

Spectrum of Vitriolage in Pakistan: A Gnawing Violence against Women

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this qualitative study was to know the socio-cultural causative factors behind the phenomenon of acid-based attacks against women in Pakistani society. A sample of 18 respondents, i.e., female acid victims with an age range of 15-45 years, belonging to Lahore city, was taken through a purposive sampling technique amongst the patients of Depilex Smileagain Foundation, Lahore. Face-to-face narrative interviews by using an interview guide were conducted to listen to the autobiographies of the respondents. The collected data was analyzed by using thematic analysis. The findings of the study exposed that more than three-fourths of the respondents were quite young, between the ages of 21 and 45 years. More than three-fifths of the respondents were unmarried. The majority of the victims belonged to the lower middle class. Acid attacks often arise from family disputes, rejected marriage proposals, or dowry demands, typically as acts of revenge fueled by hatred or jealousy in personal relationships. The study further revealed that the majority of the victims did not receive immediate medical aid. Victims of the acid attack faced frequent changes in their later lives, and they also had psychological concerns such as nightmares, exhaustion, headaches, sleeplessness, weakness, sadness, dread of another assault or facing the world, trouble remembering and focusing, etc. Governments must enact and enforce laws against violence, especially acid attacks, ensuring victims receive free medical care and support for complete rehabilitation and recovery.

KEYWORDS: Acid Attack, Violence against Women, Gender based Violence, Women, Pakistan

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Introduction

Violence refers to the act that may cause potential harm, either emotionally or physically, to oneself or others. Basically, the action of violence is including fighting, attacks at all levels, self-inflicted physical injuries, and exclusion from others in peer groups (Fatima et al., 2025). Violence against Women (VAW) is very common in underdeveloped patriarchal societies. It is also known as violence the based on gender or gender-based violence (GBV). In other words, it collectively refers to a series of violent atrocities done only against women. Pleck (2004) depicts that VAW is a global phenomenon. It is observed in workplaces, families, and public places. However, it is a permanent threat to the health, lives, and prosperity of individuals. It is witnessed under cultures, different regions, classes, and age globally (Alvi et al., 2023).

Acid throwing is considered a physical form of extreme physical violence throughout the world. An acid attack is a type of violent assault which refers to the act of hurling caustic chemical or flaming acid against another person's body "in order to injure, maim, murder, or torment. Acid violence is a global trend, and there is a common misconception that strikes are limited to any specific regions, culture, or religion, etc. In fact, acid

attacks are being committed in many nationalities and are not restricted to any specific religion, creed, race, or location (Vaughn, [2011](#); Afzal et al., [2021](#)).

Acid throwing is the most awful type of cruelty, which has devastating and long-lasting results for women who come across it. It is regrettably typical for women in Pakistan to experience this horrific crime of harming human beings with acid. Acid attacks are various types of brutal acts against women (Zeeshan et al., [2023](#)). The patriarchal system has advantages for women in certain aspects, such as women are safe if they are at their places and do not leave their places. In such a way, men protect their women by keeping them safe at their place and playing a dominant role in society. A report published by the Aurat Foundation reported 8539 cases of violence against women in 2011, with a startling rise of 6.49 percent over the previous year. Out of them, 48.65 percent were attacks, 37.5 percent were destructive tossing, 26.57 percent were killing, and 25.51 percent were aggressive behavior at home. (Aurat Foundation, [2012](#)).

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2023) has mentioned in its report that the Minister for Human Rights shared data in the National Assembly of Pakistan that during the last three years, 63,367 cases of VAW were registered. He further shared that as per Police Department data for the period from 2019 to 2021, women murdered cases were 3,987, kidnapping cases were 34,376, rape cases were 11,160, cases of physical violence were 5,171, whereas the acid throwing cases were 103 in this period (Shakeel et al., [2023](#)).

According to the Acid Survivors Trust International (ASTI), 80 percent of acid attack victims are women. When it comes to violence against women, the issue is more prevalent in countries where gender inequality is more severe. Women in Pakistani culture are always at risk of attack, not just from outsiders but also from their spouses and family members. This practice reinforces gender inequity and represents the plight of Pakistani women (Afzal et al., [2022](#); Din et al., [2024](#)).

