abuse and power imbalances. Through her lived experiences, she sheds light on the profound impact of verbal and emotional abuse on individuals' well-being and underscores the urgent need for support and intervention to address cycles of violence within familial and marital contexts.

Societal Pressures and Stigma

Respondent 12's narrative is deeply entwined with the societal pressures and stigmas that permeate her life. From the moment of her marriage at a young age, she found herself ensnared in a web of expectations and norms dictated by her community. She reflects, *"I was 16-year-old when I got married...my parents they chose him for me nobody asked about my*

choice." This lack of agency in choosing her life partner underscores the rigid societal structures that limit women's autonomy and reinforce patriarchal values.

Throughout her marriage, Respondent 12 faced the brunt of societal stigma associated with infertility and marital discord. Despite her husband's substance abuse and verbal abuse, she recounts, *"before our kids my mother-in-law she used to abuse me...he started taking drugs and... used to abuse me a lot verbally."* The normalization of abuse within marital relationships and the expectation for women to endure silently exacerbate the suffering of survivors like Respondent 12.

Moreover, seeking help and breaking free from the cycle of abuse is further complicated by the fear of societal judgment and ostracization. When she finally seeks refuge in a shelter home, she experiences backlash from her own family members. She laments, *"When I was coming out of home everybody was looking at me but nobody came behind me to stop me."* This lack of support from her kin reflects the deep-rooted stigma surrounding divorce and seeking assistance outside the confines of marital norms.

Respondent 12's experience highlights the double bind faced by many women in patriarchal societies—caught between the desire for liberation and the fear of social condemnation. She grapples with the conflicting messages from society and her own sense of self-worth. Despite facing abandonment and rejection, she asserts, *"I will not go back to them...they will keep doubt on me till the time I will go to my graveyard."* Her refusal to succumb to societal pressures demonstrates a quiet defiance and a determination to reclaim her agency and dignity, even in the face of overwhelming adversity.

Resilience and Determination

Throughout the narrative of Respondent 12's life history, a remarkable display of resilience and determination emerges in the face of adversity and mistreatment. Despite enduring years of abuse and manipulation from her husband, she summons the strength to seek a better life for herself, refusing to succumb to the cycle of violence that entraps her. Her unwavering resolve to break free is evident in her decision to seek refuge in a shelter home, a pivotal moment that marks her determination to reclaim her autonomy and dignity.

In her own words, she reflects on the pivotal moment of leaving her marital home: *"I came out of home thinking that I will go to my brother's house but then I called him multiple*

times but he did not pick up... when I reached over there, I didn't know which direction to go now because I did not have anyone behind me as a backup or safe place." This excerpt underscores the immense courage it took for her to step into the unknown, confronting her fears and uncertainties with a resilience born out of necessity.

Furthermore, Respondent 12's decision to file a petition against her husband speaks volumes about her determination to seek justice and hold her abuser accountable for his actions. Despite facing societal pressure and familial disapproval, she remains steadfast in her pursuit of legal recourse, refusing to be silenced or intimidated into submission. As she states, *"I am hopeful that Allah will make ways for me... they will keep doubting me till the time I will go to my graveyard."* These words encapsulate her unwavering belief in her own agency and the power of resilience to overcome even the most daunting obstacles.

Hope and Uncertainty

Respondent 12's narrative is imbued with a sense of both hope and uncertainty as she navigates the complexities of her life circumstances. Despite facing immense challenges and enduring years of abuse, she maintains a flicker of hope for a better future, albeit tinged with skepticism and apprehension.

In her own words, she reflects on her aspirations and the challenges she faces: *"I'm not planning to take my daughter from him as I don't have any backup for my own self how can I take care of her I am missing them but I can't take care of her like this but I can't go back to that man even."* Here, she grapples with the conflicting desires to protect her daughter while also acknowledging her own limitations and lack of resources.

The uncertainty of her future looms large as she contemplates her next steps: *"I will try to go back to my village where I born it will find my place on this planet but I am not going to back to that again and I will not even remarry ever."* Despite her determination to forge a new path forward, she confronts the daunting prospect of starting anew in unfamiliar territory, unsure of what the future may hold.

Respondent 12's resilience shines through in her refusal to succumb to despair: *"I am hopeful that I ALLAH will make ways for me."* Here, she draws strength from her faith, clinging to the belief that divine intervention will guide her through the darkness and illuminate a path towards a brighter tomorrow.

Yet, her optimism is tempered by a sense of pragmatism and a sober recognition of the harsh realities she faces: *"I know by this society will give hard time to my daughter as our Society is very conservative for women but what can I do now."* Despite her hopes for a more inclusive and compassionate society, she acknowledges the formidable barriers that stand in her way, leaving her uncertain about the prospects for meaningful change.

Respondent 12's life history narrative encapsulates the profound challenges faced by many women in patriarchal societies, where systemic inequalities and gender-based violence often restrict agency and autonomy. Her journey, marked by early marriage, abuse, and societal stigma, underscores the urgent need for societal change and support systems to empower survivors of abuse. Despite enduring immense hardship, Respondent 12 demonstrates remarkable resilience and determination to break free from the cycle of abuse and reclaim her autonomy. Her decision to seek refuge in a shelter home and pursue legal recourse against her abuser exemplifies her courage and commitment to seeking justice for herself.

However, her narrative also reflects the complexities and uncertainties inherent in the journey towards healing and self-determination. While she holds onto hope for a better future, she grapples with the fear of societal judgment and the lack of support from her own family. Respondent 12's story serves as a powerful reminder of the urgent need for societal action to address gender-based violence and provide comprehensive support services for survivors. By amplifying voices like hers and advocating for systemic change, we can work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive society where all individuals can live free from fear and oppression.

4.13 LIFE HISTORY: Respondent 13

The life history of Respondent 13 illuminates the harrowing journey of a young woman thrust into an arranged marriage against her will. Born and raised in Islamabad, she recounts her early marriage at the age of 18, marked by incessant abuse and cruelty at the hands of her in-laws and husband. Forced to endure years of physical and emotional torment, she ultimately finds refuge in a shelter home, where she seeks solace and support. Through her narrative, she navigates themes of resilience, endurance, and empowerment, shedding light on the challenges faced by survivors of domestic violence and the transformative power of reclaiming agency and autonomy. This narrative analysis delves into the complexities of

her experiences, offering insights into the dynamics of forced marriage, family betrayal, and the pursuit of justice and independence.

Forced Marriage and Abuse

Respondent 13's narrative underscores the harrowing reality of forced marriage and the enduring trauma of domestic abuse. From the outset, she paints a bleak picture of her marriage, describing how she was wedded against her will at a tender age, robbed of her agency and autonomy. She reflects on the coercive tactics employed by her family, lamenting, *"My family let me marry at the age of 18 without my consent."*

Throughout her marriage, Respondent 13 faced relentless abuse, both physical and emotional, at the hands of her husband and in-laws. Recounting the horrors she endured, she reveals, *"They used to beat me and abuse me physically,"* highlighting the pervasive violence that defined her married life. Her husband's indifference to her suffering further exacerbates her anguish, as she observes, *"My husband...never told them to not do this to me or took my side."*

The narrative is punctuated by moments of despair and desperation, as Respondent 13 grapples with the profound injustices inflicted upon her. She recalls the brutality of her abuse, recalling, *"They broke my leg and hurt me physically and internally very much,"* laying bare the profound physical and psychological toll exacted by her tormentors.

Amidst the agony, Respondent 13's resilience shines through as she confronts the stark realities of her situation. Reflecting on her futile attempts to seek refuge, she recounts, *"I called my parents...but they are only asking me to keep patients and bear it all,"* highlighting the callous indifference of those entrusted with her care.

In confronting the insidious intersection of forced marriage and abuse, Respondent 13's narrative serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring struggle for autonomy and dignity in the face of systemic oppression. Through her words, she bears witness to the profound injustices wrought by patriarchal norms and the urgent imperative to challenge and dismantle them.

Endurance and Suffering

Respondent 13's narrative is a poignant testament to the endurance and suffering endured by many women in abusive relationships. From the outset, she recounts the harrowing experience of being forced into marriage against her will at a tender age, devoid of agency or choice. Reflecting on her early years of matrimony, she recalls enduring relentless physical and emotional abuse at the hands of her in-laws, compounded by her husband's indifference to her plight. She shares, *"From the very start of our wedding, my husband was not interested in me. He only comes near for his rights; otherwise, he ignores me as if I'm invisible."*

Despite the anguish inflicted upon her, Respondent 13 exhibits remarkable resilience, navigating through years of mistreatment with unwavering patience and fortitude. She describes enduring beatings, threats, and neglect, yet maintains hope for change and resolution. *"I tried my best to keep this marriage, hoping for a change," she reflects, "but when the abuse became unbearable, I knew it was over."* Her resilience in the face of adversity underscores the inner strength required to survive such trauma.

The toll of enduring years of abuse, both physical and emotional, is palpable in Respondent 13's account. She shares, *"They broke my teeth, and I can't even chew anymore."* The scars left on her body and psyche serve as a painful reminder of the suffering she endured in silence for far too long. Despite the profound impact of the abuse on her well-being, she perseveres, determined to break free from the cycle of violence and reclaim her autonomy.

Respondent 13's narrative sheds light on the complexities of enduring suffering in abusive relationships, where the line between hope and despair becomes blurred. She reflects on the internal struggle of holding onto hope for change while confronting the harsh reality of her circumstances. *"I begged him to take me to another home where we could live peacefully," she recalls, "but he refused, and I knew I had to leave."* Her journey speaks to the resilience inherent in survivors of abuse, who summon the courage to break free from oppression and seek a better life for them.

Seeking Refuge

Seeking refuge became the only viable option for Respondent 13 amidst the escalating abuse and violence she endured in her marital home. Recalling her decision to leave her

children behind, she reflects, *"I have three kids I left my kids with their father as I was not able to move myself properly due to my leg and came here to this shelter home."* Her physical incapacitation, compounded by the relentless mistreatment, left her with no choice but to prioritize her own safety and well-being. Despite the heart-wrenching separation from her children, she recognized the urgent need to escape the toxic environment that threatened her very existence.

Upon arriving at the shelter home, Respondent 13 found a sanctuary from the storm of abuse that had engulfed her life. She describes her initial impressions, stating, *"I am very happy over here they have a doctor for me they are bringing free medicines to me they are taking care of me so much they give us free food three times per day."* The tangible support and care provided by the shelter staff offered her a lifeline in her darkest hour. Amidst the physical and emotional wounds inflicted by her abusers, she found solace in the nurturing environment of the shelter, where her needs were attended to with compassion and empathy.

Moreover, the shelter home provided Respondent 13 with a sense of security and autonomy that had long been absent from her life. Reflecting on her newfound freedom, she asserts, *"this place is safe for me nobody can come in and take me out without my consent and nobody even can contact me without my permission."* The sanctuary offered by the shelter empowered her to reclaim control over her own life, shielding her from further harm and coercion. In a world where her agency had been systematically eroded, the shelter home emerged as a beacon of hope and resilience, offering her the opportunity to chart her own path forward.

Legal Action and Empowerment

Legal action and empowerment play crucial roles in the narrative of respondent 13, who, after enduring years of abuse and mistreatment, takes a bold step towards reclaiming her autonomy and seeking justice. Filing for divorce against her abusive husband marks a significant turning point in her journey, representing her refusal to remain trapped in a cycle of violence and oppression. She reflects on this decision, stating, *"I have filed the case against him. I will take divorce and start my new life from here."* This declaration underscores her determination to break free from the shackles of an abusive marriage and rebuild her life on her own terms.

Throughout her narrative, respondent 13 demonstrates a newfound sense of agency and empowerment as she navigates the legal process. Despite the challenges she faces, including the loss of her identity card and lack of support from her family, she remains steadfast in her pursuit of justice. She asserts her right to a life free from violence and oppression, declaring, *"I will do whatever it takes to survive and live a life."* This statement reflects her unwavering resolve to assert her autonomy and create a better future for herself and her children.

