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Extended Family Influences on Intimate Partner Violence: Perceptions of Pakistanis in Pakistan and the UK

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Influences of Extended Family on Intimate Partner Violence: Perceptions of Pakistanis in Pakistan and the UK

Abstract

Limited research has been undertaken on the role of extended family members in Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). This study uniquely explores the perspective of Pakistani men and women about the role of a husband and wife's families in relation to marital conflict and IPV. For this qualitative study, data were collected through 41 individual interviews, including 20 from Pakistan and 21 from the UK. The findings are presented in four themes including 'privacy and personal space', 'interference and instigation of problems', 'conflicting and uncommunicated expectations' and 'adjustment facilitation'. A lack of privacy and personal space within a family home shared with extended family on the husband's side, interference in terms of mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law making complaints about the wife, and the couple's differing expectations of the husband's responsibility for his extended family could cause tension and conflict which could lead to IPV. The husband's family could also have a positive effect by minimizing conflict through offering the couple personal time and helping the wife to adjust to her new family. The wife's family was perceived as having a much more passive role in terms of not interfering, but instead allowing her to adjust to her new extended family. In conclusion, the husband's extended family can have a considerable impact on conflict within couples. Public health prevention initiatives for IPV in Pakistani people should address the role of the husband's extended family. The findings of the study are not only important for the population studied, which is part of an international diaspora, but for other communities worldwide that value close family structure due to cultural and religious preferences.

INTRODUCTION

Family plays an important role in individuals' lives throughout the lifespan and when two individuals enter into an intimate relationship and plan to develop a family of their own, their respective natal families do not cease to influence their relationship (Clark, Silverman, Shahroui, Everson-Rose, & Groce, 2010). The level and strength of influence, however, differ depending on the culture, ethnicity and, possibly, the country of the individual. In many countries, especially developing countries, couples live in an extended family. One such example is the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, a patriarchal and patrilineal society that values a strong family system. Pakistan has also got well established Pakistani communities in nearly developed countries around the world. The family structure and system has a strong influence on an individual's life, decision-making, social roles and selection of profession (Itrat, Taqui, Qazi, & Qidwai, 2007). People generally live in joint or extended families with two or three generations living together. Joint families are comprised of: "... the wives and children of the adult males, their parents and younger siblings and not usually, their first cousins, nephews and nieces. A common residence, common property, common worship, a common kitchen and system of mutual obligations." (Wasim, Herani, Farooqui, & Qureshi, 2008, p. 30) is a distinct characteristic of a joint family. Extended family, on the other hand, is composed of several nuclear families living together in the same household. These are usually composed of generally male siblings – with their families – living together. Each family may be economically independent, but have to abide by the same rules and are affected by the control over their social behavior, major life decisions such as: "... marriage, divorce, observance of purdah and women's participation in development programmes" (Wasim et al., 2008, p. 31). On average 6-8 people live in a single Pakistani family (Government of Pakistan, 2010). At times, people may not live in the same household, but live very close by, such as in the same street.

The trend of nuclear and sub-nuclear family is becoming popular, especially in urban parts of the country (Taqui, Itrat, Qidwai, & Qadri, 2007). However, regardless of the living in nuclear, joint or extended family, members are usually very close to each other and have considerable influence over each other's lives and important decisions such as marriage, separation, divorce, employment etc. Older members of the family, whether male or female, usually have an important role in making decisions affecting members of the family. While employment in other cities and countries has an impact, the majority of Pakistani elder family members, be in Pakistan or outside Pakistan, still live at home with their children or grandchildren (Itrat et al., 2007; Taqui et al., 2007). Therefore, the family can significantly impact on the marital relationship of a couple, especially in the early years of their marriage. Evidence suggests that arranged marriages and especially consanguineous and transnational marriages are still very common among Pakistani diaspora living in the United Kingdom (UK) and other countries (Mohammad, 2015; Qureshi, Charsley, & Shaw, 2014; Shaw, 2014). While, attitudes related to spouse selection, marriage, separation, divorce and marital expectations are changing (Qureshi et al., 2014), the role and influence of extended families on the marital relationship of a couple still remains significant.

The quality of intimate/marital relationship can be affected by many different factors, including intimate partner violence (IPV), which refers to a pattern of abusive behavior between two individuals in an intimate relationship (World Health Organization, 2016). IPV is a significant concern in Pakistan and according to the findings of a recent Demographic Health Survey of Pakistan, lifetime prevalence of IPV experienced by women aged 15-49 years is reported to be 38% (National Institute of Population Studies & ICF International, 2013). However, research exploring IPV in Pakistan is limited and presents variable results due to the variation in the conceptualization of IPV and methodology used in various studies. A systematic review of IP in Pakistan 'reported a wide variation in the prevalence of verbal (31%–100%), psychological

(42%-84%), physical (28%-35%) and sexual (1%-77%) IPV”(Ali, Naylor, Croot, & O’Cathain, 2014).

The role of intimate partners’ families on IPV often remains unrecognized and under explored (Clark et al., 2010) may be due to an assumption that IPV happens between two individuals whose behavior may not be influenced by their families. Among various perspectives proposed to explain IPV, the nested ecological framework is one of the most widely used (Heise, 1998). The framework acknowledges that behavior is shaped through interaction between individuals and their social surroundings (Heise, 1998). It acknowledges the role of individual, relationships, community, and societal level factors in contributing to the risk of perpetuating, perpetrating or accepting violence and abuse in relationships. However, the framework fails to explicitly consider the role of the family with regards to IPV (Clark et al., 2010). Available research is generally limited to consideration of how witnessing or been subjected to family violence in childhood/ intergenerational transmission of violence relates to subsequent adult IPV perpetration/victimization (Goodman et al., 2017; McFarlane et al., 2017). Some research has also been conducted to explore the significance of family in relation to women’s experiences of IPV (Chan, Brownridge, Tiwari, Fong, & Leung, 2008; Chan et al., 2009; Clark et al., 2010; Tang & Lai, 2008). A husband’s family, especially his mother and sister, are often identified as the instigator or a direct source of conflict which may lead to IPV (Agoff, Herrera, & Castro, 2007; Chan et al., 2008; Chan et al., 2009; Clark et al., 2010; Haarr, 2007; Haj-Yahia, 2000; Hyder, Noor, & Tsui, 2007; Kapadia, Saleem, & Karim, 2010; Zareen, Majid, Naqvi, Saboohi, & Fatima, 2009). On the other hand, a wife’s natal family is often identified as a source of assistance (García-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2005) and protection against IPV for woman (Naved & Persson, 2008; Xu, 1997) especially if they live in close proximity (Yount, 2005). However, much is still unknown about the role of extended family members in relation to IPV (Allendorf, 2013; Clark et al., 2010; Mirza, 2015). There is a need to explore the role and contribution of both husband and wife’s families in facilitating or

preventing IPV from the perspective of various individuals (family members) as it may help identify strategies that can be used to minimize risk of IPV.