In 2011, the use of acid as a weapon was declared illegal in Pakistan, and anyone found guilty of carrying out an assault was sentenced to death. As a part of an effort to prevent violence, the sale of acid and other caustic chemicals was also banned. Despite the fact that Pakistan's government has put these procedures in place, they are not being adequately enforced (Shaikh, [2020](#)). After 2014, the official number of recorded acid attacks decreased in Pakistan (Abbasi, [2023](#)). Since 2014, the frequency of recorded acid attacks in Pakistan has declined, making it the only country in the world where violence against women has reduced (ASF, 2018).

According to ASF ([2015](#)), acid-based attacks are alarmingly high in Punjab province, where about 56 % of the cases took place in 2013. Zia ([2013](#)) revealed the data from Aurat Foundation, according to the measured statistics, despite the enforcement of laws in the financial year 2011, about 8,000 examples of total violence were reported, of which about 44 were acid-based attacks. However, enacting legislation is the very first move toward successful implementation.

It is often believed that the rise in acid attacks on women may be traced back to gender imbalance. Religious and ideological convictions, as well as social and political actions, can inspire acid attacks against women. Acid attacks have been linked to disputes over inheritance, land ownership, and financial resources. Furthermore, the refusal of commitment recommendations also serves as motivation for these attacks. Pakistani society's patriarchal culture, in which women are viewed as commodities and constantly objectified, is a major contributor to domestic violence, including extreme actions such as acid throwing. Weaker rule of law in the country makes victims of attacks afraid to come forward against the offenders, and as a result, they

easily escape punishment. Fear of the criminals' retaliation may also play a role in this phenomenon (Rahman et al., 2024; Afzal et al., 2024)

However, in 2018, the Acid & Burn Crime Bill was passed, which is a promising legal step. Legislation has been introduced with the goal of criminalizing acid attacks and speeding up the judicial process for the benefit of those who have been attacked. Since acid attacks are so serious, the Pakistan Supreme Court decided in 2020 that victims' mercy petitions in which they officially express that they forgive the culprit will not be taken into account in court proceedings (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Acid attack on women is one of the most damaging forms of violence against women, which has damaging repercussions not only for the victim women but for society as a whole. Acid attack also occurs in developed countries, but their ratio is much higher in developing countries. Despite rising incidents of acid attacks against women in Pakistan, very few studies have been conducted so far to investigate the phenomenon. Thus, it was considered significant to conduct a detailed study so as to know about the situational and socio-cultural causative factors behind the phenomenon. This study was also aimed at finding major changes that occurred in the lives of victims, as well as medical and legal obstacles faced by the acid-attacked women survivors.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives to achieve:

- ▶ To find the situational and socio-cultural causative factors behind the phenomenon of acid attacks against women in Pakistan.
- ▶ To know about the major changes that occurred in the lives of women survivors of acid attacks.
- ▶ To identify the medical and legal obstacles faced by the acid-attacked women survivors.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions for the study:

1. What are the socio-cultural causative factors behind the phenomenon of acid attacks against women in Pakistan?
2. What are the major changes that have occurred in the lives of women survivors of acid attacks?
3. What are the medical and legal obstacles faced by the acid-attacked women survivors in Pakistani Society?

Significance of the Study

Violence against women is booming day by day in Pakistani society. The violence against women exists in several forms in society, including acid attacks, an extreme form of physical violence. It is true that any social evil or social problem cannot be eradicated until the phenomenon is well researched to find its root causes, socio-cultural and other responsible factors, as well as its impact on society. But unfortunately, despite rising incidents of acid attacks in Pakistan, very few studies have been conducted so far to investigate the phenomenon. Consequently, it was very essential to conduct a detailed study so as to find the real causes of such violence to uproot it from society. The purpose of the study at hand was to explore the reality and the hidden cultural and socio-economic causes behind this very phenomenon of acid-based attack against women. The results of this study will be significant in understanding the factors behind the phenomenon of

acid-based violence against women. This study will also be helpful for policymakers to make or amend the legislation in accordance with the cultural context.

