

A Marxist Feminist Approach To Violence Against Women During COVID-19 Pandemic In Pakistan

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Abstract

Keeping in view exacerbating unemployment amid of COVID-19, the current research focuses on the economic causes and impacts of increasing violence against women in Pakistan. For the current research, Marxist Feminist approach is employed to carry out productive analysis and bring out practical recommendations. To achieve the objective of the research, secondary data are obtained, and mixed methods of data analysis is employed. The research concludes that due to rooted patriarchal culture in Pakistan, women are subjugated and treated as second-class citizen of the country despite equal rights being ensured to them in the Constitution of Pakistan. Due to crippling economic situation amid of lockdown throughout the country, many private firms in Pakistan laid off and downsized their employees. It is observed that ratio of women downsized employees is far greater than men. In addition, it is concluded that ratio of cases of violence against women during COVID-19 Pandemic is directly proportional to the increasing unemployment and laid-off labour force. In the backdrop of pre-existing narrative and deep-rooted patriarchal culture, women are more vulnerable to be the victim of public and private patriarchy amidst of Pandemic. There is a dire need to produce literature which can transform pre-existing narrative that is against women. Extensive research and policy reforms are the need of an hour to mitigate the domestic and structural form of patriarchy existing in Pakistan and provide conducive environment for women at home and at work.

Keywords

Covid-19 Pandemic, Marxist Feminist Approach, Violence against Women, Unemployment, Policy reforms.

1. Introduction.

The term “feminism” was first coined in France during 1880s, long after the onset of women rights campaigns. In 1960s, the term was often used for US’s women rights movement which referred to “women’s subordinate social position spiritual authority, political rights and/or economic opportunities” (Freedman, 2001, p.1-3) However, the term has evolved throughout the history; except some foundational assumptions, its meaning is not stable and varies from context to context. Feminism has evolved and grown into an array of offshoots since then, and it has now become a significant part of socio-political rubric of every society. In Pakistan, there are two contradictory offshoots of women rights movement i.e., Islamic feminism, and Secular Feminism; former defines women rights under Islamic framework whereas later considers women rights as an extension of human rights.

According to United Nations, globally, an estimated 736 million women—almost one in three—have been subjected to intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their life (30 per cent of women aged 15 and older) (UN-Women, 2021). It has been observed that during Covid-19 Pandemic, violence against women has increased drastically. There are various reasons of prevailing and surging tide of violence against women, such as socio-cultural gender norms, cultural practices like Vani, karo-kari, etc., women’s financial dependance on men, patrilineal-patriarchal households, early marriages of girls, unemployment, etc. However, according to Marxist-feminism, the most drastic among them are women’s financial dependance on men in the capitalist societies, their unpaid domestic labor, less employment opportunities for women, and their under-paid professional work (Tyson, 1998). It has been observed that in Pakistan, with the rise of Covid-19 restrictions, there has been a drastic rise of unemployment and frustration among masses which ultimately became the reason for the growing tide of violence against women especially domestic violence. Former Chairperson of Punjab Commission on Status of Women, Fauzia Viqar said,

“Men are at home during pandemic, and it would be very challenging for women to report and seek any relief. According to my experience, women used to report such cases usually at night or when men are away from home. Now most of the private and public services are disrupted, therefore it is hard to know the accurate statistics and magnitude of the specific nature of these crimes” (as cited in ANI news)

In Pakistan, first case of coronavirus was reported on 26th of February, and government imposed first lockdown for 14 days from March 23rd, 2020 followed by shutting down markets, downsizing companies, laying-off employees, and increasing unemployment. Many private firms laid-off their employees which increased frustration among them. It has been observed that number

of women downsized employees was far greater than men. Many women work as domestic maid in households, who were also laid-off due to Covid-19 restrictions and SOPs. Increased unemployment caused frustration among male populace who are driven by patriarchal mindset and culturally and socially supported for their violent behaviors manifested more violence against women. Crippling economy and growing unemployment among women populace also increased women's dependance on men hence made them more vulnerable to violence especially domestic violence.

In this backdrop, there is dire need to mitigate the prevalence of violence against women and its disastrous implication on the society. Therefore, the current study aims to explore deep rooted causes and impacts of violence against women in Pakistani society. As the surge in cases of violence against women and femicide has been observed during Covid-19 pandemic, the research is limited to the data collected during Covid-19. There are socio-cultural, political, and economic causes of VAW, however, during Covid pandemic all the other factors more or less remain static except economic situation which drastically changed throughout the lockdown period, therefore, the current research focused on unemployment and economic causes of Violence against women and their implication on the society. To carry out productive analysis and bring out practical resolution, Marxist-feminist approach to study is applied.