In the Pakistani context, marriage is the only legitimate way for people to live in an intimate relationship and therefore the term 'intimate partner' or 'husband and wife' are used interchangeably in this paper. In addition, the term extended family is used to refer to the respective families of husband and wife (intimate partners). As the cultural and societal context in which people live, shapes perspectives, ways of living as well as expectations from relationships, we felt that it was necessary to understand the differences and similarities in perspectives, of Pakistani living in and outside Pakistan with regards to the role and influence of extended family. This is the first study which attempts to make cross cultural comparisons and aims to explore the perspective of Pakistani and British Pakistani men and women about the role and contribution of husband and wife's families (natal and marital) in facilitating or minimizing IPV. The specific objectives were to explore the perspective of Pakistani and British Pakistani men and women about:

- The positive and negative role and contribution of the husband's family in facilitating or minimizing IPV.
- The positive and negative role and contribution of the wife's family, facilitating or minimizing IPV.

The findings presented here, are part of a larger study conducted to explore the meaning of IPV from Pakistani people's perspective using a constructivist grounded theory approach. The findings and the resultant theory are reported elsewhere (Authors, 2016).

METHODS

The study was conducted using a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). This approach seeks to ascertain the knowledge of subjective experiences and observations of

people from their perspective and assumes that people give meaning to their own experiences and construct their own realities; the researcher's job is to interpret reality from the participants' perspectives. The approach acknowledges the role of the researcher in the construction of reality and the development of a theory that explains the phenomenon. We felt that this approach was suitable for the present study, as it provides the researcher with a "set of tools"- guidelines, principles, and strategies- that can be used to 'tell stories about people, social processes and situations" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 522).

Setting

One of the original aspects of the study is that the data were collected from Pakistan (Karachi) and UK (Sheffield). Karachi is the biggest metropolitan city of Pakistan. It is the second most populated city in the world with a population of approximately 23.5 million as of April 2013 (Khawaja, 2013). Karachi hosts people from all parts of the country, who represent many of its religions, languages and dialects. In addition to Urdu, other languages spoken in Karachi include Sindhi, Pashto, Punjabi, Baluchi, and Seraiki. Approximately 97% of the city's population is Muslim. Minorities include Christians, Hindus, Ahmadis, Parsi, Sikhs, Jews and Buddhists (Government of Sindh, 2011).

Sheffield, the third largest city of England, had an estimated population of 551,800 as of 2011 (West, 2014). Approximately 81% of the population is white and 19% belongs to various ethnic minorities, including Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Somali, Yemeni, Chinese, and Caribbean. According to the 2011 census, the number of Pakistanis living in Sheffield was 21990 (4% of the Sheffield population). Among these, 6762 (1.32%) were born in Pakistan (Sheffield City Council, 2006, 2011). Approximately 92% of the Pakistani population is Muslim (Sheffield City Council, 2011; UK Department for Communities and Local Government, 2009). The most common language spoken is English. Among Pakistani people, the spoken languages include Urdu, Punjabi, Pushto, Sindhi, Seraiki, Pahari and Hindko. Approximately 52.5% of the city's

population is Christian. Muslims account for 8% of the population. Other religious identities include Hindu, Buddhists, Jews, Sikh and others.

To meet the objectives of the study, we felt that inclusion of participants from inside and outside Pakistan would contribute to the variation of the sample and thus may help in-depth exploration of the issue. In Sheffield, participants were recruited from community organizations, mosques and Asian shops as people from all sorts of backgrounds, socioeconomic status and perspectives access these settings. In Karachi, participants were recruited from community organizations, and the outpatient departments of different hospitals and community centers that cater to the needs of diverse populations. Flyers inviting people to participate in the study were placed on notice boards and the staff (receptionists, nurses, shopkeepers, Imams) helped with identification and recruitment of participants. People who showed an interest in the flyer by reading and inquiring about the study (to staff working in the setting who noted their names and telephone numbers) were approached and invited to participate in the study. The above strategies along with theoretical sampling techniques ensured the recruitment of appropriate participants for the study.

Participants

As we wanted to understand what happens in the homes of ordinary people, the initial sampling frame included any men and women (at least 18 years of age) who may or may not have experienced violence in their intimate relationships. At the beginning of the study, participants were selected purposely based on these predetermined characteristics. Decisions about further sampling were made on the basis of provisional theoretical ideas as they emerged during simultaneous data collection and analysis (McCann & Clark, 2003; Patton, 1990). For instance, participants living in joint families stated that spending time together and living in a joint family affects the development of what they termed as ‘understanding’ between husband and wife. To analyze this proposition, interviews were then conducted with participants living in nuclear

families. Likewise, the role of the mother in law was frequently mentioned by participants, and therefore it was deemed necessary to interview mothers-in-law (n=6). Sampling continued until theoretical saturation was achieved (Creswell, 1994).

Participants were 15 males and 26 females (N=41); 20 participants were from Karachi, Pakistan and 21 were from Sheffield, UK. Participants were aged between 20 and 62 years. At the time of the interview, 26 participants were married and most had an arranged marriage. Years of marriage ranged from one to 45 years. Among Pakistani participants, one female had been married three times and another was the second wife of her husband whose first wife had died. One male participant had more than one wife at the time of interview. Among British Pakistanis, only one was married to a British-born Pakistani whereas the remaining 20 participants' spouses came from Pakistan. All mother-in-law participants (n=6) were Pakistani born. Participants varied in terms of languages spoken, education, employment, socioeconomic status and family structure. Table 1 provides details of the participants' characteristics.