Review of the Literature

Butler (2018) found that in most cases, attacks with acid are not the result of a sudden outburst of rage, but rather this act is preplanned. The attacker intended to attack and has done so by obtaining acid, carefully transporting it, and then stalking the victim. In most cases, the aggressor holds the victim solely responsible for the aggravation of the situation and seeks to inflict maximum emotional and physical pain. The offender did not want to kill the victim but merely to give her unending pain. Therefore, only the victim's face is targeted.

Azim & Zaman (2023) illustrated that any act that would cause physical, psychological, or sexual harm to females, depriving the victims of their fundamental human rights, freedom, and anonymity, is classified as gender-based violence. As Pakistan is a patriarchal society, women in Pakistan have to endure violence on a regular basis, which makes it more common there. On July 8, 2020, the National Assembly introduced the Domestic Violence Act 2020 to combat this issue. It seeks to create practical plans for safeguarding women, the elderly, and young people who are vulnerable to domestic abuse in whatever form. Acid throwing is the worst form of violence, which has risen in Pakistan because of the easy and cheap availability of acids or chemicals (Alvi, 2023). In 2018, the Acid and Burn Crimes Bill was introduced with the intention of making the crime illegal. Since 2018, there has been a noticeable decrease in the number of instances reported. Nearly 85% of the cases were recorded predominantly from the southern Punjab, according to the ASTI research. Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Baluchistan, Islamabad, and Kashmir were the next most common regions.

The earliest known acid assault was recorded in the 17th century, and then it continued throughout Europe until the end of the 19th century. However, the region saw a stop to these attacks after World War II. Acid attacks are currently regularly recorded in a number of countries throughout the world, including Bangladesh, which accounts for 9% of all instances globally, as well as India, Pakistan, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Hong Kong, China, the United Kingdom, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, and Ethiopia. (Ismail et al., 2020)

Acid attack victims are left in a debilitating condition that will continue to cause them pain and suffering for the rest of their lives. The issue of acid abuse has been discussed on a global scale, and numerous nations are raising awareness of the issue in an effort to better support those who have been victimized by it. This study aims to explain the mental state of victims of acid attacks, their pain, and the change inside the criminal justice system that is compelling the first stages in figuring out the full scope of the crime problem and its influence on society (Chandrashekar & Johny, 2017)

A study undertaken by Mittal et al. (2021) indicated that acid attacks cause six major sources of trauma with interrelated but mutually independent subthemes. Violence, motivation, social statement, treachery, violation of civil rights, and embodiment are all examples of these sources of inspiration. Psychiatrists and other mental health practitioners who could work with acid victims would benefit from this study's increased awareness in scientific research.

Sharma et al. (2022) also found that acid-attack survivors suffer from a unique kind of trauma, one that is exacerbated by the discrimination they face and the structural limits they face. Survivors had all shown post-traumatic growth as a result of the assault and their suffering, each in a unique way. Survivors require both

individual and group psychotherapy as well as systemic assistance (Afzal et al., 2024). The vast majority of victims inhaled the acid fumes during the attack, leading to respiratory failure or difficulties. In severe acid burn situations, sufferers may also have septicemia, renal failure, skin depigmentation, and even death.

Tubsem et al. (2023) shared statistics that between 1999 and 2019, there were more than 3,400 reported occurrences of acid burning in Pakistan. One of the worst countries for acid attacks is Pakistan, where there are reputedly 200 incidents reported annually. These attacks can result in chemical burns that are among the most excruciating experiences a person can have. They resemble being burned over an open flame, but they eat away at more than just flesh—they eat away at bones (Molloy, 2017).

Asif and Mahmood (2023) found that one of the riskiest stages that might damage a girl's life is acid burn incidents. An individual can become both internally and externally depleted by going through such a predicament. The role and assistance of NGOs are the only options to diminish or decrease the incidents; there is no way to entirely end such cases. The two greatest organizations in Pakistan fighting for the rights of female acid burn victims and offering them the best medical care, financial support, educational opportunities, and career training are the Acid Survivors Foundation (2018) and the Deplex Smile Again Foundation. The organizations host seminars, training, awareness programs, and workshops in several cities to disseminate information about acid attacks and their causes.