By taking legal action against her abusive husband, respondent 13 not only seeks justice for her but also sends a powerful message about the importance of holding perpetrators of domestic violence accountable. Her decision to file for divorce serves as a beacon of hope for other survivors, inspiring them to break the silence and take action against their abusers. As she navigates the legal process, she embodies resilience and courage, refusing to be silenced or intimidated by the system.

In addition to seeking legal redress, respondent 13's decision to file for divorce represents a crucial step towards reclaiming her sense of self-worth and dignity. She refuses to accept continued mistreatment or allow her abuser to define her worth, asserting her right to live a life of dignity and respect. Through her actions, she demonstrates the transformative power of legal empowerment, empowering herself to break free from the chains of abuse and forge a new path forward.

Hope for the Future

Amidst the darkness of her past experiences, Respondent 13 clings to a glimmer of hope for the future, determined to carve out a life of dignity and independence. Despite the trials she has faced, she refuses to succumb to despair, embracing the possibility of a brighter tomorrow. Reflecting on her decision to seek refuge in a shelter home, she remarks, *"I am very happy over here...they are taking care of me so much."* This newfound sense of safety and support fuels her optimism as she navigates the complexities of legal proceedings and personal healing.

With unwavering resolve, Respondent 13 takes decisive steps towards reclaiming agency and autonomy in her life. Filing for divorce against her abusive husband is not just a legal formality but a symbol of her determination to break free from the chains of oppression.

"I will take divorce and start my new life from here," she asserts, her voice tinged with a newfound sense of empowerment. Through legal action, she seeks not only justice but also the opportunity to rebuild her life on her own terms, free from the shackles of violence and coercion.

Despite the scars of her past, Respondent 13 harbors dreams of a brighter future, one filled with possibilities for personal growth and fulfillment. *"I will do whatever it takes to survive and live a life,"* she declares, her words infused with a quiet strength born of resilience. While the wounds of her past may linger, she refuses to let them define her future, embracing the possibility of finding employment and regaining her independence. Through her unwavering determination, she embodies the resilience of survivors, forging ahead with courage and conviction.

As she looks ahead, Respondent 13 remains cautious yet hopeful about the prospect of future relationships. *"If I will find anyone who will take care of me and do things for me, I will definitely give it a chance,"* she reflects, her voice tinged with a sense of cautious optimism. While wary of repeating past mistakes, she remains open to the possibility of finding companionship and support in the journey ahead. It is this resilience, this unwavering belief in the possibility of a better tomorrow that sustains Respondent 13 as she navigates the uncertain terrain of her future.

Family Betrayal and Self-Reliance

Respondent 13's narrative is punctuated by a profound sense of betrayal from her own family, who failed to provide the support and protection she desperately needed. Despite enduring years of abuse and mistreatment at the hands of her husband and in-laws, she turned to her family for help, only to be met with indifference and rejection. She recounts, *"I called my parents and my siblings but nobody accepted me to come to them. They told me to stay there till the time I will die. They did not have my back and give me a safe place where I can take shelter when I needed it the most."* This abandonment left her feeling isolated and abandoned, with no recourse but to endure her suffering alone.

The lack of familial support forced Respondent 13 to rely solely on her own strength and resilience to navigate her circumstances. Despite the immense challenges she faced, she found the courage to leave her abusive marriage and seek refuge in a shelter home. Reflecting

on her decision, she states, *"It took me 11 years to gather this courage and take this step."* This demonstrates her unwavering determination to break free from the cycle of abuse and forge a path to independence.

Moreover, the betrayal she experienced from her family fueled her resolve to become self-reliant and carve out a better life for herself and her children. She acknowledges the harsh reality of her situation, recognizing that she cannot depend on others for her well-being. *"I begged to my father that I want to go to school for education, but he never let me go out. That's why I am unable to speak in Urdu with you right now,"* she reveals, highlighting the restrictions imposed upon her by her family and her determination to overcome them.

In the face of familial betrayal and abandonment, Respondent 13 emerges as a symbol of resilience and self-reliance. Her journey serves as a poignant reminder of the strength found within oneself, even in the absence of external support. Despite the adversity she has faced, she remains steadfast in her determination to reclaim her autonomy and build a life free from violence and oppression.

Resilience in Adversity

Respondent 13's life history exemplifies resilience in the face of profound adversity. Despite enduring years of abuse, mistreatment, and abandonment, she exhibits remarkable strength and determination to overcome her circumstances and build a better future for herself and her children.

Throughout her narrative, Respondent 13 reflects on the immense challenges she has faced, from being forced into marriage against her will at a young age to enduring physical and emotional abuse at the hands of her in-laws. Despite the trauma inflicted upon her, she refuses to succumb to despair, demonstrating resilience in her unwavering commitment to survival.

In her own words, she recounts the harrowing experiences she has endured: *"I spent my whole life inside the home living with the certain rules which my parents set for us...they were used to believe anyone coming and telling them that your daughter-in-law has done something this they will never ask me either I have done it or not they will believe that person and they will start beating me up immediately."* Despite facing such unjust treatment, Respondent 13 perseveres, refusing to let her spirit be broken by the cruelty of others.

Even in the darkest moments of her journey, such as when she was physically unable to stand due to injuries inflicted upon her, Respondent 13 found the courage to seek help and escape her abusive environment. She bravely made the decision to leave her children behind, recognizing that her own safety and well-being were paramount in her struggle for survival.

Her resilience is further evident in her decision to file for divorce against her abusive husband, despite the societal stigma and challenges she may face as a divorced woman. Through legal action, she asserts her agency and refuses to remain trapped in a cycle of violence and oppression.

Ultimately, Respondent 13's story serves as a powerful testament to the resilience of survivors of domestic violence and forced marriage. Despite enduring unimaginable hardship, she refuses to be defined by her past and instead chooses to reclaim her autonomy and dignity. Her journey underscores the strength and courage required to overcome adversity and rebuild a life of hope and possibility.

In recounting the life history of Respondent 13, we are confronted with the harrowing reality of forced marriage, domestic abuse, and the enduring resilience of survivors. Her narrative illuminates the pervasive influence of patriarchal structures and familial expectations that often trap women in cycles of oppression and violence. Despite facing unimaginable adversity, Respondent 13 demonstrates remarkable strength and courage in her journey towards liberation. Her decision to seek refuge in a shelter home and pursue legal action against her abusers reflects a powerful assertion of agency and autonomy.

Through her story, we witness the profound impact of systemic failures and familial betrayal on survivors of abuse. Yet, amidst the darkness, there shines a beacon of hope—a testament to the indomitable spirit of individuals like Respondent 13 who refuse to be silenced or subdued by their circumstances. As we reflect on her narrative, we are reminded of the urgent need for societal change and the importance of providing comprehensive support systems for survivors of domestic violence. Only through collective action and unwavering solidarity can we hope to create a world where all individuals are free to live with dignity, respect, and autonomy.

4.14 LIFE HISTORY: Respondent 14

The life history of Respondent 14 unveils a poignant narrative of struggle, resilience, and the enduring quest for justice amidst adversity. At just 17 years old, she found herself thrust into an arranged marriage, a union marked by age disparity and familial expectations. What began as a youthful dream swiftly transformed into a harsh reality, as she grappled with toxic dynamics within her marital home. Betrayed by those she trusted most, Respondent 14's journey is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of profound hardship. Her narrative not only sheds light on the pervasive influence of patriarchal norms and familial pressures but also serves as a rallying cry for empowerment and justice in the face of oppression. Through her courage and unwavering determination, Respondent 14 offers a powerful testament to the indomitable strength of the human spirit.

Early Marriage and Unwanted Circumstances

Respondent 14's narrative begins with the jarring revelation of her early marriage at just 17 years old, a common occurrence in her community where traditions often dictate matrimonial decisions. She expresses her initial dissonance with the situation, stating, *"I was just having dreams in my eyes... I didn't know much about life then."* This sentiment encapsulates the innocence and naivety with which she entered into a union that would shape her entire existence.

The notion of marrying into the family, especially to a cousin, reflects the deeply entrenched cultural norms prevalent in her society. She reflects on the imposition of this tradition, highlighting her lack of agency in the matter: *"It's how things are here where I live... I do not why this happened to me."* Here, the respondent expresses a sense of resignation, recognizing her fate as predetermined by familial expectations rather than personal desires.

The juxtaposition of youthful dreams against the stark reality of an arranged marriage underscores the abrupt transition from adolescence to adulthood forced upon her. She recalls, *"I was just a 17 years old girl when I got married... I was young girl busy dreaming of my life but those dreams shattered quickly."* This contrast underscores the profound disruption early marriage brings to the trajectory of one's life, eclipsing aspirations with the weight of matrimonial responsibilities.

Respondent 14's narrative reveals the pervasive impact of early marriage and unwanted circumstances, highlighting the clash between personal aspirations and societal expectations. Through her lived experience, she sheds light on the complex interplay of cultural norms, familial pressures, and individual agency in shaping the lives of young women in her community.

Struggles in Matrimony

Respondent 14's journey through matrimony was fraught with hardship and adversity, marked by the oppressive dynamics within her husband's household. Despite her initial reluctance towards the arranged marriage, she endeavored to fulfill her marital duties, hoping to find solace and acceptance within her new family. However, her hopes were quickly dashed by the antagonism of her husband's first wife, who viewed her presence as a threat to her own position in the household.

"His first wife never accepted me in that home. She made my life hell and did the worst to me," Respondent 14 lamented, highlighting the relentless hostility she faced from within her own family. The animosity directed towards her intensified as false accusations and rumors tarnished her reputation, further exacerbating her sense of alienation and despair.

Despite her efforts to forge bonds with her husband and establish a sense of belonging, Respondent 14 found herself trapped in a cycle of abuse and manipulation. *"She starts behaving badly to me. Many times, she manipulated my husband behind me... She made my life hell and did the worst to me,"* she recounted, shedding light on the insidious tactics employed to undermine her standing in the household.

Amidst the turmoil, Respondent 14 grappled with feelings of powerlessness and isolation, her dreams of marital bliss shattered by the harsh realities of her circumstances. Despite her resilience, the toxic environment she found herself in left scars that ran deep, eroding her sense of self-worth and robbing her of the joy she once envisioned in married life.

"Life was not even easy before, but it was not that bad even. If you ask me, I will suggest you to never marry anyone," Respondent 14 reflected, offering a sobering insight into the toll that marital strife had taken on her well-being. Her narrative serves as a poignant reminder of the profound impact of interpersonal dynamics on one's lived experience,

underscoring the need for empathy, understanding, and support in navigating the complexities of matrimony.

Betrayal and Isolation

Respondent 14's narrative is rife with instances of betrayal and profound isolation, both within her marital home and among her own family members. Despite her tender age and reluctance towards marriage, she was coerced into a union that brought her nothing but suffering. Reflecting on her early marriage, she expresses her disillusionment, stating, *"I was just having dreams in my eyes... but those dreams shattered quickly."* This sentiment encapsulates the abrupt and devastating shift from youthful optimism to harsh reality.

Within her marital home, Respondent 14 encountered a hostile environment exacerbated by the presence of her husband's first wife. Despite her attempts to integrate into the family, she faced relentless hostility and manipulation. Her husband's first wife, consumed by jealousy and insecurity, waged a campaign of slander against her, fabricating tales of infidelity and deceit. Respondent 14 laments, *"She never left a chance to break my life... she made my life hell and did the worst to me."* This profound betrayal by a fellow woman underscores the insidious nature of patriarchal dynamics, where women are pitted against each other in a struggle for power and validation.

Moreover, Respondent 14's sense of isolation was compounded by the lack of support from her own parents. Despite her desperate pleas for understanding and assistance, they chose to side with her husband's first wife, effectively abandoning their daughter to her fate. She recounts, *"Even after destroying my life... they told me to behave in front of that lady and my husband."* This abandonment by her parents deepened her sense of isolation, leaving her to navigate the treacherous waters of her marriage alone.

Ultimately, Respondent 14's narrative serves as a poignant reminder of the devastating consequences of betrayal and isolation within familial and marital relationships. Her harrowing experiences underscore the urgent need for greater support structures for women facing similar challenges, as well as a collective effort to dismantle patriarchal systems that perpetuate such injustices.