1.1.Objective of the Research

To explore the causes and impacts of increasing violence against women during COVID-19 pandemic under Marxist Feminist perspective.

1.2. Research Question

Q.1. What are the causes and impacts of surging violence against women cases in Pakistan amidst of COVID-19 Pandemic in the light of Marxist Feminist perspective?

1.3. Significance of the Study

In Pakistan, during last one and a half year, there is rapid surge in cases of violence such as instances of rape of women and minors, acid throwing, honor killing, workplace and street harassment, and domestic violence, due to growing frustration and chaotic socio-economic condition of the state amidst Covid Pandemic. Femicide and suicide rate among Pakistani females are also increasing drastically. Due to prevalence of structured patriarchy coupled with crippling economic situation amidst of lockdown, many private firms in Pakistan laid off and downsized their employees especially females which has increased women's dependance on men and exacerbated rate of violence against women. In this backdrop, there is a dire need of exploring the number of reported cases, the root causes and impacts of VAW on women and society at large to help access to safety mechanism and bring policy reforms pertaining to the issue. Therefore, the current study endeavor to investigate the causes and impacts of surging femicide and VAW within Pakistani society with special focus on its directly proportional relationship with unemployment

and declining economic rate amidst Covid-19 lockdowns. For this, Marxist Feminist approach is employed to carry out productive analysis and bring out practical recommendations.

2. Literature Review

In the present age of advancement where humans are considering sky as the limit, women are still struggling for their survival where, violence against women is not a crime but a socially accepted norm. If we examine the impacts of domestic violence (in the form of either economic, physical, psychological) on psychological and social well-being of these women than it is concluded that, families and socio-economic factors are very crucial players that can play significant role in the lives of survivors as most of the victims are financially deprived and dependent, and having issues while sleeping, experiencing post-traumatic stress, severe depression, and other psychological issues. It is witnessed that the women facing physical torture had more devastating impacts on their psychological health and the reasons to tolerate this kind of physical violence are the lack of legal rights, social obligations, fix gender norms, and other kind of boundaries set by marital relationship (S Naz, NI Malik, 2018).

Heise (2018) asserts that Throughout the world, violence on women is still considered as the most pervading and least recognized human right abuse. In this backdrop there is a dire need to include issues pertinent to gender-based violence in the mainstream of country's policy as call of action instead of always treating them as the missing agenda. As the global pandemic Covid-19 intensifies, its gendered effects start gaining attention. Instead of having scarce information, media and other associated reports coverage reveal frightening violent cases against women by intimate partners. During this outbreak, including partners using physical distancing measures to further isolate affected women from resources. In many countries, police department reports tripling of domestic violence cases in February 2020 as compared to February 2019 (E Roesch, A Amin, [J Gupta](#), C García-Moreno, 2020). Being the patriarchal society, it is already observed that almost 90% of Pakistani married women endure physical abuse which is considered to be a family matter that's why not reported as a crime instead, nevertheless, international laws clearly identify these activities as a human right violation.

In Pakistan, women rights and protection are being ensured by Islamic shari'ah supported with the state legislation which, however, lack proper implementation. During covid restrictions of staying at home in order to avoid the spread of pandemic, women became double victimized as they face lethal COVID-19 virus outside and abusers at home, who take advantage of lockdown situation to manifest more violence on women who lack access to law enforcement agencies amidst lockdowns. Almost 399 women are murdered in KPK during lockdown in March 2020 with only 25 calls from victims to report police so, there is a dire need to create not only awareness but telemedicine facilities should be expanded for quick medical treatment of victims supported by quick and easy complaint system and protection of victims (MAM Baig, [S Ali](#), NA Tunio - Asia Pacific Journal of Public ..., 2020). As lockdowns during COVID-19 significantly hit developing nations like Pakistan so, it eventually damage the employment situation in Pakistan particularly in

rural areas and this unemployment which ruin the income status of families causes high rate of partner violence as bread earners of the families facing high level stress which eventually results in the form of intimate partner crimes in Pakistan (MM Munir, MH Munir, [U Rubaca](#), 2021). Special features of low income countries like demographic positioning, health system, economic inequality, corruption and socio economic culture are the fertile grounds of virus to overwhelm in a developing nation like Pakistan but it is difficult for the low income countries like Pakistan to adopt some long-term protective measure to contain the virus so, short-term policies are adopted based on the daily COVID position which may be the cause of many economic issue during the pandemic ([I Ali](#), [S Ali](#), 2020).