Research Methodology

This qualitative research study was conducted in Lahore city. The narrative interview technique was used to probe into the feelings of the respondents by listening to their autobiographies. A total of 18 respondents were selected using purposive sampling techniques amongst the patients of Deplex Smileagain Foundation with their formal consent. Only those respondents were selected who fulfilled the inclusion criteria of the study, i.e., females acid victims with an age range of 15-45 years belonging to Lahore city. By following the exclusion criteria, the females with acid burn exposure accidentally at their workplace, as well as male acid burn victims, were excluded. For the purpose of the data collection, an interview guide was developed. Face-to-face interviews were conducted by the researchers to gain in-depth information. All the information gained/written in the local language was carefully converted into the English language in such a way that sentences must not lose the intensity and actual meaning of the response. After transcribing the data, some themes and sub-themes were drawn. At the end, these themes and sub-themes were analyzed, and a conclusion was drawn accordingly.

Analysis of the Data

The results depicted that more than three-fourths of the respondents (78%) were quite young between the ages of 21 and 45, whereas the remaining (22%) were between the ages of 13 and 20. The maximum respondents (61%) were unmarried. About two-thirds (67%) of respondents were illiterate or under matric/grade 10. The majority of the respondents (94%) were those who used to go out of their homes for earning purposes. The majority of the victims belonged to the lower middle class. While inquiring the Reasons for acid throwing, results revealed that about 28% of the respondents were become victim due to the family dispute, while 27% were become victim because they refused to marry with someone, 28% of the respondents were become victim due to dowry demand and 17% of the respondents were become victim due to some others reasons.

Theme-1: Life of Survivors of Acid Attack:

The results of the study showed that throwing or spraying acid is followed by a variety of large and small confrontations. Data showed that acid throwing was found normally an act of revenge, motivated by hatred or jealousy due to the intensive issues in personal relationships, for example, marriage, broken love affair, rejection, or unfaithfulness. The attacker blamed the victim for such issues and wanted to inflict as much mental or physical harm as possible.

Dowry demand was also found to be one of the main causes of acid attacks. When a girl did not provide a good dowry, she was subjected to an acid assault by her husband or another member of her in-laws. If she is unable to fulfil her greed and thirst for money, she is exposed to acid, which is both inexpensive and readily accessible. In fact, dowry was reported as a core and most important duty of the bride's family in Pakistani society; if not complied with, it is considered the worst social stigma. Three of the women claimed that they are being victimized with high-intensity acid because of their failure to fulfill the monetary expectations of their in-laws. One of the victims said that her husband threw acid on her, saying that:

"You don't have enough money to satisfy my needs but I have enough to buy acid for you"

The results also demonstrated that many times when a girl stood up to exercise all of her constitutionally guaranteed rights & freedoms, such as the right to property, she was exposed to acid by her own family members because they believed it was the best method to quiet her voice. Some of the people in Pakistan are fundamentalists and throw acid on women for a number of reasons, like laughing loudly, not wearing a hijab, and moving to college in jeans, etc. Vindictive lovers, on the rejection of a marriage proposal by a female and their family, were also found to be a sound evidence for acid-based attacks to disfigure the woman's outer looks and reduce her to a fate which is inferior to death. Basically, the orthodox mindset of the masculine gender regards women as "possession," which was also found to be one of the major causes of acid attacks. One of the victims reported that, before the attacks, the attacker threatened her by saying that:

"No one else could possess her.... If she could not"

Another victim of 25 years of age said that:

"An acid-based attack is not something that you can hide or avoid psychologically. Merely it is not only a

Question for those men who are struggling to tackle the feelings of rejection, but it also means to teach them a strict lesson to mark someone for life."