Data Collection

Data were collected using individual face-to-face interviews using a semi structured interview guide. With the progress of data collection, questions were added or deleted to explore each emergent category to ensure saturation. Depending on a participant's preference, interviews were conducted in Urdu (26 interviews) or English (15 interviews) by the first author, who is a Pakistani female, married, and able to speak Urdu and English fluently. Each interview lasted 60-90 minutes and was audio recorded. Following each interview, detailed notes were taken to record all significant features and events in each interview such as a description of the setting, the participant's non-verbal behavior, and any interruptions during the interview process. Throughout data collection, a reflexive diary was maintained by the researcher to help them analyze their own feelings, values and beliefs related to the issue of IPV. These notes and reflexive diary were also coded and used in the data analysis. Data collected in English were

transcribed verbatim by the first author. Data were collected in Urdu from 26 participants. These data were first transcribed using Roman Urdu, “a common method of handling Urdu words in English text...” (Halai, 2007, p. 348). This text was then translated into English. As mentioned earlier, the first author of the study is bilingual and was able to transcribe and translate interviews herself. To check the accuracy of the translation of Urdu interviews, three translators who were fluent in both Urdu and English translated excerpts from 12 interviews randomly selected by the translators from the 26 Urdu interviews.

Ethical Issues

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the ethics review committees of the University of Sheffield and Aga Khan University Karachi, Pakistan. In addition, permission to access study sites was obtained from all the involved organizations. Potential participants were provided with an information sheet- in English or Urdu depending on their preference - explaining the aims and objectives of the study. Written consent was obtained from each participant before the interview. Only one participant per family, either male or female, was included in the study. This was done to ensure a participant’s spouse and families would not know whatever the participant disclosed in the interview. We also hoped this approach would help in building rapport and trust with the participants and facilitate their openness in responding to the interview questions (Ellsberg & Heise, 2002; Ellsberg, Heise, Pena, Agurto, & Winkvist, 2001). Every effort was made to ensure that participants were approached and interviewed in a culturally sensitive manner, and confidentiality and anonymity of all participants was ensured at all times. While we have used participants’ quotes to illustrate the findings, we have used pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

Data Analysis and Rigor

For the larger study, data were analyzed using constant comparison, a method of comparing and contrasting data, merging codes and categories throughout data collection and analysis

period (Charmaz, 2006). The process involves three stages that include open coding, focused coding and theoretical coding. In the open coding stage, the data were analyzed line-by-line, from which codes and labels were developed. This process resulted in the development in each interview of more than 150 codes. In the next stage, these codes and conceptual labels were then clustered into categories. In the next phase of focused coding, the relationship between various focused codes and categories were explored and specified. Memos were kept through the period of data collection and analysis to note the thoughts and ideas that were used to clarify concepts. The role of the family emerged as a significant theme. To ensure robustness of the findings related to the role of family, data were analyzed again using a thematic analysis approach. This involved familiarization by reading and re-reading transcripts. Each line or sentence was coded. Similar codes were clustered into categories/ sub themes and themes. Themes were examined in relation to each individual case and were compared across cases to ascertain similarities and differences (Braun, Clarke, & Terry, 2014). To ensure the study was rigorous, various strategies, including member checking, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, theoretical sampling, reflection, validating emerging concepts were used. In addition, appropriate information about where the study was conducted, findings and context of findings are described to enable the reader assess quality. We have adhered to COREQ guidelines for reporting findings

FINDINGS

Participants of the study identified three forms of IPV including physical, psychological and sexual IPV. The examples given to describe physical IPV included hitting (with or without an object such as a knife), beating, pushing, punching, slapping, pulling hair, kicking and throwing objects. Psychological IPV referred to the use of abusive language, swearing, taunting, criticizing, threatening (to divorce, taking children away) degradation, humiliation, forced isolation from family and friends, suspicion and character assassination. Sexual IPV was

defined, by the participants as forced sexual intercourse, forcing a wife to do things that she does not like. Participants believed that IPV develop from conflict between husband and wife. It results from arguments, disagreements and conflicts about daily family life situations and issues that can then escalate to IPV where the husband becomes abusive.

A conflict between husband and wife arises when one of them is unable to meet the expectations of the other and family members. There are many expectations that a husband and wife have to meet in the course of marital life (Authors, 2016). These expectations not only come from individuals themselves, but from other members of the family. Perceived success in meeting such expectations minimizes development of conflict; however, a failure to meet expectations may contribute to the development of conflict between husband and wife. A conflict, if not managed appropriately, can escalate into IPV. As indicated in Figure 1, participants believed that IPV in Pakistani society results from a constant and complex interplay of many different factors and processes. These include individual's attitudes towards IPV, the relationship dynamics (nature and strength of husband and wife's relationship) between the husband and wife, individual personal characteristics (positive or negative attributes of the individual), conflict management practices (how individuals solve conflict), role fulfillment (husband and wife's expectations from each other), the role of family and socioeconomic and cultural factors. A detailed discussion of these is presented elsewhere (Author, 2016). As mentioned previously, this paper aims to focus and expand on the understanding of the role and contribution of the family with regards to IPV between a husband and wife.

Participants of the study asserted that the close knit family structure within the Pakistani community had a strong influence on the marital relationship of a couple. Family here refers to the immediate family of either a husband or wife. The family members include father, mother, sisters, brothers and their wives (if married). In Pakistani society, after marriage a girl moves in with her husband and, therefore, the husband's family plays a significant role in their marital

life. The family could play both a positive and a negative role; however, a negative role was more commonly reported by the participants in this study. The findings are presented here within four themes: 'privacy and personal space', 'interference and instigation of problems', 'conflicting and uncommunicated expectations' and 'adjustment facilitation'. Box 1 provides a description of the participants whose quotes are used to illustrate the findings of the study in this paper. While there appear to be more quotes used from female participants in this paper, only representative quotes are used to illustrate the findings. Female participants have more to say with regards to the aspects discussed here and therefore appear to have a heavy presence here. The implications of this and similarity and differences in the views are discussed later in the discussion section.