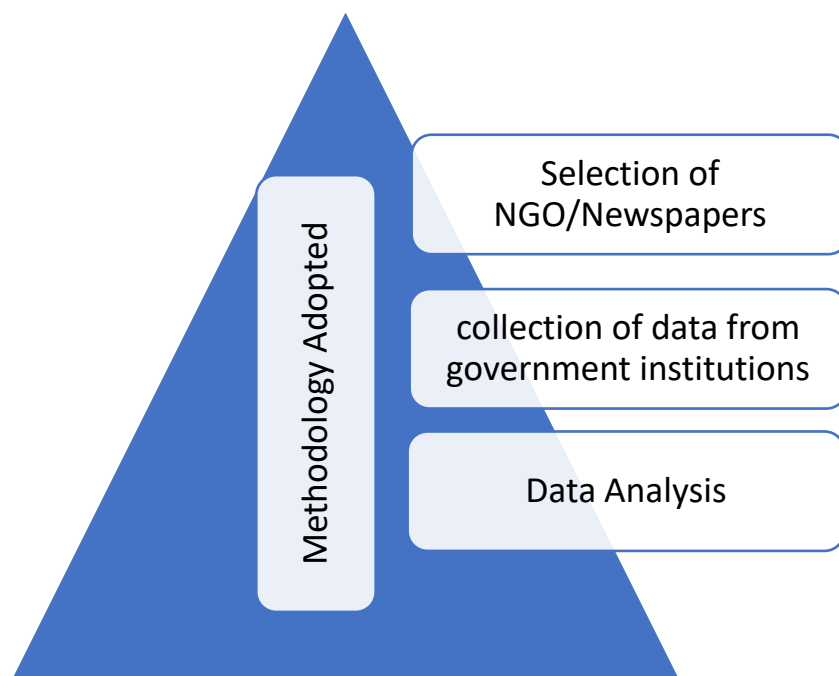
If we critically evaluate the relation between domestic violence against women and the pandemic, it is noticeable that, stay at home policy accelerates the pace of domestic violence against women causing a kind of “shadow pandemic within the pandemic” called by United Nations. Although, the research conducted so far mostly based on social media, internet and reports of helplines, letters and editorials etc. but it emphasis the need of improved health care facilities available to victims along with the mental health facilities for better and creative solution of the issue (A Viero, G Barbara, M Montisci, K Kustermann, 2020).

Surging domestic violence is not restricted to developing nations, however, its effect in these countries is more severe due to the financial status, unemployment, poverty and living standards. Financial and economic situation due to lock down and undesired unemployment are the root cause of frustration and stress which result depression and intensify domestic violence. These incidences of violence translate into impaired mental health conditions accompanied with internet addiction between vulnerable groups specifically women and recovery from these harmful effects can only be possible via counselling and psychotherapy sessions of victims along with full support and security for legislation. But reducing economic impact require maintenance of food supply and cash reward system (like Ahsas Program) till the covid recoveries and restoration of jobs ([O Ilesanmi](#), M Ariyo, A Afolabi).

In Pakistan, issues pertinent to women’s physical, mental, and psychological oppression, and gender-based violence against women are not restricted to COVID-19 but have strong historical background. The contributing factors are gender inequality, low rate of women’s education, economic disparity, firm traditional gender norms and misinterpretation of religion which reinforce and aggravate women’s subordination. These factors combined with COVID-19 restrictions over travelling and staying at home have exacerbated the effects of violence against women. If we monitor the cases with magnifying lens than it is concluded that change is mandatory at all levels including social norms, institutions, political structure etc. to safeguard right of majority along with the awareness of right which is only possible by empowering women through education (Z Jan , 2021).