Property or land disputes were also found to be a major factor in the direction of such inhuman and brutal crime. In the present study, about 20% of the acid-based attacks were committed by people unrelated to the victims due to disputes such as business, land, and sales, or revenge between families.

Theme 2: Occurrence of Acid Attack Incidence

The study revealed that in most cases, attackers or perpetrators were well familiar with the victim. The attackers were husbands, neighbors, lovers, friends, and relatives. But in two cases, attackers were not familiar to the victims; however, in one case, the attacker's identity was not mentioned. All the respondents shared that acid throwing is a terrible & painful situation. This pain was reported as the most severe pain in the world. One victim, while telling her story of acid throwing by her lover, shared that:

Instantly after the incident, I felt it was only cold water, which was thrown just for the sake of a joke. I remember that this cold fluid became unbearably painful and hot. At that time, I felt like a person whose skin had been stripped by someone."

Likewise, another acid victim, while sharing her experience of an acid attack by her cousin, said that:
'Instantly, I felt like someone had torn my skin off and poured red chili powder inside it'

Acid attack causes serious body and skin damage. It also affects the long-term function of different organs of the body. One victim of 30 years of age shared that:

'When acid was thrown on me, the next thing I remember was that the skin on my face was melting and I could barely see anything.'

Results of the present study also showed that most of the incidents took place at home rather than in public places during different times of the day. One of the 28-year-old victims said:

'It was afternoon when Rasheed came to my home. He was angry due to my rejection of the proposal, and he threw acid on me. I felt the liquid oozing through my skin, which was causing it to melt off.'

She further added:

"I remember I could hardly breathe. Everything on my face turned black and silver. I felt the fluid oozing in my skin, causing it to melt off. I ran to the police station and painfully cried that I had been attacked with acid."

The findings of the study revealed that a sudden Acid attack also puts pressure on the victim. Most of the victims were out of their senses and were confused at the time of the incident. They don't know what to do in that kind of situation.

"I knew he was coming towards me to throw acid, but I was still standing at the place and was out of my senses. I don't know what I should do," Said one of the victims.

Results of the present study also show that at the time of the incident, there was mostly no one to save the victim at the spot or to take her to the hospital for timely treatments; if there was someone, they didn't dare to help them. One of the victims who was badly injured due to an acid attack, while recalling the incident, said that:

"Some people were nearby, but no one took me to the hospital as it was a police case and needed a proper complaint".

From the findings, it has become clear that acid attackers do not have any intention to kill their target, but only to cause long-term physical or psychological trauma. Results show that such attackers commonly throw acid on the neck, face, and upper parts of the body. In a few cases, attackers threw acid on reproductive and sexual areas of the body, which may include the buttocks or breasts.

Theme 3: Access to Medical and Legal Aid after Acid Attacks

Results of the current study showed that most of the respondents did not receive immediate medical aid. Most of them have to wait for at least 3 to 4 hours to reach the hospital. Till that time, their condition was serious, and most of the body had been burned. One of the victims said that:

"I was left to suffer in agony on the roadside for several hours after nobody called an ambulance".

She further added that:

"When finally, someone managed to call my parents, I was taken to a police station and then a hospital".

Findings of the present study illustrated that some of the victims could not have access to the hospital instantly after the acid-based attack. They had tried to treat themselves at home or to go to the local traditional healers. Two acid victims in the present study said that they did not receive treatment from the hospitals soon after the attacks. The victims waited about a month to consult a professional medical doctor. One of the victims, while weeping, explored this bitter reality in these words:

"I was crying with pain and calling for help, please, for God's sake, help me. Take me to a hospital for treatment. But no one was listening to me, and I was left helpless."

In most cases, the victims of acid attacks seek legal aid with the help of their family and friends and other relatives. Some of the victims also received help from NGO's which are working for women's rights, but all of these have not proved very useful for the victims. In most cases, the perpetrator was released from jail and was not punished by the police or courts. Even police usually started to ask a list of offensive questions to the victim rather than making an effort to catch the perpetrator. One of the victims, a 32-year-old, said that:

"After the acid attack, I was passing through the most critical phase of my life. I was being mentally tortured by listening to different negative comments from different people within society. In this critical situation, the bombardment of questions by the police put fuel on the fire."