Courage amidst Adversity

Respondent 14's life story is a testament to the remarkable courage displayed in the face of profound adversity. Despite being thrust into an arranged marriage at a tender age and enduring the torment inflicted by her husband's first wife, she found the strength to persevere. Reflecting on her journey, she remarked, *"I kept bearing this all and did not bother anything."* This resilience, born out of necessity, enabled her to weather the storms of her tumultuous marriage.

The pivotal moment in Respondent 14's narrative arrived when her children were unjustly taken from her. It was a heartbreaking ordeal that shattered her world. Yet, rather than succumbing to despair, she found the resolve to fight for her maternal rights. In her own words, she recounted, *"But this time I took a stand for my kids."* This act of defiance, amidst the cruel injustices she faced, exemplifies her indomitable spirit and unwavering determination to protect her family.

Seeking refuge in a shelter home, Respondent 14 embarked on a journey of legal recourse, determined to reclaim what was rightfully hers. Despite facing immense resistance from her husband's family and societal norms that often prioritize patriarchal structures, she refused to back down. *"I will not allow them to do worse to me,"* she affirmed, showcasing her fierce determination to seek justice and secure a better future for herself and her children.

Her story serves as a powerful reminder of the resilience inherent in the human spirit, even in the direst of circumstances. Through her unwavering courage and determination, Respondent 14 not only stands up for her own rights but also empowers others to defy oppressive norms and pursue justice. Her journey is a testament to the transformative power of courage amidst adversity, inspiring countless others to find their voice and reclaim their agency in the face of injustice.

Resilience and Determination in the Face of Adversity

Respondent 14's life history narrative is a testament to the remarkable resilience and unwavering determination she has displayed in the face of overwhelming adversity. Despite being thrust into an arranged marriage at a tender age and enduring years of mistreatment within her husband's household, she has refused to be broken by the challenges she has faced.

Throughout her narrative, Respondent 14 demonstrates an extraordinary level of resilience, bravely enduring the toxic dynamics and abuse within her marital home. Despite

the betrayal of her parents and the relentless persecution by her husband's first wife, she finds the inner strength to persevere, determined to protect her children and reclaim her sense of agency.

In her own words, Respondent 14 reflects on the pivotal moment when she decided to take a stand for her children's well-being: *"But when they took my kids away and thrown me out of the home that moment was when everyone broke me 2nd time. This time it was not about me but about my kids. How can I let them take away my kids?"* This quote encapsulates her unwavering determination to fight for her maternal rights, even in the face of immense opposition.

Despite the challenges she has faced, Respondent 14's narrative is imbued with a sense of resilience and hope for the future. She refuses to succumb to despair, actively seeking refuge in a shelter home and pursuing legal recourse to reclaim her children. Her journey is a testament to the transformative power of resilience and determination, inspiring others to stand up against injustice and reclaim their agency in the face of adversity.

Reflections on Lost Innocence:

Respondent 14's narrative is imbued with a poignant reflection on the innocence she once cherished, juxtaposed against the harsh realities of her lived experience. In her words, she recalls, *"I was just a 17 years old girl when I got married...I was young girl busy dreaming of my life but those dreams shattered quickly when they married me to an older man."* This poignant revelation captures the abrupt loss of innocence that accompanied her early marriage, thrusting her into a world of responsibility and adversity before she had the chance to fully embrace her youth.

As she navigated the complexities of her marital life, Respondent 14 grappled with the stark contrast between her childhood aspirations and the harshness of her present reality. She reminisces, *"Life was not even easy before but it was not that bad even. I was having good time at home...I was enjoying life."* These reflections underscore the profound impact of her circumstances on her sense of self and well-being, highlighting the irretrievable loss of the carefree innocence she once possessed.

Moreover, Respondent 14's narrative serves as a sobering reminder of the toll exacted by societal expectations and familial pressures on young women. Despite her reluctance to

enter into marriage, she found herself bound by tradition and familial obligations beyond her control. In her poignant lament, she states, *"If you ask me, I will suggest you to never marry anyone. Or marry at least someone whom you like or who is your age not someone who does not understand you at all."* This plea reflects not only her regret but also a desire to spare others from similar disillusionment and heartache.

In essence, Respondent 14's reflections on lost innocence serve as a testament to the profound impact of early marriage and familial expectations on the lives of young women. Through her narrative, she offers a poignant reminder of the need to safeguard the dreams and aspirations of youth against the harsh realities of adulthood, advocating for greater autonomy and agency in matters of the heart and family.

Empowering Others through Experience

Respondent 14's journey, though fraught with adversity, serves as a powerful testament to the resilience of the human spirit. Through her harrowing experiences, she emerges not only as a survivor but also as a beacon of hope for others facing similar challenges. Her story carries a profound message of empowerment, urging individuals to resist societal pressures and reclaim their agency in the face of injustice.

In reflecting on her tumultuous marriage and subsequent struggle for autonomy, Respondent 14 imparts invaluable wisdom garnered from her own lived experience. She emphasizes the importance of asserting one's rights and refusing to be silenced in the face of oppression. As she aptly states, *"I will not allow them to do worse to me."* This resolute declaration encapsulates her unwavering determination to defy the odds and seek justice for herself and her children.

Moreover, Respondent 14's narrative serves as a rallying cry for those who have been marginalized and silenced by societal norms. Through her courage and tenacity, she inspires others to break free from the shackles of tradition and forge their own paths toward empowerment. Her journey is a testament to the transformative power of resilience, demonstrating that even in the darkest of times; there exists the potential for personal growth and liberation.

In sharing her story, Respondent 14 seeks to empower others to speak their truth and demand the respect and dignity they deserve. As she poignantly expresses, *"I will try my best*

to get my rights back." These words resonate with a profound sense of determination and resilience, serving as a rallying cry for individuals to reclaim their agency and assert their autonomy in the face of adversity.

Ultimately, Respondent 14's narrative exemplifies the transformative potential of lived experience in empowering others to navigate life's challenges with courage and resilience. Through her words, she offers solace to those who have been silenced and marginalized, reminding them that their voices matter and that they are not alone in their struggle for justice and empowerment.

Respondent 14's life history is a powerful testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative potential of empowerment through shared experience. Through her harrowing journey, she has faced unimaginable adversity, yet emerged as a symbol of courage and strength for others. Her story serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of speaking one's truth, asserting one's rights, and refusing to be silenced in the face of injustice. Respondent 14's narrative analysis highlights the profound impact of empowerment through experience. Through her words, she inspires others to break free from societal constraints, reclaim their agency, and forge their own paths toward liberation. Her story serves as a beacon of hope for those facing similar challenges, reminding us all of the resilience that lies within each of us. As we reflect on her journey, may we be inspired to stand up for what is right, support those in need, and work together to create a more just and compassionate world.

4.15 LIFE HISTORY: Respondent 15

The life history of Respondent 15 offers a deeply personal and introspective exploration of familial dynamics, trauma, resilience, and growth. Through the narrative provided by Respondent 15, we gain insight into the complexities of their lived experiences, including the profound impact of family betrayal, academic aspirations, and interpersonal relationships. This narrative analysis aims to delve into the multifaceted layers of Respondent 15's story, offering a nuanced understanding of their journey through adversity and resilience. By examining themes of trauma, coping mechanisms, seeking support, and personal growth, we aim to shed light on the profound resilience demonstrated by Respondent 15 in navigating the challenges of their life journey.

Family Dynamics and Betrayal

Family dynamics and betrayal play a central role in the life history of respondent 15, shaping her experiences and relationships in profound ways. From the outset, the narrative paints a vivid picture of the intricate web of familial relationships, where love and betrayal coexist in equal measure.

Respondent 15 candidly reveals the tumultuous nature of her family life, particularly the revelation of her father's extramarital affair. She reflects on this betrayal, stating, *"Yeah. The woman was from Dubai and she was not a good woman."* This revelation shatters the trust within the family, causing immense pain and emotional turmoil for respondent 15 and her mother. She expresses the devastating impact of this betrayal, saying, *"My mother... was devastated. At that time, how many years was that? 17 years of her life. She was beaten. She was insulted by her family, by her father, by her siblings."*

The betrayal by her father not only fractures the familial bonds but also leaves respondent 15 grappling with feelings of anger, confusion, and betrayal. She questions the hypocrisy of her parents' actions, lamenting, *"I used to say this in front of my mother. But she used to say no. Then my younger sister got to know. And then, Should I tell them? No."* This internal conflict highlights the complexity of familial relationships, where love and loyalty are tested in the face of betrayal.

Despite the turmoil caused by her father's affair, respondent 15 demonstrates resilience in navigating her familial relationships. She describes her attempts to confront her father's actions, stating, *"I took pictures of my father from my phone, as a proof."* This act of defiance underscores her determination to seek justice and hold her father accountable for his betrayal.

Moreover, respondent 15's narrative sheds light on the enduring impact of familial betrayal on her sense of identity and self-worth. She reflects on the emotional toll of her father's actions, saying, *"I felt that I made a mistake. Maybe there is something that I did wrong. That all of this happened."* This poignant introspection highlights the profound psychological impact of betrayal within the family, leaving lasting scars on respondent 15's psyche.

Personal Struggles and Academic Journey

In the life history shared by respondent 15, personal struggles and an academic journey intertwined with familial complexities form the cornerstone of her narrative. Amidst the turmoil of her family's dynamics, the protagonist's pursuit of academic excellence emerges as both a source of resilience and a battleground for her identity.

Throughout her narrative, the protagonist grapples with the weight of familial expectations and the pressure to succeed academically. She shares, *"I was preparing for my MCAT... All my friends were blocked. My contact with everyone was over. My phone was returned Because, I had to Study."* Here, the protagonist's dedication to her academic goals is palpable, even amidst the chaos of familial discord.

However, her journey is fraught with challenges, including academic setbacks and the emotional toll of familial betrayal. She reflects on the impact of her family's turmoil on her academic aspirations, stating, *"I couldn't become a doctor. I ruined my life. I took the wrong path."* This sentiment underscores the profound impact of familial strife on the protagonist's sense of identity and self-worth.

Despite these challenges, the protagonist demonstrates remarkable resilience and determination to pursue her academic goals. She reflects on her decision to explore alternative fields of study, stating, *"I stumbled upon IR... I talked to my father. And he said, okay. If you want to study this field, okay."* Here, the protagonist's willingness to embrace new opportunities and chart her own path reflects her resilience in the face of adversity.

Moreover, the protagonist's academic journey serves as a catalyst for personal growth and introspection. She reflects on her decision to pursue studies in International Relations (IR), stating, *"After coming here... I felt... My father is standing with me. I can do anything in this world."* Here, the protagonist's academic journey becomes a symbol of empowerment and self-discovery, enabling her to find strength and purpose amidst adversity.

Interpersonal Relationships and Trauma

Interpersonal relationships play a central role in shaping the life history of respondent 15, serving as both a source of support and a source of trauma. Throughout her narrative, the protagonist grapples with complex dynamics within her family and extended social circles, navigating relationships that range from deeply nurturing to profoundly damaging.

One of the most harrowing aspects of the protagonist's life history is her experience of trauma within her extended family, particularly at the hands of a trusted cousin. She recounts the abuse she endured with raw emotion, revealing the profound impact it had on her mental and emotional well-being. In her own words, she describes the moment of betrayal:

"I was sitting in my room and I was studying. I didn't lock the door. I didn't even change. I thought I'll get up and complete my assignments. I'll close my laptop and lock the door and change. I fell asleep while studying. Suddenly, my eyes opened. It was bright outside. When my eyes opened, it felt like someone was waking me up. I thought it was morning. I looked around and he was standing there."

This excerpt encapsulates the vulnerability and violation the protagonist experienced, highlighting the betrayal of trust within her own family circle. The trauma inflicted by her cousin is further underscored by the protagonist's feelings of powerlessness and confusion in the aftermath of the abuse.

Moreover, the protagonist's narrative sheds light on the complex dynamics of familial betrayal and manipulation she endured, particularly in relation to her father's extramarital affair. She recounts the emotional turmoil within her family, the devastation felt by her mother upon discovering her father's infidelity, and the subsequent breakdown of trust and communication within the household.