Family violence is one of the largest epidemic all across the world and with the outbreak of pandemic and stay home restrictions, it tantamount its effect in the society which is a clear call of action for the countries as the lack of coordination between the Governmental departments and stake holders are the serious challenges to address which require strong and effective public policy ([HA Khan](#), K Rasheed, G Dastagir, 2021). Under the stress of pandemic COVID-19, we are less attentive towards equally alarming and thought provoking issue which is not much visible but serious to target is a shadow pandemic i-e the cases of violence against women which is continuously increasing during the pandemic caused by financial and emotional hardship of social distancing. Local women support programs must be promoted to spread awareness about this grim reality hiding underneath the Pandemic (B Hisam, [MN Haider](#), [G Saleem](#), 2021)

3. Research Methodology



3.1.Step 1: Selection of Newspapers:

The data collected from famous, having large readership, and easily accessible national and provincial newspapers by Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO) during the period of 2020 to 2021 is adopted for the current study. The selected English newspapers are: The Nations, The News, Dawn, whereas the selected Urdu newspapers are: Duniya News, Daily Jang, and Daily Express. During the study, the relevant news based on the set indicators were monitored and mapped out on excel sheet by SSDO team.

3.2.Step-2 Collection of Data from Government Institutions

Under Right to Information Law(s) 2013 and 2017, the information was requested by Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO) to public information officers of the office of inspector

general police for the collection of data on tracking numbers of violence against women and children which was published by SSDO in bi-annual tracking report. This published data by SSDO is employed in the current study for the triangulation of the data.

3.3.Step-3 Data Analysis

At the end of each quarter, the data collected from the above-mentioned newspapers was analysed by SSDO team using various parameters; a) Indicator wise Analysis b) Province/Area/Region wise Analysis c) Monthly and Quarterly Analysis against the Indicators

The current study aims to explore deep rooted causes and impacts of violence against women in Pakistani society. As the surge in cases of violence against women and femicide has been observed during Covid-19 pandemic, the research is limited to the data collected during Covid-19 period. There are socio-cultural, political, and economic causes of VAW, however, during Covid pandemic all the other factors more or less remain static except economic situation which drastically changed throughout the lockdown period, therefore, the current research focused on unemployment and economic causes of Violence against women and their implication on the society. To carry out productive analysis and bring out practical solution, Marxist-feminist approach to study is applied which focuses on women's financial dependance on men, and their unpaid domestic work as the causes of their subjugation.

4. Data Analysis

The analysis is based on the data of VAW cases collected through media tracking of the selected newspapers, and official record obtained from official authorities under Right to Information Laws by Sustainable Social Development Organization from January to December 2020, and January to June 2021. Moreover, the data pertaining to unemployed labour force is collected from economic survey issued by Finance Ministry of Pakistan.

4.1. Violence Against Women from January to June 2020

According to the data tracked through media reporting of the selected newspaper within the specified timeframe of six months from January 2020 to June 2020, 383 cases were reported in Punjab, 66 cases in Sindh, 26 in KPK, 14 in Islamabad, and 4 cases were reported in Baluchistan. The total number of cases tracked from the selected newspapers during January to June 2020 is 495, as shown in Table 1. Whereas, according to the official statistics obtained through different official authorities under Right to Information Laws, around 2069 cases out of total 3148 cases all over the country were reported in Punjab alone, 108 cases in Sindh, 698 cases in KPK, 17 in Islamabad, and 286 cases were reported in Baluchistan during January-June 2020.

As per data collected from media tracking of the selected newspapers, around 78 percent of cases of VAW were reported in Punjab only, 13 percent in Sindh, 5 percent in KPK, 3 percent in Islamabad, and around 1 percent in Baluchistan. Whereas, as per the official record collected under RTI laws from official authorities, around 65 percent of VAW cases were reported in Punjab only,

3 percent in Sindh, 22 percent in KPK, only 1 percent in Islamabad, and around 9 percent in Baluchistan. The highest number of VAW cases were reported from Punjab, followed by Sindh and KPK. However, due to firm patriarchal structure and delayed or no justice in Pakistan, many cases are not reported. Underreporting of cases in any province does not establish the claim of absence of violence against women in that province, however, it rather raised the questions and concerns regarding value and justice system of the society. It can also be noted that media tracking of VAW cases is much lower than the data collected from official statistics, which however indicate the fact that media play an irresponsible role in reporting violence against women.

4.2. Violence Against Women from July 2020 to December 2020

According to the data tracked through media reporting of the selected newspaper within the specified timeframe of six months from July 2020 to December 2020, 1042 cases of VAW were tracked from Punjab alone out of 1409 cases in total from Pakistan, 235 cases from Sindh, 44 in KPK, 77 in Islamabad, and 11 cases were reported in Baluchistan, as shown in Table 2. Whereas, according to the official statistics obtained through different official authorities under Right to Information Laws, around 5170 cases out of total 6253 cases all over the country were reported in Punjab alone, 440 cases in Sindh, 478 cases in KPK, 21 in Islamabad, and 430 cases were reported in Baluchistan during July- December 2020.