There were only three cases in which the victims sought justice from the court, and the perpetrators received a high penalty. Results show that when perpetrators were severely punished, it created a little bit of happiness and relaxation in the victims. One of the victims, while sharing her feelings on the severe punishment to the culprit by the court, said that:

"It was one of the happiest days of my life. I get a little bit of relief from my grief and thought now, Aslam (The Perpetrator) will also suffer the same as she is suffering."

Theme 4: Major Changes Occurred in the Lives of the Survivors of Acid Attack:

Victims of the acid attack faced a lot of changes in their later lives. The victim is usually subjected to psychological stress, which stems not only from the panic they experienced during the assault but also from the awareness that they must live with deformities and disability. The physical injuries may heal with time, but the indelible scars left on the person's mind and soul will last forever. One of the respondents stated that:

"My life has been changed into multiple parts – before and after the accident. After the attack, I had learnt everything from life. Whatever I knew before was no more useful now, as I couldn't practice it in my current life. However, for walking solo and independently to do my personal work, I had to relearn everything," said one of the victims.

They are plagued by feelings of melancholy, humiliation, and loneliness. Victims have psychological concerns such as nightmares, exhaustion, headaches, sleeplessness, weakness, sadness, dread of another assault or facing the world, trouble remembering and focusing, and so on. Every time the sufferer looks in the mirror, their life is shattered. It reminded them of the horrific assault on them, the uncertainty in their life, and the gloom of the future. One of the victims who refused to marry the perpetrator said that:

"I have lost my friends and childhood on that day; however, I stopped going to school. People started to stare and mock me. Relatives and neighbors had started to blame me, and said I had done something worse to face a man's anger. My only mistake was that I rejected that man's proposal."

When she was asked about how she felt after the incident, she said that:

"I had no will to live. The pain is unbearable, and the biggest problem is that I had to keep my face covered all the time so no one could see me".

Another victim, while sharing changes in her life after an acid attack, elaborated that:

"Before the incident, I was extremely shy and hardly spoke to anyone. But now I do not have any more luxury in my life."

While further explaining the miseries faced by the victim after the acid attack, she said that my school has been closed for me, and all my close friends used to assemble at our house every evening. But no one, barring a solitary friend, comes in now. She further added that:

"She also collected the courage enough to visit her near friends because people are not ready to give company to or even want to see the person who is the victim of acid-based attacks. I think the days of shopping, playing, and studying have passed. Today, I spend most of my time doing domestic work or helping my mother with stitching and sewing."

Results also showed that the victims, after the acid-based attacks, do not get employment as well, despite their qualifications. The core reason for rejection is the stigma of not having a "suitable personality" for a job, and some people also label themselves as not presentable now. Married life is also an important part of human life. Data from the present study shows that the youngest girls of acid victims were refused by other people for marriage as well. The community had limited interest in marrying based on the victims. And these circumstances morally depressed the survivors within their surroundings.

Discussion

In the patriarchal Pakistani Society, women throughout their whole lives are supposed to stay under the protection of men and lead their lives in accordance with the wishes and desires of the male family members. The cultural norms and patriarchal structure, which are considered the backbone of Pakistani society, where men have dominance in all domestic spheres. Whenever a woman rejects a man, it is considered a threat to a man's honor and reputation, and he tries to reinstall it through violence, by acid-based attacks, etc. The results of the present study clearly indicated that men attacked women with high-intensity acid on women's faces to show their superiority and masculinity. By destroying the face of a woman, a man actually derives the satisfaction of his ego and sadistic pleasure. The results of the previous relevant studies are also in line with the findings of the current study, that the patriarchal structure of the society is a major issue behind all forms of gender-based violence, including acid attacks. Hadi (2019) confirmed that Pakistani society is ingrained with patriarchal norms that dictate the inferior status of women there. The most prevalent influences affecting women's dignity and contributing to gender-based violence in Pakistan are the abnormal, immoral, and harmful customs that are preserved and sanctified as cultural traditions and aim to preserve the enslavement of women. Another study also exposed that despite the fact that all International as well as National laws prohibit gender-based violence, it has persisted nearly unabated due to deeply ingrained patriarchal norms, a weak state of law and order, and the readily available, inexpensive acid in markets at cheap rates. (Zia, 2013)