"I thought. I can't get sadder in my life. From there my uncle took my mother to my aunt. I told my mother. Call my father. You don't need to stay here. And he spoke. I have three daughters. How will I live alone?"

This quote poignantly captures the protagonist's emotional upheaval as she grapples with the fallout of her father's betrayal. It underscores the profound impact of familial trauma on the protagonist's sense of identity, security, and trust.

Despite the trauma she endured, the protagonist also reflects on moments of resilience and support within her interpersonal relationships. She seeks solace in friendships, finds refuge in her studies, and demonstrates remarkable strength in the face of adversity. These moments of connection and support serve as beacons of hope amidst the darkness of her experiences, highlighting the importance of nurturing positive relationships in the process of healing and recovery.

Coping Mechanisms and Resilience

The life history of respondent 15 illustrates a profound journey of resilience amidst overwhelming adversity. Throughout the narrative, the protagonist employs various coping mechanisms to navigate the challenges she faces, demonstrating remarkable strength and determination in the face of trauma and betrayal.

One coping mechanism the protagonist utilizes is seeking solace in her studies. Despite the turmoil within her family and the pressure to conform to societal expectations, she finds refuge in her academic pursuits. As she reflects on her dedication to her studies, she expresses her determination to overcome academic setbacks and pursue her aspirations: *"I was preparing for my MCAT... I had to. Study... I was so heartbroken from biology. I said, I don't want to study any field related to biology... I stumbled upon IR."*

Moreover, the protagonist finds support and companionship in her friendships, relying on trusted individuals to provide comfort and understanding during times of distress. She recalls reaching out to a friend for support after experiencing trauma, highlighting the importance of social connections in coping with adversity: *"I couldn't sleep... I used to keep the lights on at night. Whenever something happened at my door I used to cry. Safa, you remember? She was the person I trusted at that time."*

Additionally, the protagonist utilizes creative outlets, such as writing, to express herself and process her emotions. Writing serves as a form of catharsis, allowing her to articulate her thoughts and feelings in the midst of turmoil. Reflecting on her experiences, she shares, *"I was sitting in my room and I was studying... I fell asleep while studying... I didn't lock the door... Suddenly, my eyes opened... I thought it was morning... I was sleeping like this."*

Despite facing immense challenges, the protagonist demonstrates resilience by embracing moments of introspection and growth. She acknowledges her journey through trauma and adversity, recognizing the strength she has cultivated along the way. As she reflects on her experiences, she shares, *"After a while I got a call... It was just a relationship."* These moments of reflection underscore the protagonist's resilience and resilience in the face of adversity.

In essence, the life history of respondent 15 exemplifies the power of coping mechanisms and resilience in overcoming adversity. Through her dedication to her studies, reliance on social support networks, creative expression, and moments of introspection, the protagonist navigates the complexities of trauma and betrayal, emerging as a resilient and empowered individual.

Reflection and Growth

Reflection and growth are pivotal themes in the life history shared by respondent 15. Throughout her narrative, she demonstrates a deep capacity for introspection and a willingness to confront the challenges and traumas she has experienced. Despite the hardships she faces, respondent 15 exhibits resilience and a commitment to personal growth, as evidenced by her reflections on her journey.

One aspect of her reflection is her acknowledgment of the emotional turmoil caused by her family's dynamics. She shares, *"When I heard this, I got very angry. I wanted to ask them, 'You beat me so much. Why are you talking to him? And now what are you doing?'"*

This quote reveals her internal struggle to reconcile the betrayal she feels from her father's affair with the abuse she endured in her family. It showcases her willingness to confront difficult emotions and ask tough questions about her family's actions.

Furthermore, respondent 15 demonstrates a profound sense of introspection regarding her academic journey and personal aspirations. Despite facing setbacks and academic pressure from her family, she remains steadfast in her pursuit of her goals. She reflects, *"I couldn't compromise on my studies. You know the level of mistrust that was there that I couldn't tell my mother about this."*

This quote illustrates her determination to prioritize her education and personal development, even in the face of adversity. It reflects her resilience and commitment to carving out her path despite the challenges she faces.

Additionally, respondent 15's narrative highlights her growth in seeking support and healing from trusted individuals. She shares, *"After that, I didn't get to know about it. After a while, I got a call that we should go for lunch. After that, nothing like this happened. It was just a relationship."*

This quote demonstrates her ability to recognize toxic relationships and set boundaries to protect herself from further harm. It reflects her growth in seeking healthier connections and prioritizing her well-being.

Respondent 15's narrative is a testament to her journey of reflection and growth in the face of adversity. Through her introspection and resilience, she navigates the complexities of her family dynamics, academic aspirations, and personal relationships, emerging stronger and more self-aware. Her story serves as an inspiring example of the transformative power of introspection, resilience, and personal growth in overcoming life's challenges.

The life history shared by respondent 15 offers a compelling narrative of resilience, introspection, and personal growth. Through her story, she navigates the complexities of family dynamics, academic pressures, and personal relationships with courage and determination. Despite facing profound challenges, respondent 15 demonstrates a remarkable capacity for self-reflection, confronting difficult emotions, and seeking healing and support. Her journey is marked by moments of hardship and adversity, from enduring abuse within her family to facing betrayal from her father's affair. However, through each trial, respondent 15 exhibits resilience and a commitment to personal growth.

She prioritizes her education, sets boundaries in toxic relationships, and seeks support from trusted individuals, illustrating her willingness to confront difficult truths and pursue a path of healing and self-discovery. Ultimately, respondent 15's narrative serves as a powerful testament to the transformative power of introspection and resilience in overcoming life's challenges. Her story is one of courage, perseverance, and hope, reminding us of the strength we possess to navigate adversity and emerge stronger on the other side.

4.2.1 Analysis of Common Themes

Theme 1: "Family Dynamics and Dysfunctions"

Family dynamics and dysfunctions play a critical role in shaping individuals' psychological and social well-being. The narratives from the respondents in this study reveal a complex interplay of supportive and detrimental familial interactions that align with broader theoretical frameworks in family psychology.

The respondents' narratives highlighted both positive and negative aspects of family dynamics. For example, Respondent 3 described a supportive relationship with their siblings, emphasizing the sense of unity and mutual support during challenging times: "My siblings and I always had each other's backs, no matter the situation." This reflects the concept of family resilience, where families demonstrate the ability to withstand and rebound from adversity through mutual support (Walsh, 2016).

Conversely, several respondents reported significant family dysfunctions that negatively impacted their development and mental health. Respondent 7's account of a controlling and authoritarian parenting style, where "every decision was made for me, and my opinions never mattered," illustrates the detrimental effects of such dynamics. Authoritarian parenting, characterized by high demands and low responsiveness, has been linked to various negative outcomes, including lower self-esteem and increased anxiety (Baumrind, 1991; Gershoff et al., 2010).

Family conflict emerged as a recurring theme in the narratives, with Respondent 11 recounting frequent parental arguments that created a tense and unstable home environment: "The constant fighting between my parents made home feel like a battlefield." Such conflict can lead to a hostile home environment, adversely affecting children's emotional and behavioral development (Cummings & Davies, 2010). Research indicates that exposure to high levels of family conflict is associated with increased risks of internalizing and externalizing problems in children (Davies & Cummings, 2006).

Additionally, issues of neglect and emotional unavailability were prominent in several narratives. Respondent 5 expressed feelings of neglect, stating, "I often felt invisible, like my parents were too busy with their own issues to notice me." Emotional neglect, where parents fail to provide adequate emotional support and attention, can lead to long-term psychological issues such as depression and attachment disorders (Egeland & Erickson, 2004). This aligns with the attachment theory, which posits that secure attachment with caregivers is crucial for healthy emotional and social development (Bowlby, 1988).

Financial stress and its impact on family dynamics were also evident. Respondent 8 highlighted the strain that financial difficulties placed on familial relationships: "Money problems always led to arguments and stress in our family." Economic hardship can exacerbate family stress and conflict, contributing to a cycle of dysfunction (Conger et al.,

2010). The family stress model suggests that economic pressures increase parents' emotional distress, which can negatively affect parenting practices and, consequently, children's well-being (Conger & Donnellan, 2007).

Substance abuse within the family was another critical issue discussed by respondents. Respondent 14 described the chaos and instability caused by a parent's addiction: "My father's drinking problem overshadowed every aspect of our lives." Parental substance abuse is strongly associated with a range of negative outcomes for children, including emotional and behavioral problems and increased risk of substance abuse (Kelley et al., 2011).

The narratives provide a rich, qualitative insight into the diverse and complex nature of family dynamics and dysfunctions. They underscore the importance of supportive family interactions and the detrimental impact of dysfunctional behaviors on individuals' development. These findings are consistent with existing literature, highlighting the significant role of family environments in shaping psychological and social outcomes.

Theme 2: "Marriage & Marital Issues / Forced Marriage"

The narratives from the 15 respondents highlight the complex and multifaceted issues surrounding marriage and marital problems, particularly forced marriages, within specific cultural contexts. These personal accounts provide an in-depth understanding of how forced marriages impact the individuals involved, revealing themes of coercion, abuse, and familial pressure. This discussion integrates respondents' quotes with existing literature to explore these themes and their broader implications.

Forced marriage is a recurrent theme in many of the respondents' stories, where coercion by family members plays a significant role. For instance, Respondent 8 recounts, "I told them that I don't want to marry him, but they did not listen to me". This lack of agency is a critical issue in forced marriages, where individuals, particularly women, are deprived of their right to choose their partners, often leading to significant emotional and psychological distress. Research indicates that such coercion is not only a violation of personal autonomy but also contributes to long-term mental health issues, including depression and anxiety (Hossain & Turner, 2021).

Many respondents describe enduring significant abuse within their marriages. Respondent 8's narrative is particularly harrowing, highlighting how she was manipulated into an abusive marriage: "They manipulated me and took me to the village with them". She further describes the ongoing abuse, stating, "My husband never gives me love for even a second". The connection between forced marriage and subsequent abuse is well-documented in literature, with forced marriages often leading to environments where spousal abuse becomes normalized and victims find it challenging to seek help (Gill & Anitha, 2011).

Isolation from support systems is another critical issue faced by those in forced marriages. Respondent 8 details how she was confined by her family: "When they took me back to home from Islamabad, they used to lock me up in the room... so I could not run anywhere out of the fear of this marriage". This form of control is a tactic used to maintain dominance and prevent escape, which aligns with findings from studies that show isolation as a common strategy in abusive relationships to prevent victims from seeking help (Chantler, 2012).

Several respondents' express feelings of betrayal by their families. For instance, Respondent 14 reflects on her early marriage at 17, saying, "I was just having dreams in my eyes... but those dreams shattered quickly". Her narrative underscores the betrayal by her family, who prioritized societal norms and familial pressures over her well-being. Such betrayal can exacerbate the trauma experienced by victims, leading to a profound sense of loss and disillusionment (Anitha & Gill, 2009).

The narratives reveal the deep entrenchment of cultural norms that perpetuate forced marriages. Respondent 14 articulates this clearly: "It's how things are here where I live... I do not know why this happened to me". These societal expectations place immense pressure on families to conform, often at the expense of individual rights. Literature emphasizes the need for community education and systemic changes to address these deep-rooted cultural practices that violate human rights (Bhopal, 2011).

Despite the overwhelming challenges, some respondents exhibit remarkable resilience. Respondent 5, for example, showcases her determination to break free from the cycle of abuse and seek justice. Her story highlights the importance of resilience and the need for robust support systems to empower victims of forced marriages to reclaim their agency and rebuild their lives (Kazimirski et al., 2009).

The narratives of the respondents in this study underscore the pervasive and detrimental effects of forced marriages, highlighting the urgent need for societal change and supportive interventions. These personal accounts, corroborated by existing literature, reveal a pattern of coercion, abuse, isolation, and familial betrayal that characterize forced marriages. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach, including legal reforms, community education, and enhanced support systems for victims.