As per as per the official record collected under RTI laws from official authorities, around 79 percent of cases of VAW were reported in Punjab only, 7 percent in Sindh, 7 percent in KPK, 0.33 percent in Islamabad, and around 7 percent in Baluchistan. Whereas, as per data collected from media tracking of the selected newspapers, around 74 percent of VAW cases were reported in Punjab only, 17 percent in Sindh, 3 percent in KPK, only 5 percent in Islamabad, and around only 1 percent in Baluchistan. However, many cases are not reported due to firm patriarchal structure and delayed or no justice in Pakistan. Underreporting of cases in any province does not establish the claim of absence of violence against women in that province, however, it rather raised the questions and concerns regarding value and justice system of the society. However, it should also be considered that due to lockdown situation and restriction imposed due to surge of Covid-19 during July-December 2020, access to report violence was limited. It can also be noted that media tracking of VAW cases is much lower than the data collected from official statistics, which however indicate irresponsible attitude of media to report violence against women.

4.3. Comparative Analysis of Data collected during Jan-June 2020 and Data Collected during July-December 2020.

The comparative analysis of data of VAW cases, as depicted in Table 3, collected during Jan-June 2020 and data of VAW cases collected during July-December 2020 through media tracking and official statistics both shows that there was a rapid surge of cases of violence against women in Pakistan. During the second half of the year 2020, cases of violence increased to 1409 as compared to 495 number of cases tracked from the selected media resources during first half of the year 2020, as shown in the table below. According to these statistics, violence increased almost two

folds during the second half of the same year. Same is the case with the data collected from official resources under RIT laws. According to official statistics, total number of VAW cases reported during Jan-June 2020 is 3148 compared to the number of VAW cases reported during June-December 2020 i.e., 6253, which is increased almost two folds, as shown in the table below. However, it is noted that the acceleration in number of VAW cases started from March 2020 & the trend continued throughout the year.

Moreover, it can be noted that there is a huge difference between official statistics during both halves of the year and media tracking during the same time. Number of VAW cases obtained from official statistics is far greater than that of tracked from media resources, which also reveals that irresponsible attitude of media pertinent to violence against women cases.

4.4. Comparative Analysis of VAW Cases Reported During Jan-June 2020 and VAW Cases Reported During Jan-June 2021 from Punjab and Sindh Province.

Comparative analysis of VAW cases officially reported and tracked via the selected media resources from Punjab and Sindh province during Jan-June 2020 with VAW cases reported officially and tracked via media resources in the same provinces during Jan-June 2021 indicates that there is considerable increase in cases violence against women from 2020 to 2021. The total number of cases of VAW registered officially during the period of January 2020 to June 2020 in Punjab and Sindh province is 2,177 compared to the 4067 VAW cases officially reported during January 2021- June 2021 reveals the rapid surge in Violence against women during Covid-19 pandemic. The media tracking of the cases also proclaims that violence against women increase drastically. This can be seen in Table 4.

4.5. Impact of COVID-19 on Employment.

Covid-19 has posed unprecedented challenges to economic growth of Pakistan. Covid-19 pandemic has aggravated the country's economic condition, resulting in the negative growth of -0.47 percent in financial year 2020 (FY20) followed by falling income, job losses, layoffs, and deteriorating social indicators. According to "Special Survey for Evaluating Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Wellbeing of People" conducted by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) 2020-2021, almost half of the working population was affected due to closure of business and lockdown. Prior to COVID-19, there was 35 percent (55.75 million) of working population. Due to lockdown imposition during the pandemic, this number was reduced to 35.04 million. This decline in number of working populations amidst COVID-19 pandemic stipulates that majority of people lost their jobs or unable to work. However, 52.56 million (33 percent) resumed their working when government provided incentive package for construction sector in July.

Summarized COVID-19 Pandemic impact on population is explained in Figure 7:

Figure 7 demonstrates that due to the pandemic economic activities in construction and manufacturing sectors was hampered due to decline in consumer, business confidence and production and supply chain disruptions. It is estimated that 80 percent worker lost jobs/could not

find work and received lower income in construction sector. In addition, wholesale & retail business and transport & storage business have also faced decline, leaving 63 percent and 67 percent people jobless or had minimum income respectively (as cited in Economic Survey of Pakistan 2020-21).