The results of the current study revealed that dowry demand was one of the main causes of acid attacks. In fact, dowry was reported as a core and most important duty of the bride's family in Pakistani society; if not

complied with, it is considered the worst social stigma. These findings are consistent with the other studies. Thomas (2018) also found that dowry-related acid attacks have consistently occurred in South Asian countries, including Pakistan.

The current study also exposed that major changes occurred in the life of the acid attack survivor. According to the findings, most of the respondents had to face psychological trauma after acid attacks. The youngest victims had to face the social inequalities and deprivations of the marriage. A study conducted by Ali (2008) confirmed the findings that acid-based attacks leave a deep impact on the emotional, physical, economic, and social aspects of a victim's later life. Such victims usually need a long-term process of psychological rehabilitation and surgical treatment. Acid burn wounds are not only painful but also lead to physical distortions, which may result in feelings of embarrassment and social isolation as well. Mental illness, suicidal ideation, and being turned down for work were all recognized as contributing causes to and initiating a negative self-concept. Derogatory statements concerning one's physical appearance are reported to have a negative impact on one's mental health. Survivors' self-esteem might be harmed by the combination of prejudice and lack of empathy they encounter.

The findings of this study further reported that retribution was the most common driving force for the acid attack. The antecedents of acid throwing were reported as an act of revenge motivated by hatred or jealousy due to the intensive issues in personal relationships, for example, marriage, broken love affair, rejection, or unfaithfulness. Many of the participants were attacked with acid as a result of their perception of unfairness and disrespect from the perpetrator. The findings of the present research are consistent with the findings of the other researchers. Taylor (2019) reported vengeance and romantic issues as the most common reasons behind the acid attacks. Farhad *et al.* (2011) also revealed that acid-based burns are mostly associated with social issues, personal marital troubles, and rejection of marriage proposals. Another study also revealed the same results that rejection in love and refusal to marry or other such personal commitments were found as the main reasons behind more than 70% of acid attacks. (Zalmai & Amiri, 2021)

The findings of the current study revealed that the victims were entirely dissatisfied with the medical and legal services. According to the findings, *in most cases*, the perpetrator was released from jail and was not punished by the police or courts. Hadi (2019) also confirmed these findings that a rise in violence against women in *Pakistan* can be attributed to a patriarchal mindset that is reinforced by an ineffective judicial system, which only seeks to regulate the conduct of women.

Conclusion

Gender based violence in all its forms, including acid attacks, is impermissible in all societies, but it still persists mostly due to the ingrained patriarchal structure in societies. Pakistani society's patriarchal culture, in which women are viewed as commodities and constantly objectified, is a major contributor to domestic violence, leading towards extreme actions such as acid throwing. Acid throwing has been found to be normally an act of revenge motivated by hatred or jealousy due to the intensive issues in personal relationships, for example, marriage, a broken love affair, rejection, or unfaithfulness. The attacker blamed the victim for such issues and wanted to inflict as much mental or physical harm as possible. However, dowry demand was also found to be one of the main causes of acid attacks in Pakistani society. Acid attack on women is one of the most damaging

forms of violence against women, which has damaging repercussions not only for the victim women but for society as a whole. The victims had to face the psychological trauma after acid attacks. The youngest girls had to face the social inequalities and deprivations of marriage. Weaker rule of law in the country makes victims of attacks afraid to come forward against the offenders, and as a result, they easily escape punishment. The government needs to enact appropriate laws to stop all types of violence against women, including acid violence, and ensure proper implementation of the laws. Further, the acid-attacked victims have to face a variety of issues and barriers in receiving legal and medical support in Pakistani Society; therefore, the Government should take specific appropriate action to help the victims in getting free medical treatment and other services for their absolute rehabilitation.

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