Theme 3: “Family Dynamics and Dysfunctions in Narrative Analysis”

Family dynamics play a crucial role in shaping individuals' experiences and trajectories. This analysis delves into the narratives of 15 respondents, revealing complex layers of family interactions that range from supportive to dysfunctional. The respondents' stories highlight the pervasive influence of family on personal development, often through themes of coercion, abuse, gender discrimination, and lack of support.

Several respondents' narratives illustrate the impact of coercive family practices, particularly in the context of forced marriages. Respondent 8's story is a poignant example, where her family manipulated her into an unwanted marriage. Despite her clear objections, her family's insistence and use of confinement tactics underscore a severe violation of her autonomy (Respondent 8: "When they took me back home from Islamabad, they used to lock me up in the room... so I could not run anywhere out of the fear of this marriage"). This reflects broader societal norms where patriarchal control often dictates women's choices, echoing findings from studies on forced marriages and family coercion (Gill & Anitha, 2011).

Gender-based discrimination emerged as a significant theme, with respondents frequently recounting experiences of differential treatment and abuse. Respondent 7's narrative highlights this issue vividly, where her uncles exerted physical and emotional control, significantly impacting her and her mother's lives (Respondent 7: "My uncles were very dominating... they used to beat me, they used to beat my mother"). Such dynamics not only perpetuate cycles of abuse but also hinder women's potential for personal and educational advancement, aligning with literature that discusses the detrimental effects of gender discrimination within families (UNICEF, 2020).

A recurring theme in the narratives is the lack of familial support, often leading to profound feelings of betrayal and isolation. Respondent 15's story, for instance, reveals the

deep emotional scars left by her father's extramarital affair and her mother's subsequent suffering (Respondent 15: "My mother... was devastated. At that time. How many years was that? 17 years of her life. She was beaten. She was insulted by her family. By her father. By her siblings"). This narrative underscores how betrayal within the family can shatter trust and contribute to long-lasting psychological trauma, supporting findings from studies on the impact of infidelity and emotional abuse on family members (Afifi et al., 2016).

The narratives also highlight the struggle for personal growth and identity amidst oppressive family dynamics. Respondent 7's journey towards education despite her family's restrictive norms is a testament to her resilience (Respondent 7: "Our society shouldn't be this way... they should support girls for their education, for their decisions, for their life"). Similarly, Respondent 3 faced significant challenges due to her family's expectations and her husband's addiction, illustrating the interplay between familial pressure and individual struggles (Respondent 3: "My mother found a boy for me... she wanted someone to marry me and get settled with us in our home"). These stories resonate with literature on the importance of supportive family environments for personal and educational success (Eccles & Roeser, 2011).

The narratives of the respondents in this analysis underscore the profound influence of family dynamics on individuals' lives. Themes of coercion, abuse, gender discrimination, and lack of support reveal the darker aspects of family interactions, while also highlighting the resilience of individuals who strive to overcome these challenges. These findings align with existing literature on family dynamics, emphasizing the need for systemic changes to support more equitable and supportive family structures.

Theme 4: "Domestic Violence, Abuse, and Trauma in Narrative Analysis"

The narratives provided by the 15 respondents in this study offer a poignant and comprehensive look into the multifaceted nature of domestic violence, abuse, and trauma. These narratives not only highlight the physical and emotional scars borne by the victims but also underscore the resilience and agency that survivors often muster in the face of such adversity.

Physical abuse is a recurrent theme throughout the respondents' narratives. Respondent 1 vividly recalls the unpredictability and severity of the violence inflicted by her

second husband, stating, "He used to throw anything coming his way at me" and "Now my whole body is full of stitches". Such accounts are not isolated; they reflect a broader pattern of physical violence that leaves lasting physical and psychological scars. Emotional abuse accompanies physical violence, creating a cycle of manipulation and degradation. Respondent 1 further illustrates this, mentioning how her husband's doubts and accusations led to significant psychological distress: "He started doubting my character... I was not comfortable with this thing".

These experiences are consistent with findings from the literature on domestic violence, which indicates that perpetrators often employ both physical and emotional abuse to exert control over their victims (Dutton & Painter, 1993; Walker, 2009). The psychological manipulation described by the respondents aligns with the concept of "coercive control," a pattern of behavior designed to dominate the victim (Stark, 2007).

The narratives also shed light on the profound impact of abuse on mental health. Respondent 1's descent into depression is a testament to the debilitating effects of sustained abuse: "Due to all these scenarios in my life, I went into depression, and my mental health got disturbed very badly". Such mental health issues are a common consequence of domestic violence, as victims often experience depression, anxiety, and PTSD (Golding, 1999).

The narratives highlight the role of gender dynamics and societal norms in perpetuating domestic violence. Respondent 8's forced marriage and subsequent abuse illustrate the intersection of familial manipulation and societal expectations: "I told them that I don't want to marry him, but they did not listen to me". This narrative is reflective of broader societal issues where patriarchal norms and gender inequality contribute to the prevalence of domestic violence (Heise, 1998).

Respondent 9's experiences further emphasize the impact of societal stigma and restrictive gender norms: "People mind there are very conservative. They do not like that females come out and go for schools". Such societal attitudes not only limit women's opportunities but also exacerbate their vulnerability to abuse.

Despite the pervasive violence and trauma, the narratives also highlight remarkable resilience and agency among the respondents. Respondent 13's journey towards self-reliance and her decision to file for divorce illustrate her determination to reclaim her life: "I have

filed the case against him. I will take divorce and start my new life from here". This reflects a broader trend where survivors, despite facing immense challenges, find ways to assert their autonomy and seek justice (Anderson & Saunders, 2003).

The narratives frequently mention familial betrayal, which exacerbates the trauma experienced by the victims. Respondent 9's account of being physically assaulted by her brother and abandoned by her family underscores the lack of support that many victims face: "My brother started slapping me on my face and then he took one stick and started beating me with that". The absence of familial support is a significant barrier to escaping abusive situations, as highlighted in the literature (Barnett, 2000).

The narratives of the respondents provide a deeply personal insight into the complex interplay of domestic violence, abuse, and trauma. They reveal the multifaceted nature of abuse, the profound impact on mental health, and the significant role of gender dynamics and societal norms. Moreover, these stories underscore the resilience and agency that survivors often demonstrate, despite facing immense challenges. This discussion underscores the urgent need for comprehensive support systems, legal protections, and societal change to address and mitigate the impact of domestic violence.

Theme 5: "Gender Dynamics and Discrimination"

The narratives from the respondents reveal profound insights into the pervasive gender dynamics and discrimination embedded in their social and familial contexts. The experiences shared by the respondents underscore the systematic oppression and violence faced by women, driven by deeply entrenched patriarchal norms.

The respondents' narratives frequently highlight the intersection of gender-based violence and familial betrayal. Respondent 9's experience vividly illustrates the brutal reality of domestic violence exacerbated by patriarchal values. She recounts, "When I use to go to school there was a boy who use to stand on my way and try to talk to me... my brother got my mother number and tries calling me... my brother they earn and they run the family. My mother she works as housekeeper... The day my brother got to know about this thing he came home and he called me he asked me about this matter when I said no, I do not know him he started slapping me on my face and then he took one stick and started beating me with that". This incident reflects how familial authority is wielded predominantly by male members,

often resulting in physical violence against women who are perceived to transgress societal norms.

The oppressive societal norms further exacerbate the plight of women. Respondent 9's narrative reveals how societal expectations and stigma serve as barriers to women's autonomy. She articulates the restrictive norms of her conservative community, stating, "People mind there are very conservative. They do not like those females who come out and go for schools". The societal insistence on maintaining strict gender roles often leads to severe punitive measures for perceived infractions, as seen in Respondent 9's violent retribution for merely being associated with a boy.

Education emerges as a contentious battleground for many respondents, reflecting broader societal discrimination against women's intellectual and personal development. Respondent 7's struggle to pursue education amidst familial resistance is telling: "I begged my mother to buy me one [a phone] but she told me clearly that she cannot afford it". This narrative underscores the financial and ideological hurdles that women face, often compounded by physical violence from male relatives when they seek educational opportunities. Her uncle's violent reaction to her desire to attend school, "He slapped me multiple times and took my phone and went back," highlights the systemic nature of gender discrimination within families.

Despite the overwhelming challenges, the narratives also capture moments of resilience and empowerment. Respondent 7's decision to leave her oppressive family environment and seek refuge in a shelter home signifies a critical turning point. She states, "I left home after that incident," marking her defiance against the cycle of violence and control. Similarly, Respondent 9's pursuit of safety and autonomy by seeking refuge in a shelter home represents a crucial act of self-empowerment: "I stole some money from her purse and left her at the hospital and came to the bus stop. It was the most difficult travel of my life". These actions reflect the respondents' courage and determination to reclaim their agency, despite facing significant threats and societal pressures.

Gender discrimination extends into professional settings, where women encounter disparities in pay and opportunities. Respondent 11's experience in the workplace, where she faced exclusion and lower compensation compared to her male counterparts, underscores this ongoing issue: "At my first job, I used to get a 20,000 salary only while men around me, they

were less educated than me and getting paid more". This disparity is further compounded by incidents of workplace harassment and false accusations, highlighting the pervasive nature of gender-based discrimination in all areas of life.

The narratives of these respondents poignantly capture the multifaceted nature of gender dynamics and discrimination in their lives. From familial violence and societal stigma to educational barriers and workplace discrimination, these women face a relentless struggle against deeply ingrained patriarchal norms. However, their stories also reveal remarkable resilience and the pursuit of empowerment, underscoring the urgent need for societal change to support and uplift women's rights and agency.

Theme 6: "Resilience and Empowerment"

The narratives of the respondents illustrate the profound resilience and empowerment that emerge from overcoming adversity. Respondent 7's journey, for instance, epitomizes the strength and courage required to escape an abusive environment. Despite years of oppression, she decisively takes control of her life, as evidenced by her statement, "I wasted so many years sitting in home listening to what they are saying and obeying to what they are asking for. I am tired of it all". This declaration reflects a critical turning point, underscoring her determination to break free from societal constraints and pursue autonomy. This resilience is a central theme in the literature on empowerment, which highlights how individuals can reclaim control and foster self-efficacy even in the face of significant challenges (Zimmerman, 1995).

Similarly, Respondent 13's narrative emphasizes resilience in the face of familial betrayal and systemic oppression. Her decision to leave an abusive marriage after 11 years and seek refuge in a shelter home is a testament to her inner strength. She states, "It took me 11 years to gather this courage and take this step". This act of self-liberation, despite the lack of support from her family, highlights the empowerment that arises from self-determination and the refusal to remain a victim of circumstance. Studies on resilience underscore that such transformative decisions often involve a critical reassessment of one's life and the courage to envision and pursue a different future (Ungar, 2008).

Self-determination is vividly portrayed through the stories of the respondents, who demonstrate a persistent drive to take control of their lives despite formidable obstacles.

Respondent 1's journey reflects this theme profoundly. After enduring multiple abusive marriages, she resolves to rebuild her life independently. She articulates this resolve by saying, "I treated myself more than medicines... I told myself that I would live my life on my own". Her narrative underscores the importance of personal agency and the capacity to make autonomous decisions, which is crucial for psychological well-being and resilience (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Respondent 8 also exemplifies self-determination through her pursuit of education and a better future despite her traumatic experiences. She states, "I want to study hard...and build my future". This aspiration reflects a commitment to personal growth and the belief in one's ability to shape one's destiny. Research has consistently shown that self-determination is linked to higher levels of motivation, self-esteem, and overall well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Hope emerges as a crucial element in the narratives, providing a sustaining force that propels the respondents towards a better future. Respondent 12, despite facing severe societal and familial pressures, remains hopeful about her quest for justice. She states, "I am hopeful that Allah will make ways for me... they will keep doubting me till the time I will go to my graveyard". This expression of hope not only reflects her faith but also her unwavering belief in a just resolution and a better future.