Privacy and Personal Space

This theme relates to the role and influence of family in provision of privacy and personal space to the couple to help them understand each other. Marriage in Pakistani society, most often, takes place based on the preferences of parents rather than those of the couple themselves. This was evident in the present study, where most of the Pakistani and British Pakistani participants reported having an arranged marriage, where their spouse was selected by the parents or family members. The husband and wife had often not seen each other or had only seen each other in a short meeting before their wedding day. A perception was that in the case of a love marriage the couple may know each other to a certain extent as they may have worked or studied together. However, Pakistani men and women normally see each other in formal places for a brief time only, as societal and cultural norms discourage as well as closely control social interaction between unrelated men and women. Consequently, their understanding of each other at the time of marriage is limited. Participants felt that regardless of the degree of preference and involvement of the couple in the decision to marry, their marital relationship was expected to

grow and develop over time as their knowledge and understanding of one another increase.

Faheem (British Pakistani male participant) explained:

'Eventually, both [love and arranged] marriage level out. So it's not like, you know, this is a love marriage, so it's better. I think both types of marriage could work out if they [husband and wife] have an understanding of each other... Husband, if he is understanding of his wife, then they will both grow to love each other anyway. I think you need to work on the marriage, no matter what. Even if it's a love or arranged marriage.'

Participants maintained that open communication and sharing facilitate- between a husband and wife-the development of understanding and of feelings of care and love for each other. They described how this was only possible if the husband and wife were able to spend time together. However, the joint family system and the cultural norms did not seem to allow a couple to spend time together and thus was considered to hinder development of open communication and sharing between them. Beena (Pakistani female participant) highlighting this issue stated:

'In a joint family system... husband and wife cannot spend time together. Once you leave your bedroom early in the morning, you are not allowed to go back to your room during the day and you cannot even sit together with your husband in the presence of other family members, as it is considered inappropriate.'

As highlighted, it is considered inappropriate for a husband and wife to be seen together in the presence of other family members. If they are seen around each other in the presence of other family members, the daughter in-law usually gets criticized by extended family members and, therefore, she may avoid her husband who may get frustrated, but may not be able to challenge or confront his mother or other family members. This can lead to conflicts and the husband can resort to IPV to vent his frustration as Pari (Pakistani female participant) explained:

'During the first two years of marriage, we never had time or privacy to talk to each other. If we were talking to each other, the mother in-law would interfere. We didn't have any time for ourselves. So obviously, he [husband] used to get irritated and he could not say anything to his mother, but could get his frustration out on me so that is why we used to end up having a conflict. He used to be verbally abusive sometime. As I said, there was not a single day when we did not have a problem.'

Both female and male participants mentioned this, though female participants appear to be more concerned about this as they found themselves between competing demands from mother-in-

law as well as the husband. Male participants mentioned this but did not seem to be too frustrated about it. The inability to spend time together could contribute to an inability to communicate and a lack of mutual understanding between a husband and wife. Participants believed that couples who were able to spend time with their spouse and felt that they understood each other seemed to have less conflict and did not experience IPV. Both husband and wife's families and especially the husband's family could play a very important role by providing the couple with privacy, personal space and opportunities to spend time with each other. However, the experience of the majority of those participating in this study was different

Interference and Instigation of Problems

This theme explains the contribution of extended family to the development of conflict and subsequent IPV by the interference and instigation of problems between husband and wife. With regards to the husband's family, participants identified mother-in-law and sister-in-law as the most usual people to instigate problems between husband and wife. Participants felt that they did this by making complaints to their son/ brother about his wife. These complaints could be viewed as false or true, but either way generated tension between the couple. Participants asserted that such complaints could contribute to conflict. These could annoy the husband and, as a result, he could get aggressive and use IPV to discipline his wife or to rectify her behavior. It was interesting to note that all participants, men and women, and even the mothers in law in the sample, elaborated the negative role of mother-in-law and sister-in-law in instigating problems between husband and wife. Naureen (British Pakistani female participant) exemplified this problem while sharing her own experiences:

'I think what they [mother-in-law and sister-in-law] do behind the wife's back is that they talk about the wife to their son [husband], she has been doing this, she has been doing that, she has been saying this, why is she doing that. They will basically fill his ears and fill his head and he then comes home and takes it out on the wife... They do underhand tactics. And they will get their son, why is she wearing this, why is she going here, what is she doing and then that all goes into his head and then he goes home and will take that out in violence. Where were you today, what did you do today'.

Even where in-laws did not physically live with, or in close proximity to the couple (for instance, the husband's family living in Pakistan and husband and wife living in the UK), some participants felt that mother-in-law and/or sisters-in-law could still instigate problems by interfering in their marital life via telephone. The interference did not have to involve direct criticism of the wife, but could include ignoring the wife. Rani (British Pakistani female participant) shared her perception about her in-laws' involvement in her marital life:

'The problem I had was that they [in-laws] never spoke to me as much. They would have a private conversation and I think that's what hurt me more. They would ring and speak to him for hours and hours and hours. They would ring him when he was at work so his conversation would be at work. It wouldn't be when he was at home. But I only knew he had spoken to his Mum because he has phoned me. For me that is interfering. You could spend one hour sitting outside in the car or at work talking to your mum or your sister and you are planning things together. I don't know nothing about it, but that is interfering. How is a woman supposed to feel? I don't have that relationship with my mother in-law, I don't have that relationship with my sister in-law. I was a threat to them because I was British born, I was educated here, I worked here, I called him over here, but they were all behind him and not me. That is interference when you are still not letting go of the phone, your son is married, and he is someone's husband now. He needed to play that role not the role of 'I am my mummy's son'.

Participants felt that such tensions between mother-in-law/ sister-in-law and the wife could make the situation difficult and could contribute to a conflict between husband and wife, with the husband resorting to IPV in an attempt to pacify his mother and sister or to vent his anger. On the other hand, the daughter-in-law, living far away from in-laws, as mentioned in the above situation, may perceive the actions of the in-laws as interference resulting in a confrontation or conflict with a husband that could escalate to IPV. In addition, participants felt that men as a husband do not like to hear negative comments (thoughts/ views) about their mother or sisters from their wife. Therefore, when a wife says something negative about her mother-in-law or sister-in-law, it may result in conflicts that can escalate to IPV.

Similar thoughts and perspectives were apparent with regards to the involvement of the wife's family. Their involvement in their daughter's marital life is usually not welcomed by their son-

in-law and his family and may be considered interference, as Naeema (British Pakistani female participant) mentioned:

'I think the girl's family...sort of keeps out of it because they don't want anything to go wrong in their daughter's marriage. They don't want to go in there, interfere in her life because that is going to put their daughter in more trouble'.