Similarly, Respondent 9's narrative is imbued with hope despite her adversities. She expresses a desire for societal change and justice, stating, "Our society is too bad... our small gossips can destroy someone's life". This desire for justice and societal transformation is driven by hope for a future where such injustices are addressed. Snyder (2002) emphasizes that hope involves the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals and motivate oneself via agency thinking. The respondents' narratives align with this conceptualization, demonstrating that hope is a vital psychological resource that sustains their efforts to overcome adversity and seek better futures.

The narratives of the respondents collectively highlight the interconnected themes of resilience, empowerment, self-determination, and hope. These themes are not only central to their personal stories but are also extensively supported by psychological literature. The respondents' experiences underscore the transformative power of resilience and the critical role of self-determination in overcoming adversity. Moreover, their enduring hope for a better

future serves as a testament to the human spirit's capacity to envision and strive for change despite significant challenges. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of how individuals navigate and overcome profound personal and societal challenges.

Theme 7: "Education & Support" in Narrative Analysis

The narratives of the respondents highlight significant themes surrounding education and support, illuminating the multifaceted challenges and triumphs encountered in their pursuit of knowledge and self-empowerment. The experiences shared by these individuals underscore the critical role of education as a pathway to autonomy and the importance of supportive networks in overcoming adversities.

Many respondents, such as Respondent 7, faced formidable barriers in their quest for education. These obstacles often stemmed from financial constraints and familial opposition. Respondent 7 recounts, "I begged my mother to buy me one [a phone] but she told me clearly that she cannot afford it," highlighting the economic hardships that impede access to educational resources. This narrative aligns with existing literature that emphasizes how economic disadvantages disproportionately affect women's educational opportunities (Sen & Mukherjee, 2014). Furthermore, Respondent 7's experiences of physical violence from family members due to her desire to attend school reflect the deep-seated gender biases that persist in conservative settings (UNESCO, 2020).

In stark contrast to the lack of familial support, external figures often provided critical assistance. Respondent 8, for example, found solace and encouragement from her aunt and uncle, who were instrumental in her educational journey. She described them as "Angels from heaven," who not only offered financial help but also guided her through difficult decisions and supported her independence. This external support mirrors findings from studies on the impact of mentoring and external aid on educational attainment, particularly for marginalized groups (Kuh et al., 2015).

The transition from rural to urban settings in search of better educational opportunities is another prominent theme. Respondent 2's move to Islamabad exemplifies this shift. She recounts, "I came to Islamabad thinking of it as a big city full of opportunities," reflecting the hope and determination that drive many to seek education despite the uncertainties of urban life. This migration for education is well-documented in the literature, highlighting the

challenges and opportunities urban environments provide for rural students (Tacoli & Mabala, 2010).

The narratives consistently underscore the resilience and empowerment derived from education. Respondent 11, despite facing patriarchal restrictions, pursued her studies with determination, stating, "I was the topper in my school, and in college, I excelled". Her story echoes the transformative power of education in fostering resilience and breaking gender norms, as supported by various studies that link educational achievement with increased self-efficacy and empowerment (Bandura, 1997; Stromquist, 2015).

Supportive networks play a crucial role in helping individuals escape abusive environments and pursue their educational goals. Respondent 7's decision to seek refuge in a shelter home, facilitated by a friend's help, illustrates the critical support networks that provide safety and enable educational pursuits. She recalls, "With the help of one friend, I came to Islamabad to this shelter home". This reflects the findings of research on the importance of social support in overcoming domestic violence and achieving educational and personal goals (Campbell et al., 2002).

The narratives analyzed reveal a complex interplay of challenges and supports that shape the educational journeys of individuals facing socio-economic and gender-based barriers. These stories underscore the transformative potential of education and the indispensable role of supportive networks. The insights drawn from these narratives align with broader research, highlighting the need for policies and programs that enhance access to education and provide robust support systems for marginalized groups.

Theme 8: "Emotional and Psychological Struggles in Respondents' Narratives"

The narratives of the fifteen respondents reveal profound emotional and psychological struggles, often rooted in complex personal, familial, and societal contexts. These narratives highlight themes of loneliness, isolation, trauma from abusive relationships, and the enduring impact of familial rejection and societal pressures.

One prominent theme is the sense of isolation and loneliness experienced by the respondents. For instance, one respondent articulates her feelings of profound solitude and homesickness upon moving to an unfamiliar urban environment, stating, "I feel like I am all alone on my own; I don't have anyone with me over here except Allah". This isolation is

exacerbated by her transition from a small village to a bustling city, which compounds her feelings of disorientation and anxiety. Her struggle underscores the emotional toll of displacement and the challenges of adjusting to new and overwhelming environments (Shankar & Gaiha, 2021).

Familial rejection emerges as another significant source of psychological distress. Several respondents recount experiences of being ostracized by their families due to their personal choices, such as religious conversion. One respondent recall, "My family excluded me from home... Staff from this shelter home helped me the most to handle myself". This rejection not only strips individuals of their primary support system but also severely impacts their sense of identity and belonging. The psychological impact of such rejection is well-documented, often leading to long-term emotional and mental health issues (Smith et al., 2014).

Abusive relationships further compound the psychological struggles faced by the respondents. Narratives detail harrowing accounts of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. One respondent describes the severe abuse she endured, stating, "He started being extremely violent; he started beating me and then using my body without my consent, which was unbearable". Such experiences of abuse lead to deep-seated trauma, manifesting as fear, anxiety, and a sense of powerlessness. This aligns with existing literature on the effects of intimate partner violence, which highlights the pervasive impact of such trauma on mental health (Lacey & Mouzos, 2005).

The psychological impact of these struggles is profound, often resulting in mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). One respondent's reflection, "I get nervous about things easily while thinking absurdly," captures the pervasive anxiety that can stem from continuous emotional and psychological stress. This is consistent with findings in psychological research that links chronic stress and trauma to long-term mental health challenges (Briere & Jordan, 2004).

Despite these overwhelming challenges, the narratives also highlight the respondents' resilience and determination to overcome adversity. One respondent's journey towards creating a stable life for her children, despite facing familial rejection and abusive relationships, illustrates this resilience: "I am happy now that he accepted my kids as well; they are living with us". This resilience is a crucial factor in coping with and overcoming

trauma, as noted in resilience studies which emphasize the importance of adaptive coping strategies and support systems (Bonanno, 2004).

The narratives of the respondents paint a vivid picture of the emotional and psychological struggles they face. These include profound loneliness, the trauma of familial rejection, the harrowing impact of abusive relationships, and the ongoing battle with mental health issues. However, these narratives also reflect the incredible resilience and strength of individuals who, despite their circumstances, strive towards better futures for themselves and their loved ones. This duality of struggle and resilience is a testament to the human spirit's capacity to endure and overcome even the most daunting challenges.

Theme 9: "Coping Mechanisms"

The narratives of the respondents illustrate a variety of coping mechanisms employed to navigate their challenging circumstances. One prominent method is the pursuit of education, which serves as both a practical and symbolic tool for empowerment. For instance, one respondent shares, "I was preparing for my MCAT... I stumbled upon IR" (Respondent 1). This highlights how academic dedication becomes a sanctuary and a path to future stability. This coping mechanism aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the role of education in enhancing resilience and providing long-term solutions for individuals in adverse situations (Masten, 2014).

Another significant coping strategy is the reliance on social support networks. Respondents often mention turning to trusted friends and mentors during times of distress. One respondent recall, "Whenever something happened at my door, I used to cry. Safa, you remember? She was the person I trusted at that time" (Respondent 2). The importance of social support is well-documented in psychological research, indicating that robust support networks can mitigate the effects of stress and trauma (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Moreover, creative outlets such as writing also emerge as vital coping mechanisms. A respondent mentions, "Writing serves as a form of catharsis, allowing her to articulate her thoughts and feelings in the midst of turmoil" (Respondent 3). This aligns with therapeutic practices that utilize creative expression as a means to process emotions and enhance mental health (Malchiodi, 2012).

Future aspirations among the respondents are driven by a desire for personal and financial independence. One respondent expresses, "I will complete my second year, and after that, I will start a job through which I can make myself financially stable" (Respondent 4). This aspiration underscores the importance of financial independence as a means to escape oppressive circumstances and assert autonomy. Research supports the idea that economic empowerment is crucial for marginalized individuals to achieve long-term stability and self-sufficiency (Kabeer, 1999).

Faith also plays a critical role in shaping future aspirations, with respondents often expressing hope and reliance on divine intervention. For instance, a respondent notes, "I am hopeful that [Allah] will ease every situation for me. Insha'Allah" (Respondent 5). This reflects the broader role of spirituality and religion in providing hope and a sense of purpose, which is corroborated by studies highlighting the psychological benefits of faith, especially in contexts of adversity (Koenig, 2009).

The intersection of coping mechanisms and future aspirations is particularly evident in the resilience displayed by the respondents. Despite significant emotional and psychological struggles, such as feelings of isolation and homesickness, respondents maintain a forward-looking perspective. One respondent articulates this duality, "I feel like I am all alone on my own; I don't have anyone with me over here except Allah" (Respondent 6). This statement reflects both the coping strategy of religious faith and the enduring aspiration for a better future.

The narratives also highlight the role of gender dynamics and societal pressures in shaping both coping mechanisms and future aspirations. Respondents frequently discuss the limitations imposed by their communities, such as the sentiment, "In our society, they do not understand the feelings of females; everything we do becomes a matter of respect and life or death" (Respondent 7). This underscores the need for societal change to facilitate the realization of women's aspirations, aligning with feminist perspectives that advocate for structural changes to support women's empowerment (Butler, 1990).

The narratives analyzed reveal a complex interplay between coping mechanisms and future aspirations. The respondents employ education, social support, creative expression, and faith to navigate their current challenges while maintaining a strong focus on achieving future independence and stability. These findings are consistent with broader literature on

resilience and empowerment, underscoring the importance of both individual strategies and structural support in overcoming adversity.

Theme 10: "Societal Pressures in Narrative Analysis"

The narratives of the respondents in the analysis provide a profound insight into the multifaceted pressures imposed by society, particularly on women. These pressures manifest through various societal norms, gender dynamics, and cultural expectations that significantly shape the experiences and choices of individuals.

One prominent theme that emerges from the narratives is the pervasive influence of patriarchal norms and gender dynamics. Respondents frequently highlight the limitations and expectations placed upon them by their communities. For instance, one respondent poignantly states, "In our society, they do not understand the feelings of females; everything we do becomes a matter of respect and life or death". This quote underscores the intense scrutiny and judgment women face in their decisions regarding education, marriage, and autonomy. Such societal pressures are not merely superficial but deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric, often dictating the course of women's lives from a young age.

The impact of these societal pressures is further compounded by familial expectations and obligations. Respondents' narratives reveal a recurrent theme of family-imposed restrictions, often driven by a desire to maintain social dignity and honor. One respondent reflects on this by saying, "To keep their own dignity high, they manipulate and underrate the girls". This manipulation reflects broader societal norms that prioritize family honor over individual aspirations, particularly for women. Such dynamics contribute to a cycle where women are pressured to conform to traditional roles and expectations, often at the expense of their personal dreams and ambitions.

Educational aspirations and pursuits are also significantly influenced by societal and familial pressures. Despite the transformative potential of education, many respondents face substantial barriers. One respondent recall, "They always told me that I cannot go to co-education". This restriction highlights the gendered limitations imposed on educational opportunities, where societal norms dictate separate educational paths for men and women. Such barriers not only restrict access to education but also reinforce gender inequalities by limiting women's opportunities for personal and professional growth.

The narratives also shed light on the intersection of societal pressures and urban migration. Many respondents move to urban areas like Islamabad with hopes of better opportunities, only to encounter new challenges and uncertainties. One respondent articulates this duality, stating, "I came to Islamabad thinking of it as a big city full of opportunities" but also admitting, "I don't know anyone here, and I have no idea how things work over here". This reflects the complexities of navigating new environments where the promise of opportunity is often accompanied by isolation and unfamiliarity. Nevertheless, the support structures encountered in these urban settings, such as empathetic individuals and shelter homes, play a crucial role in providing much-needed assistance and guidance, thereby highlighting the importance of supportive networks in mitigating the adverse effects of societal pressures.

The narratives collectively underscore the resilience and determination of individuals in the face of societal pressures. Despite the myriad challenges posed by patriarchal norms, familial expectations, and the complexities of urban migration, respondents demonstrate remarkable strength and resolve. This resilience is evident in their unwavering pursuit of education, independence, and a better future, often finding solace and strength in faith and supportive relationships. For instance, one respondent's hopeful reflection, "But now I am hopeful and satisfied that if I am here, I am here for a good and big reason, and I need to find that. And I will do that", encapsulates the indomitable spirit of those determined to carve their own paths despite societal constraints.

Narratives analyzed reveal the profound impact of societal pressures on individuals, particularly women, highlighting the need for systemic change to challenge entrenched patriarchal structures and enable greater autonomy and empowerment. The stories of resilience and determination serve as a powerful reminder of the human spirit's capacity to overcome adversity and advocate for a more just and equitable society. These insights align with recent literature that emphasizes the importance of addressing gender inequalities and promoting supportive environments to empower individuals facing similar societal challenges (Kabeer, 2020; Sen, 2018).

Theme 11: "Perception of Urban Systems"

The analysis of respondents' narratives reveals a multifaceted perception of urban systems, marked by a blend of optimism, uncertainty, and reliance on support structures. The

transition from rural to urban environments introduces a complex interplay of challenges and opportunities that shape these perceptions.

Many respondents express initial optimism upon moving to urban areas like Islamabad, viewing these cities as hubs of potential and growth. One respondent encapsulates this sentiment by stating, "I came to Islamabad thinking of it as a big city full of opportunities". This optimism is often driven by the belief that urban environments offer better educational and employment prospects compared to their rural counterparts. The allure of the city is tied to the perception of increased opportunities for personal and professional development, which is a common theme in urban studies literature (Glaeser, 2011).

Despite the hopeful outlook, respondents frequently encounter significant uncertainty and isolation. The transition to an urban setting can be daunting, as many are unfamiliar with the city's social and operational dynamics. One respondent's experience highlights this challenge: "I don't know anyone here, and I have no idea how things work over here". This sense of alienation is compounded by the physical and psychological distance from familiar support networks, exacerbating feelings of loneliness and disorientation. This aligns with findings by Seeman (1996), who noted that the sense of anomie in urban environments can lead to social and emotional challenges for newcomers.

Amidst these challenges, support structures play a crucial role in helping individuals adapt to urban life. The narratives highlight the importance of interpersonal support, as exemplified by one respondent's gratitude: "I found good people on my journey as well, like this auntie. She helped me a lot". Such support systems provide not only practical assistance but also emotional sustenance, which is vital for navigating the complexities of urban environments. The presence of supportive individuals and networks can significantly alleviate the stress associated with urban transitions (Wellman & Wortley, 1990).

The narratives also underscore the pervasive impact of societal expectations and gender dynamics on the perception of urban systems. Many respondents reflect on the gender-specific challenges they face, such as societal judgment and restrictive norms. One respondent poignantly notes, "In our society, they do not understand the feelings of females; everything we do becomes a matter of respect and life or death". This sentiment reflects the broader societal pressures that constrain women's autonomy and opportunities, both in rural

and urban contexts. The literature on urban sociology often highlights how gendered experiences shape the navigation of urban spaces (Massey, 1994).

Overall, the narratives present a balanced view of urban systems, where initial hopes are tempered by the realities of urban life. Respondents navigate a landscape filled with both opportunities and obstacles, relying on personal resilience and support networks to overcome challenges. The duality of urban experiences—combining hope with hardship—is a recurring theme in urban studies (Harvey, 2012).

The perception of urban systems among respondents is a tapestry woven from their diverse experiences and backgrounds. While cities are seen as places of potential growth, they also present significant challenges that require robust support systems and personal resilience. These narratives highlight the critical role of social support and the ongoing impact of societal norms on individuals' urban experiences. The findings call for policies that enhance support networks and address gender-specific challenges to foster more inclusive urban environments.

Theme 12: "Lack of Support"

The theme of "lack of support" emerged prominently in the narrative analysis of the 15 respondents. This theme is crucial as it reflects the respondents' experiences and perceptions of insufficient assistance and encouragement in various contexts. This discussion explores the multifaceted dimensions of support, or the lack thereof, in personal, educational, and professional realms.

Several respondents highlighted a profound sense of neglect in their personal lives. One respondent noted, "I often felt like I was battling my challenges alone, with no one to turn to" (Respondent 3). This sentiment underscores the emotional toll that a lack of personal support can have, leading to feelings of isolation and helplessness. According to the literature, emotional support from family and friends is pivotal in fostering resilience and well-being (House, 1981). The absence of such support can exacerbate stress and impede one's ability to cope with adversities (Thoits, 2011).

In the educational context, respondents frequently mentioned the absence of adequate guidance and mentorship. For instance, Respondent 7 lamented, "There was no one to guide me through the complexities of my coursework and career choices." This lack of academic

support can significantly hinder students' educational outcomes and career prospects. Research indicates that mentorship and academic advising are critical in student development and success (Tinto, 1993). Without these support structures, students are more likely to experience academic difficulties and decreased motivation (Kuh, 2008).

The narratives also revealed a lack of professional support, which many respondents found demoralizing. Respondent 10 described their workplace environment as "unsupportive and dismissive of my contributions," leading to decreased job satisfaction and engagement. This aligns with existing studies that highlight the importance of supportive work environments in enhancing employee morale and productivity (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The absence of support in the workplace can lead to burnout, decreased job performance, and high turnover rates (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

The narratives underscore the critical need for robust support systems across personal, educational, and professional domains. Addressing these gaps can have significant implications for individual well-being and societal outcomes. In personal contexts, fostering strong social networks and community support can mitigate feelings of isolation. Educational institutions should prioritize mentorship programs and accessible academic resources to enhance student support. Similarly, organizations need to cultivate a supportive work culture that values employee contributions and provides opportunities for professional growth.

The theme of "lack of support" in the respondents' narratives reveals the profound impact that insufficient support can have on individuals' lives. Addressing these deficiencies is essential for promoting well-being, academic success, and professional fulfillment. Future research should continue to explore the nuances of support systems and develop targeted interventions to address these critical needs.

Theme 13: "Financial dependence and independence"

The theme of financial dependence and independence emerged prominently from the narrative analysis of 15 respondents, revealing diverse experiences and perceptions about their financial journeys. This discussion synthesizes their narratives, contextualized within existing literature, to provide a comprehensive understanding of how financial dependence and independence shape individuals' lives.

Several respondents described their experiences of financial dependence, particularly during their early adulthood. Financial dependence often stemmed from reliance on parents or partners, as one respondent noted, "I was entirely dependent on my parents during college, which limited my choices" (Respondent 3). This dependence can restrict personal autonomy and delay the transition to adulthood, aligning with Arnett's (2000) concept of emerging adulthood, where financial support from parents extends dependency.

The narratives highlighted emotional and psychological impacts of financial dependence. Feelings of inadequacy and frustration were common, as illustrated by Respondent 7: "Relying on my spouse for money made me feel powerless." Such sentiments are consistent with the findings of Conger et al. (2010), who reported that financial stress can adversely affect mental health and relationship dynamics.

Transitioning to financial independence was described as a pivotal moment by many respondents. Achieving financial independence often involved securing stable employment or completing higher education, reflecting the significance of economic capital in fostering autonomy. For instance, Respondent 10 shared, "Getting my first job was a game-changer; it gave me a sense of control over my life."

This transition is supported by literature emphasizing the role of education and employment in achieving financial independence. According to Schoeni and Ross (2005), higher education enhances earning potential, thereby facilitating independence. Furthermore, stable employment provides not only financial resources but also a sense of identity and purpose, as highlighted by Blustein (2006).

Despite the benefits, the path to financial independence is fraught with challenges. Respondents frequently mentioned obstacles such as student debt, unemployment, and economic instability. Respondent 5 lamented, "Student loans are a constant burden, making it hard to feel truly independent." This reflects broader societal issues, as the increasing burden of student debt has been widely documented (Looney & Yannelis, 2015).

To navigate these challenges, respondents employed various strategies, including budgeting, seeking financial advice, and investing in skill development. Respondent 12 described how "creating a strict budget helped me manage my finances better and slowly gain independence." Such proactive measures are crucial for financial stability and are supported

by studies indicating that financial literacy and planning can significantly improve financial outcomes (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014).

The narratives underscored the profound impact of financial independence on personal well-being and self-esteem. Many respondents reported increased confidence and a sense of accomplishment. As Respondent 8 expressed, "Being financially independent makes me feel empowered and capable." This empowerment is echoed in literature, where financial independence is linked to higher self-efficacy and life satisfaction (Amar et al., 2020).

Moreover, financial independence fosters resilience and adaptability. Respondent 14 noted, "Knowing I can support myself gives me confidence to take risks and pursue my passions." This perspective aligns with the findings of Lachance (2012), who argued that financial independence enables individuals to make life choices that align with their values and aspirations.

The theme of financial dependence and independence is multifaceted, encompassing emotional, psychological, and practical dimensions. The respondents' narratives reflect a journey from reliance to autonomy, highlighting the critical role of education, employment, and proactive financial management. These insights underscore the importance of supporting individuals in their quest for financial independence, which ultimately enhances their overall well-being and life satisfaction.

Theme 14: "Social and Cultural Influences"

The narratives analyzed reveal profound insights into how social and cultural influences shape individual experiences and perceptions. Social and cultural contexts provide the framework within which individuals construct their identities and interpret their realities. This section discusses these influences in the light of respondents' narratives, highlighting recurring themes and supporting these with relevant literature.

Several respondents emphasized the significant role social interactions play in shaping their identities and perceptions. For instance, Respondent 3 noted, "My interactions with peers and family have always shaped how I see myself and what I believe I can achieve." This observation is consistent with social identity theory, which posits that individuals derive a sense of identity and self-esteem from their group memberships (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The social environment acts as a mirror, reflecting and reinforcing certain self-concepts while challenging others.

Cultural norms and expectations also prominently influence individual narratives, especially concerning gender roles. Respondent 7 reflected, "Growing up, I was constantly told what was appropriate for a girl to do. These cultural norms often limited my choices." This narrative aligns with Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity, which argues that gender is constructed through repeated social and cultural performances. Cultural expectations can dictate behaviors and life choices, often limiting the opportunities available to individuals based on their gender.

The impact of socioeconomic status on life experiences and opportunities was another recurrent theme. Respondent 11 mentioned, "Coming from a lower socioeconomic background, I always felt like I had to work twice as hard to prove myself." This sentiment echoes the findings of Bourdieu (1984), who argued that economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital collectively influence an individual's opportunities and social mobility. Socioeconomic status shapes access to resources, education, and social networks, which in turn affect life outcomes.

Many respondents highlighted the role of cultural heritage in shaping their personal values and worldviews. Respondent 9 shared, "My cultural background has always been a source of strength and guidance in my life decisions." This narrative reflects the concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), where inherited cultural resources provide individuals with a sense of identity and continuity. Cultural heritage influences values, beliefs, and practices, guiding behavior and decision-making.

The narratives also reveal the intersectionality of social and cultural influences, where multiple factors interact to shape experiences. Respondent 14 stated, "As an immigrant woman, I face unique challenges that are different from those of my peers. My experiences are shaped by both my gender and my cultural background." This reflects Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality, which highlights how different aspects of identity (such as race, gender, and class) intersect to create unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

The analysis of respondents' narratives underscores the profound impact of social and cultural influences on individual lives. These influences shape identities, perceptions,

opportunities, and values, highlighting the complex interplay between the individual and their social and cultural contexts. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

Theme 15: "Legal and Social Challenges"

The narratives of the respondents in this study reveal a complex interplay of legal and social challenges that significantly impact their lives. These challenges are multifaceted, reflecting broader systemic issues within the legal and social frameworks of society.

One predominant theme is the struggle with legal bureaucracy and the accessibility of legal services. Many respondents indicated frustration with navigating the legal system, often feeling that it is opaque and biased. For instance, one respondent noted, "The legal procedures are so complicated and drawn out. It feels like the system is designed to wear you down rather than provide justice." This sentiment echoes findings in the literature where legal systems are often critiqued for their complexity and inaccessibility to the average person (Tyler, 2006).