Participants believed that the interference of a wife's parents in the marital matters of their daughter could escalate problems in her life. Female participants of the study identified a wife's parents' role as negative if they supported their daughter in making unrealistic demands (for example, asking for expensive jewelry, which he couldn't afford) from her husband and if they did not encourage her to be obedient to her husband and his family. Pari (Pakistani female participant) talking about the role of the wife's family stated:

'Girl's parents can contribute to marital violence between their daughter and her husband by giving her wrong information about her husband and supporting her wrong expectation of her husband and by not helping her recognize her mistakes. Girl's parents should teach the girl to be nice with their husband and in-laws. So they shouldn't spoil their daughter's marital life, but should help her build a trusting relationship with her husband and in-laws'.

Similarly, some male participants of the study believed that a wife's parents can instigate problems and conflict in their daughter's marital life, by providing her with wrong or unnecessary information about her husband's activities outside his home or by encouraging her to make unrealistic demands from her husband. Ali (male Pakistani participant) exemplified this by stating:

'The girl's family can infiltrate her mind by telling her wrong stories about her husband by saying that your husband does not earn much, or how much money he gives you. He should give you more money, etc. etc. So when the girl listens to these sorts of statements, she starts arguing with her husband. This all happens because of the girl's family as they are the ones who poison the girl's mind. She does not know what her husband does in the outside world, but obviously her family members know because they keep an eye on their son in-law and inform his wife about everything which leads to problems between husband and wife'.

Participants felt that an interference from a wife's natal family may encourage her to either initiate arguments with her husband or to respond aggressively to her husband. A perception was that this could lead to conflict and consequent IPV. On the other hand, if the husband came

to know that his wife is encouraged and supported by her family and/or that his in-laws are aware of problems and issues in their marital lives, he may feel embarrassed and as a result may resort to IPV against his wife. As indicated above, participants of this study felt that the interference and instigation of problems by either husband or wife's family could contribute to conflict. The notion of interference and false complaints was held by both male and female participants as evident above.

Conflicting and Uncommunicated Expectations

This theme explains the issue of conflicting and sometimes uncommunicated expectations that husband and wife and their families may have from each other and how these contribute to conflicts and IPV. A daughter in-law is the new person in the family and both parties, the husband's family as a whole and the daughter-in-law, need time to understand and accept each other. Participants maintained that both parties have certain expectations of each other, which they may or may not communicate effectively to each other and as a result, it is often very difficult for the daughter in-law to understand and keep up with all the expectations of her new role and family. A perception was that the daughter-in-law might also have certain expectations of her husband and in-laws. Shazia, a Pakistani female participant explained this by describing the reasons behind the negative role of her husband's family:

'Sometimes a husband is nice, but he finds it difficult to adjust to the everyday situations in his new life. And it is also difficult for the family members because marriage results in an addition of a new person in the family and that person has her own nature. Another thing is that the family's expectation that they have from their new daughter in-law may not be met. It could also be that the girl didn't get what she was expecting to see in her in-laws'.

It is worth mentioning here that in Pakistani society a man is expected to provide for the needs of his family, which may include his parents, wife, children, and siblings (if not married). These needs include providing the family with a place to live, daily living expenses, children's education, and medical expenses. This expectation can contribute to tension between husband and wife as the wife may not see this as her husband's responsibility, especially in the context

of limited resources, and may indeed object to this. In the following quote, Rania, (a British Pakistani female participant) mentioned financial responsibilities of her husband towards his family and how these became a reason for conflict between the participant and her husband:

‘I think my main disagreement with him was financial support to his family. He wasn’t willing to support me financially because he believed that what he earned, his parents had a right over. So I was working, he was working, and my money was for housekeeping, for bills, for buying the food. Whereas his money, he felt, his brothers had a right over it and his parents had a right over it. So he was, for that first year, I accepted it, so he was earning and sending that away. I was earning and providing for the house. So it was financial reasons. Other than that we never had a problem which is a great shame. He was directed to support family back home, whereas, I wanted him to stay with me and settle down together. He was earning and supporting his family. I was earning and supporting me and him. As a man he should have been supporting me, we should have been supporting each other. We should be planning our life together, not supporting his parents and other family members’.

As indicated in this account, a husband may prioritize financial needs of his parents and siblings over the needs of his wife and children. Such situations may contribute to conflict which may then escalate to IPV. The issue of such financial support was contentious in both study settings, Pakistan as well as the UK.

At the same time, a few participants, who were mothers-in-law themselves, while talking about expectations stated that daughters-in-law do not respect their mothers-in-law and other family members, and this contributes to the tensions and problems in their relationship with in-laws.

Nabeela Khatoon, (mother-in-law) explained this as:

‘Some daughter-in-law never respect their mother-in-law and don’t listen to anything they say. So a good daughter in-law is one who understands her mother in-law, considering that elders should be respected, especially when mother in-law says something, it should be tolerated. They also don’t respect and adjust with other family members in the husband’s family’.

Living together as a joint family is often a common and an important expectation in Pakistani society, especially in the earlier years of marriage. Participants of this study felt that most daughters-in-law prefer to live as a nuclear family soon after their marriage, whereas the husband’s family would like them to live as a joint family. The conflicting interests of the daughter-in-law and husband’s family (especially mother-in-law) may affect their relationship

with each other (daughter-in law and mother-in-law) and the tension between them may affect the relationship between husband and wife.

With regards to the wife's family, participants believed that a wife's parents usually worry about their daughter's happiness and marriage sustainability, however, they expect their daughter to be able to successfully maintain the relationship to avoid negative impacts of a broken marriage on their other children, as divorce is not welcomed in the Pakistani culture and brings shame and bad reputation to not only a husband and wife, but also to their families. For instance, divorce or separation has serious implications for not only the woman affected, but it negatively impacts the marriage prospect of her siblings, especially her sisters. Fearing this, parents usually encourage their daughter to be an obedient and dutiful wife and a daughter-in-law in her marital life, as explained by Kainaat (Pakistani female participant) who stated:

'Well a girl's parents are always scared if anything could result in divorce of their daughter and always try to teach their daughters to serve her in-laws and to remain obedient to them. But sometimes, the girl's parents can get involved in marital conflicts of their daughter and could even encourage her to leave the marital house'.

These conflicting, but sometimes unspoken expectations from family members contribute to tension and conflict between husband and wife.

Adjustment Facilitation

Participants of the study also acknowledged that the family members (of husband and wife) can also play a positive role and thus can help to prevent IPV between husband and wife. The majority of the married participants acknowledged that they lived in a joint family after their marriage, with the exception of few female British born Pakistani participants who had been married to someone from Pakistan who left their families in Pakistan. Among all British Pakistani participants' only one was married to another British Pakistani. While talking about the positive role of the husband's family, participants mentioned helping the daughter in-law in adjusting to the marital home, helping her to understand her husband, and encouraging her to

share her problems and concerns with them (in-laws) as Zubair (Pakistani male participant) maintained:

'They [in-laws] can help them [the couple] to develop an understanding by providing them with opportunities to spend time with each other. They can help the girl share her problem with them and can help her understand the routine and likes, dislikes and preferences of her husband and the family'.

Participants felt that the mother-in-law can act to diffuse conflicts and problems that may occur between husband and wife and thereby may help prevent IPV. Mother-in-laws interviewed in the study highlighted this. For instance, Naseeban (mother-in-law) maintained:

'If the husband and wife have some arguments, mother in-law should try to help them resolve their conflicts'.

Participants believed that a wife's parents can also significantly contribute to marital harmony by helping their daughter understand the importance of marriage, the marital relationship, and the husband's family. They should help her understand and fulfil her responsibilities towards her husband and in-laws. Participants believed that a wife's parents can play a positive role by helping their daughter adjust to the new family by providing her with time and space. Shahana (Pakistani female participant) provided a description of the positive role of the wife's family:

'I think it is important that girl's parents should stay a little away from their daughter's marital life, once she is married to someone. They should help the girl understand that she needs to live in the new home for the rest of her life, so should learn to adjust. Obviously, she is not going to get the same environment and response that she always got from her parents. If parents keep on supporting her against her in-laws or husband, then that is not right. They need to help their daughter understand and realize her mistakes when she is wrong and her husband is right. Yes, they should support her where there is a need, but should not do it unnecessarily'.

Participants acknowledged a girl may face a lot of problems and difficulties during the initial years after marriage. They believed that it is important for her to give time to her new home and family to not only understand them, but also to help the new family to understand her as well.

In summary, most participants in this study believed that both a husband's and wife's families have important roles to play in facilitating or minimizing conflicts and IPV between husband and wife. According to most participants of the study the role of family is significant even if the couple were living in a nuclear family or thousands of miles away in Pakistan. The wife's family can also play a role; however, their role is limited in that they are not expected to interfere in their daughter's marital life.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this novel study highlight the influence of a husband and wife's respective families on their marital life with regards to conflicts and IPV. The study is unique as it explored perceptions of positive as well as negative roles of both the husband and wife's family, as available research on the role of the family generally centers around the negative role of the husband's family. The role and influence of the extended family may not be seen as significant in cultures where individualism is considered important, however, in societies that value close knit family structure, it is an important aspect of an individual's life. It is also important for the reason that in countries like Pakistan, a lot of protection that is often provided by the legal system in developed countries, is missing and therefore, the role of the family in protecting women becomes considerably important as it may be the only protection against abusive behavior of the husband and or in-laws. While there are laws to protect women and to enable them to report abuse, limited awareness of rights, emphasis on the notion of 'honor', societal attitudes towards women, the economic dependence of women on their husbands and families often act as barriers to seeking help (Bhandari, 2018; Finfgeld-Connett & Johnson, 2013). Similar issues affect disclosure of IPV and seeking help for Pakistanis living in other countries such as the UK. In addition, the role of family in Pakistani context is also important to understand with regards to Pakistanis living in other countries due to high prevalence cousin and transnational marriages where a girl/ boy from the Pakistani diaspora may choose their

spouse from Pakistan, mostly as a result of arranged marriage. In such cases, the spouse moving to the new country has limited knowledge and understanding of the new country and is usually dependent on their spouse and their extended family for a significant time. Knowing how family can influence the marital relationship of a couple positively or negatively can help improve our understanding of wider context and can help design appropriate measures to prevent IPV.

The study was initially conducted in both these countries (Pakistan and UK) independently, with an aim to ascertain similarity and differences, however, views of both the Pakistani and British Pakistani participants with regards to the role of the extended family were generally similar; however, the context in which situations occur was different. For instance, families were physically present in Pakistan, whereas in the British Pakistani context, the perceived interference by husband's family was generally via telephonic communication. The findings suggest that both families can play a positive as well as a negative role. The husband's mother and sister were frequently identified as people who may instigate issues and conflicts between a husband and wife. The finding is consistent with previous research that identified a wife's in-laws as instigators of conflict between husband and wife or a direct source of conflict with the wife and thus contributing to IPV (Agoff et al., 2007; Chan et al., 2008; Chan et al., 2009; Clark et al., 2010; Haarr, 2007; Haj-Yahia, 2000; Hyder et al., 2007; Kapadia et al., 2010; Zareen et al., 2009). The finding suggests that in-laws can contribute to conflict and IPV even if they do not live with or in close proximity. This is interesting as such close relationships are not easy to maintain over a longer duration. More research is needed to explore this issue in different communities and settings.