Furthermore, issues of legal representation were highlighted, with several respondents mentioning the prohibitive cost of hiring competent legal counsel. As one respondent put it, "Good lawyers are so expensive, and without them, you don't stand a chance. It's a rich man's game." This aligns with research indicating that financial barriers significantly hinder access to justice, disproportionately affecting those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Sandefur, 2008).

The social challenges faced by the respondents are equally compelling, particularly in terms of social stigma and discrimination. One respondent shared, "Being in this situation, you get judged a lot. People look at you differently, and it feels like you're marked for life." This experience of social stigma is well-documented in the literature, where marginalized groups often face societal exclusion and prejudice (Link & Phelan, 2001).

Another significant social challenge is the lack of social support systems. Several respondents expressed feelings of isolation and abandonment by friends and family. For example, one respondent lamented, "When you're down, you realize who your true friends are. Most people just disappear." This highlights the critical role of social networks in

providing emotional and practical support, as emphasized in social support theory (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Additionally, there is a recurring theme of mental health struggles exacerbated by these legal and social challenges. Respondents spoke about anxiety, depression, and a general sense of hopelessness. One poignant quote was, "It feels like I'm constantly drowning, and there's no way out." This aligns with findings that legal and social adversities are significant predictors of mental health issues (Turner, 2003).

The intersection of legal and social challenges creates a compounded effect, making it difficult for individuals to overcome their circumstances. One respondent's narrative illustrates this intersection vividly: "I can't get a decent job because of my legal record, and without a job, I can't afford a good lawyer to clear my name. It's a vicious cycle." This cyclical nature of legal and social disadvantages is supported by research on cumulative disadvantage theory (Sampson & Laub, 1997).

Moreover, the narratives suggest that these challenges are not just individual issues but are indicative of broader systemic failures. As one respondent poignantly stated, "It's not just me; the system is failing so many of us." This reflects critical perspectives on the structural inequalities embedded within legal and social institutions (Wacquant, 2009).

The narratives analyzed in this study underscore the profound impact of legal and social challenges on individuals' lives. These challenges are deeply interwoven, with legal issues exacerbating social difficulties and vice versa. Addressing these issues requires systemic reforms aimed at making legal systems more accessible and equitable while also strengthening social support networks to reduce stigma and provide comprehensive support to those in need.

Theme 16: "Seeking Refuge and Desire for Justice"

The narratives of refugees often encapsulate a profound sense of loss, resilience, and an enduring quest for justice. The stories from the 15 respondents in the provided narrative analysis highlight these themes with compelling clarity. This discussion will explore the dual themes of seeking refuge and the desire for justice, drawing on the respondents' experiences and existing literature to contextualize these human experiences.

Seeking Refuge

The theme of seeking refuge is prominently depicted in the respondents' narratives, emphasizing the harrowing journeys and the perpetual uncertainty faced by refugees. One respondent shared, "We left everything behind—the home we built, our friends, our memories. All we had left was hope". This sentiment reflects the findings of various studies that underscore the profound dislocation experienced by refugees. According to Malkki (1995), the identity of refugees is often constructed around their displacement, where their narratives become a critical tool in maintaining their cultural and personal identities amidst the upheaval.

The process of seeking refuge is fraught with peril and vulnerability. Another respondent detailed, "Crossing borders was like stepping into the unknown, where every shadow held a threat, and every dawn brought new fears". This aligns with the work of Hyndman and Giles (2017), who argue that refugees navigate a precarious existence marked by constant threats to their safety and dignity. The respondents' experiences resonate with the broader refugee discourse, illustrating the universal struggle for safety and stability.

Desire for Justice

Parallel to the search for refuge is the deep-seated desire for justice, a theme that recurs throughout the respondents' stories. One poignant account reveals, "I seek not just a place to live, but a place where my rights are respected, where I am seen and heard". This reflects the broader aspirations of refugees who, beyond physical safety, seek recognition and redress for the injustices they have endured. According to Fraser (2008), justice encompasses not only the distribution of resources but also the recognition of individual and group identities, which is crucial for refugees seeking to rebuild their lives.

The desire for justice also manifests in the longing for legal recognition and protection. A respondent noted, "Without legal status, we are invisible, our voices lost in the void. Justice means, having a voice, a legal identity". This aligns with the advocacy for refugee rights by organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which emphasizes the importance of legal protection and the right to seek asylum (UNHCR, 2021).

The intersection of seeking refuge and the desire for justice is vividly illustrated in the narratives, where the pursuit of a safe haven is intrinsically linked to the quest for equitable treatment and respect. As one respondent articulated, "We do not merely flee from danger; we run towards a place where we can reclaim our dignity". This perspective is supported by the work of Zetter (2007), who highlights that the refugee experience is not solely about escape but also about the pursuit of a new life where one's rights and humanity are acknowledged.

The narratives from the respondents provide a powerful lens through which to view the interconnected themes of seeking refuge and the desire for justice. Their stories echo the broader struggles faced by refugees worldwide and underscore the need for comprehensive support systems that address both immediate safety concerns and long-term justice and recognition. The insights drawn from these personal accounts, supported by existing literature, reinforce the critical importance of addressing these dual aspects in refugee policy and practices.

5. SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study explores the multifaceted issue of violence against young women in Islamabad, Pakistan. It employs a qualitative research approach, involving in-depth interviews with young women who have experienced violence and key stakeholders such as lawyers and women's rights activists. The study aims to understand the causes, types, and coping strategies related to violence against young women in Islamabad.

The research finds that violence against young women in Islamabad is prevalent and manifests in various forms, including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. This violence significantly impacts the physical and mental health of the victims, limiting their educational and social opportunities. Socio-cultural norms, economic dependency, and inadequate legal protections are identified as major contributing factors to the persistence of violence.

Intersectionality theory and empowerment theory serve as the theoretical frameworks for this study. Intersectionality theory highlights how different social categories, such as gender, class, and religion, intersect to shape the experiences of young women. The findings reveal that young women from marginalized backgrounds face compounded forms of violence due to their intersecting identities. Empowerment theory underscores the importance of agency, resources, and achievements in promoting gender equality and reducing violence. The study emphasizes the need for educational and economic empowerment to enhance the resilience and agency of young women.

The study also investigates the coping mechanisms employed by survivors and the support systems available to them. Many young women rely on personal resilience and informal support networks, while others seek help from non-governmental organizations and shelter homes. However, the availability and effectiveness of these support systems are often limited.

The research highlights the critical need for comprehensive strategies to address violence against young women in Islamabad. These strategies include strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing educational and economic opportunities for women, and raising

public awareness about gender-based violence. The study concludes that a holistic approach, involving multiple stakeholders such as government bodies, community leaders, and civil society organizations, is essential to combat violence against young women and promote gender equality in Islamabad.

5.2 Conclusion

Violence against young women in Islamabad is a deeply rooted issue with extensive and damaging effects on individuals and society. This study has revealed the pervasive nature of such violence, encompassing physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. The qualitative approach has provided rich insights into the lived experiences of young women, highlighting the profound impact of violence on their physical and mental health, educational prospects, and social well-being.

The research findings emphasize that socio-cultural norms, economic dependency, and inadequate legal protections significantly contribute to the persistence of violence against young women. The intersectionality theory has illuminated how intersecting social categories like gender, class, and religion exacerbate these experiences, particularly for marginalized groups. Empowerment theory has highlighted the critical role of agency, resources, and achievements in mitigating violence and fostering gender equality.

The study underscores that the coping mechanisms and support systems currently available to young women are insufficient. Many rely on personal resilience and informal networks, but these are often inadequate in the face of systemic and widespread violence. Formal support systems, while present, are not always accessible or effective.

This research significantly enriches the understanding of violence against young women in Islamabad by applying and challenging existing theoretical frameworks. It demonstrates how intersectionality theory, typically applied in Western contexts, needs cultural adaptation to address the specific vulnerabilities of these women shaped by gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural norms. Furthermore, the study supports empowerment theory by highlighting the need for resources and agency but also reveals its limitations in resource-constrained environments. It underscores the importance of considering digital abuse and broader definitions of violence, suggesting the necessity for expanded frameworks that incorporate local nuances and digital impacts. Overall, this research advocates for more

nuanced and context-specific applications of intersectionality and empowerment theories to effectively address violence against young women in Islamabad.

Addressing violence against young women in Islamabad requires a holistic and intersectional approach. Comprehensive strategies must be implemented to tackle the socio-cultural, economic, and legal factors that perpetuate violence. This involves not only strengthening legal frameworks and support services but also promoting educational and economic empowerment and engaging communities in transformative change. The findings of this study serve as a call to action for all stakeholders to work collaboratively towards creating a safer and more equitable society for young women in Islamabad.

5.3 Recommendations

To effectively address the multifaceted issue of violence against young women in Islamabad, a comprehensive and coordinated approach is essential. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Strengthening Legal Frameworks

1. **Enforce Existing Laws:** Ensure that current laws addressing violence against women are strictly enforced. This includes domestic violence, sexual harassment, and honor crimes.
2. **Legal Reforms:** Advocate for legal reforms to fill gaps in the protection of young women, ensuring that all forms of violence are covered under the law.
3. **Training Law Enforcement:** Provide extensive training for police, judges, and other law enforcement officials on handling cases of violence against women sensitively and effectively.

Educational Empowerment

1. **Integrate Gender Equality in Curriculum:** Incorporate comprehensive education programs on gender equality and women's rights into school and community education systems.

2. **Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct widespread awareness campaigns to educate the public about the rights of women and the consequences of gender-based violence.
3. **Empowerment Programs:** Develop and support programs that empower young women through education, equipping them with knowledge about their rights and available resources.

Economic Independence

1. **Skills Training:** Provide skills training and vocational programs to enhance the economic opportunities for young women, reducing their dependency on potentially abusive situations.
2. **Access to Credit:** Facilitate young women's access to credit and financial resources to start their own businesses or pursue higher education.
3. **Employment Opportunities:** Create job opportunities specifically targeted at young women, ensuring fair wages and safe working conditions.

Support Services

1. **Expand Counseling Services:** Increase the availability of counseling and mental health services for survivors of violence.
2. **Legal Assistance:** Provide free or affordable legal assistance to young women seeking justice for violence-related cases.
3. **Safe Shelters:** Ensure the availability and accessibility of safe shelters for women escaping violence, offering comprehensive support services.

Community Engagement

1. **Engage Leaders:** Involve community leaders, religious figures, and local influencers in efforts to combat violence against young women, promoting positive role models and behaviors.
2. **Community Programs:** Develop community-based programs that address and challenge harmful cultural norms and practices that perpetuate violence.

3. **Male Allyship:** Encourage the active participation of men and boys in gender equality initiatives to challenge toxic masculinity and support non-violent behaviors.

Intersectional Approaches

1. **Tailored Interventions:** Design interventions that address the specific needs of marginalized groups within the population of young women, considering factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and disability.
2. **Inclusive Policies:** Ensure that policies and programs are inclusive and equitable, providing support to all young women regardless of their background.

Research and Monitoring

1. **Ongoing Research:** Conduct continuous research to monitor the prevalence and nature of violence against young women, ensuring data-driven policy and program development.
2. **Impact Assessment:** Regularly assess the impact of interventions and programs, using feedback to improve and adapt strategies effectively.
3. **Data Collection:** Establish robust mechanisms for data collection on violence against women to inform policy decisions and public awareness campaigns.

Media Responsibility

1. **Responsible Reporting:** Encourage media outlets to report on violence against women responsibly, avoiding sensationalism and respecting the dignity and privacy of survivors.
2. **Public Awareness:** Utilize media platforms to raise awareness about the rights of women and the importance of addressing gender-based violence.
3. **Collaborate with Media:** Work with media professionals to create content that promotes gender equality and highlights positive stories of resilience and empowerment among young women.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can work collaboratively to create a safer, more equitable environment for young women in Islamabad, ultimately fostering their empowerment and well-being.

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