The family has the potential to act as a protective factor against conflict and IPV between a husband and wife (Clark et al., 2010; Kapadia et al., 2010; Koenig, Ahmed, Hossain, & Alam Mozumder, 2003; Naeem, Irfan, Zaidi, Kingdon, & Ayub, 2008). The present study suggests that a wife's family can also play a significant positive as well as negative role with regards to

the marital life of their daughter. This finding is interesting as previous research generally highlights only a positive role of the wife's family (García-Moreno et al., 2005; Koenig et al., 2003; Naved & Persson, 2008; Yount, 2005) especially in relation to supporting the wife to cope with violence and abuse. The wife's family role is significant with regards to transnational marriages where a husband has come from Pakistan to live with his British born Pakistani wife (Charsley, 2005). This study highlights important points in relation to the role of the wife's family; however, the various ways through which families, especially the wife's family, act as a causative or protective factor in relation to IPV remain under explored (Clark et al., 2010). It is also important to note that both male and female participants appear to be more critical when reflecting on the role of their-in laws than their own family members. For example, male participants were more critical about the role wife's natal family than their own and vice versa. Research concerning the views of men about their in-laws is scarce and to our knowledge, this is the first study that has explored this. While male voices were also included in this study, the number of male participants remains low due to the difficulties in identifying and recruiting male participants to explore such a sensitive topic. Further, in-depth exploration is required to understand men's perspectives about IPV, and perspectives about the role of husband and wife's family with regards to IPV. We felt that male participants were generally hesitant to talk about the issues when compared with their female counterparts. This could be because male find it difficult to disclose issues affecting them and that they can be defensive or biased towards their own families. In addition, males have much more opportunities to spend time outside the home environment resulting in limited exposure (and impact) of the issues between wife and other family members. Women, on the other hand, spend a lot more time at home and therefore feel greater impact of such issues. It may also be important to understand that while women as wives are subjected to a lot more expectations to settle in the new family and to learn a new way of life congruent with their husband and marital family, they are relatively better prepared for this with the help of their parents, friends and others. On the other hand, men are rarely prepared

for any of these roles and may also find it difficult to ask for help with this. More needs to be done to help boys and men to understand how to develop and maintain healthy relationships and balance between relationships in the family.

The mother-in-law and sister-in-law are identified as instigators of or contributors to marital conflict and IPV although no previous research has attempted to explore these stakeholders' perceptions of marital conflict and IPV and their precise role in contributing to IPV. More research is needed to explore the perspective of mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law about IPV. It may be worthwhile exploring in depth the mother-in-law's personal experiences of being a daughter-in-law and its impact on being a mother-in-law. In addition, interviewing mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law from the same family individually about their views on their role in IPV may provide important insights into the phenomenon as to how they perceive the role of another. In this study, we interviewed six mothers-in-law who not only talked about their own experiences of being a daughter-in-law and being mother-in-law and how they perceived their role in helping their son and daughter-in-law develop a healthy relationship. A significant difference in Pakistani and British Pakistani context was that most women did not expect their sons and their families to live with them mainly due to small houses, but they did maintain close contact with their children and potentially had a strong influence on their relationship. As mentioned previously, it will be useful to explore perspectives of mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law from the same family to explore how this is perceived by both parties. It was interesting to note that there were more similarities than differences in opinions of participants from both setting regardless of the type of family they lived in (nuclear/ joint) level of education or socioeconomic status. This may be due to the value and importance given to the family, close knit community, religious and cultural values and role expectations in the Pakistani community. It may also be due to the fact that the majority of the individuals were Pakistanis or were married to a Pakistani born spouse and, therefore, there were similarities in perspectives. It may be

interesting to explore similarity and differences in the perspectives of those not married to Pakistani spouse.

It is important to note that the role of family is often underestimated in theories and frameworks explaining IPV such as ecological framework. However, understanding the role of family in relation to conflict and IPV in Pakistani society is crucial due to various factors such as distinct cultural practices, preference for arranged marriages, expectation to maintain marital relationships and the taboo nature of separation and divorce, and the importance of family life and joint and extended family system. It is also important to note that these practices are not limited to Pakistan and that other Asian and Middle Eastern countries appear to value the same practices (Clark et al., 2010) and therefore, the findings of the study are not only relevant to Pakistani living in Pakistan and Pakistani diaspora living outside Pakistan, but to the other communities that value close knit family structures due to cultural or religious influences.

Limitations

The study has limitations as well and the findings from the study should be interpreted cautiously considering these factors. For instance, data for this study was collected from only two different settings i.e Karachi, Pakistan and Sheffield, UK. Karachi is the biggest metropolitan city of Pakistan and the perceptions, views and experiences of people living in Karachi may be very different from people living in other parts of the country. Similarly, in Sheffield, there may be an overrepresentation of participants whose parents may have come from the northern part of Pakistan. The study sample may not have captured people who may believe that IPV is acceptable. In addition, we tried to ensure inclusion of people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. However, the sample does not seem to have very poor and very rich people who may hold different views and perceptions about IPV and the role of family in relation to IPV. However, every effort has been made to ensure transferability of the findings by providing ample detail about the setting and the sample. The findings are based on

participants' perceptions and views. Participants were not asked to disclose their personal experiences unless they themselves wanted to do so. The findings also are not applicable to situations of extreme violence as it was not in the scope of study.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the study have significant implications. The findings of the research study can be used to develop appropriate strategies to enhance understanding of individuals and families about IPV and its associated factors. Educational and awareness programmes can be developed to help people recognize the importance and role of families in relation to IPV. A need for open communication channels between not only a husband and wife, but other family members can be communicated to all concerned, including the mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, husband, wife and other family members. This can be achieved through the use of television and radio programmes that are popular among the Pakistani people especially women. Other strategies may include campaigning to de-stigmatize IPV by encouraging women to speak out about their perspectives and experiences. Campaigns to raise awareness of the harm caused by IPV possibly using mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, may also be helpful.

CONCLUSION

The study significantly contributes to the body of knowledge by providing in-depth understanding of the extended family's role and contribution to IPV from the perspectives of Pakistani people living in Pakistan and UK. The study suggests that both husband and wife's family play an important role in relation to marital conflict and IPV. The husband's family can have a positive effect by minimizing conflict through offering the couple personal time and helping the wife to adjust to her new family. The wife's family could contribute by helping their daughter to adjust to her new extended family. This is the first study that included the perspectives of mothers-in-law about conflict and IPV in a marital relationship. The findings may help develop quantitative instruments that can be used to explore the perspective of people

from diverse communities about the role of extended family in IPV. Public health prevention initiatives for IPV in Pakistani people should address the role of the husband's extended family.

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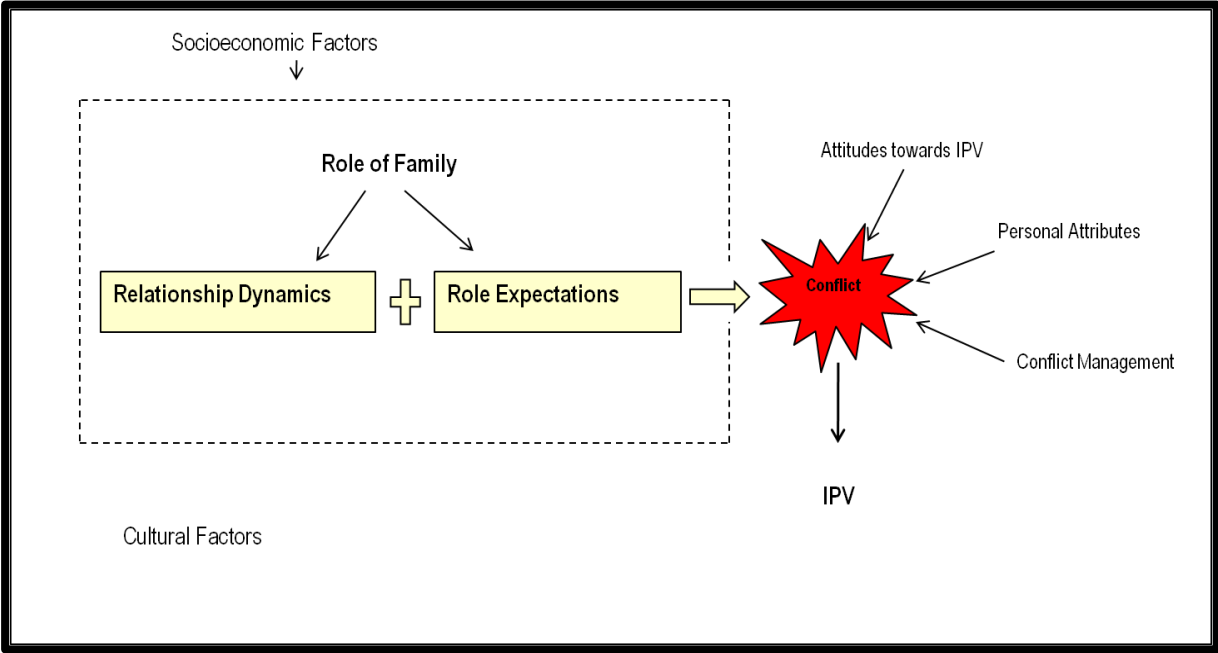


Figure 1: Interplay of various factors resulting in the development of conflict and IPV

Table 1: Characteristics of Study Participants

Characteristics	Pakistan N = 20	UK N = 21
<i>Age (in years)</i>		
< 21	00	01
21-30	08	06
31-40	08	08
41-50	03	00
50 +	01	06
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	07	07
Female	13	14
<i>Level of Education</i>		
None	02	03
Primary	04	01
Secondary (up to 10 years)	06	03
Higher Secondary	02	02
Degree level	05	07
Postgraduate	01	04
<i>Language</i>		
Hindko	05	05
Pahari	00	06
Pashto	03	03
Punjabi	07	03
Urdu	03	03
Sindhi	02	01
<i>Religion</i>		
Islam	19	21
Christianity	01	-
<i>Family Structure</i>		
Nuclear	10	14
Joint	10	07
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	04	03
Married	14	13
Divorced	02	02
Widow	-	03
<i>Mode of Marriage</i>		
Arrange Marriage	12	16
Love Marriage	04	02
Not Applicable	04	03
<i>Economic Status</i>		
Working	13	11
Not working	07	09
<i>Years of Marriage</i>	1 month-28 years	1-45 years
<i>Number of Children</i>	1-9	1-7

Box 1: Characteristics of participants whose quotes are presented in the paper

Ali: A 28 years old Pakistani Muslim male, who work as a labour, lives in a joint family with his parents, siblings, and wife who is a homemaker. Ali speaks Pushto and has been married for a month at the time of interview.

Beena: A 25 years old, Pakistani Muslim housewife who had a love marriage and lives in a joint family with her husband and in-laws. Beena speaks Urdu, has a master's degree and has been married for four years. Her husband is an Engineer.

Faheem: A 28 years old, British Pakistani male with master's degree. Faheem is a graphic designer and is married for two years following an arranged marriage. His wife is a degree level student and they live in a joint family with Faheem's parents, and siblings.

Kainaat: A 45 years old Muslim Pakistani female working in a public sector organisation. She is educated up to higher secondary school, and is married for 14 years following a love marriage. Kainaat lives with her husband (no children) who also works in a public sector organisation

Nabeela Khatton: A 62-year-old British Pakistani female widow (mother-in-law). She was married for 35 years and her husband died 2 years ago. Nabeela Khatton, speaks Hindko, and lives with her four children and their families.

Naeema: A 28 years' old, British Pakistani Muslim, single female. Naeema is a teacher, educated to master's level and speaks Hindko and English. She lives with her parents and siblings.

Naseeban: A 55 years old, British Pakistani Muslim female (mother-in-law). Naseeban speaks Punjabi, and has been married for 40 years following an arranged marriage. She lives in a joint family with her husband (businessman), 4 children and their families.

Naureen: A 30 years old, British Pakistani, Muslim female who is educated to degree level and works as community advisor in a local organization. Naureen speaks Pahari and had an arranged marriage 11 years ago. She lives with her husband (taxi driver) and 2 children as a nuclear family.

Pari: A 40-year-old Pakistani Muslim housewife, married for 28 years (arranged marriage), and lives in a nuclear family with her husband and 5 children. Pari speak Hindko and is educated to primary level. Her husband works in a government organization and her mother-in-law lived with her for few years.

Rania: A 37 years old, British Pakistani Muslim female. Rania is educated to degree level, works in the education sector and speaks Pahari. Rania is a divorcee who had an arranged marriage, with her cousin, that lasted for three years. She lives independently with her son.

Shahana: A 38 years old Pakistani, Muslim housewife, married for 19 years following an arranged marriage with her husband who is Government officer. Shahana is educated up to degree level, speaks Sindhi and lives in a nuclear family with her husband and 4 children.

Shazia: A 47 years old Pakistani Christian Nurse, married for 18 years following a love marriage. Shahana speaks Punjabi, lives with her husband (accountant) and 4 children.

Zubair: A 24 years old single Pakistani male, who works as a junior clerk. Zubair is educated at degree level, speaks Pushto and lives with his parents and siblings.