The pandemic has not only negatively affected small businesses, manufacture, and construction sectors, it has also devastatingly affected daily wage earners and economically vulnerable group as the government was unable to provide sufficient financial relief for their survival. The government announced to provide Rs. 3000 per month to the under-privileged class which, however, cannot suffice their survival. Nasir Iqbal (2020) declared that poor workers, especially daily wagers with no reserves, are unable to cope with lockdown situation and are among the most affected and vulnerable group which would increase poverty level of the country. The official statistics issued by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics indicate that the share of vulnerable employment is around 56% (52% among male and 71% among female). Vulnerable employment is measured as the proportion of own-account workers (also including the daily wage earners) and unpaid family workers in total employment. Sectoral share of vulnerable employment shows that, it is more than 80% in agriculture; about three fourths in wholesale and retail trade; near to 50% in hotel and restaurants; more than three-fifths in real estate and business; and approximately two-fifths in transport and communication sector (pg. 22).

As per the research conducted by PIDE there are three stages of lockdown; stage I: Limited Restrictions, stage II: Moderate Restrictions, and stage III: Complete Restriction. Pakistan has gone through all the three stages time and again during the pandemic (pg. 63). The approximate layoffs of vulnerably employed on provincial level for the last two stages is provided in Table 5.

Despite being the least susceptible province in terms of the share of vulnerable employment, Sindh will have around four million people losing their jobs. Punjab, with the largest population expected to have 13.5 million people projected to be laid-off. PIDE estimated 15.54 million to 18.65 million job loss while International Labor Organization (ILO) estimated 12.6 million to 19.1 million vulnerable workers may lose their jobs. Protecting the affected households from financial crunch and other social crisis in these two provinces is therefore a difficult task and requires more focused interventions. Therefore, it can be observed from the official statistics and media tracking of violence against women cases that the number of VAW cases is much higher in these provinces.

Stage I: Limited Restrictions (which probably happened) Stage II: Moderate Restrictions (We have probably also seen stage 2) Stage III: Complete Restriction (Most likely, we are now close to stage 3)

As per the economic survey of Pakistan issue by Ministry of Finance, the overall unemployment has been increasing every year. As per official statistics, rate of unemployment in KPK in 2018-2019 is 10.27 which is estimated to increase by 13.38, Punjab's unemployment rate was 7.4 in 2018-19 which is estimated to increase by 8.83 in 2019-2020, rate of unemployment in Sindh was 4 and it is estimated to increase by 4.46 in 2019-20, and in Baluchistan rate of unemployment was

4.62 which would increase by 5.15. The estimation is based on official statistics available in economic survey of Pakistan 2018-19, however, the estimation does not include the effect of lay-offs of vulnerable employment group which may rise the rate of unemployment even above the estimated figure. Province based analysis is indicated in Table 6 and Figure 8.

4.6. Comparative Analysis of Unemployment and VAW cases.

There are many causes of gender based violence against women; such as patriarchal culture, structural patriarchy, political under/ token representation of women, social norms, economic dependency, constructed gender ideology, hegemonic masculinity, etc. However, according to Marxist-Feminist approach, women's socioeconomic status determines the prevalence of violence against women in a society. Amidst of COVID-19 and growing unemployment, women's financial dependence on men, their lack of income opportunities, their unemployment and lay-offs during Covid-19 pandemic, and their unpaid domestic and reproductive labour are observed as main causes of surging VAW cases in Pakistan.

The comparative analysis of the official statistics of VAW cases and unemployment shows that the number of VAW cases raised with the surge of unemployed labour force. Table 7 shows that the number of cases of VAW increased during Jan-Dec 2020, so is the case with estimated unemployment. However, the estimation of unemployed labour force does not include the effect of laid-offs of vulnerable employment groups which would increase the estimated figure even further.

4.7. Causes of increase rate of VAW cases under Marxist-Feminist Perspective

According to Marxist feminism, women are vulnerable to gender-based violence due to their financial dependence on men (Tyson, 1998). Marxist-feminists claim women's socioeconomic condition is the predictor of rate of violence against women in the society. (Martin, Vieraitis, Britto 2006). In the capitalist society, such as Pakistan, women's domestic work is unpaid and does not have any worth. Men in capitalist economies, which requires them to be highly efficient and hardworking, are dependent on women for domestic chores and well-being. Women in such societies also perform reproductive labor which is often considered as worthless. Despite spending their entire life and sacrificing their careers and education for the well-being of household and male patriarch, domestic women are prone to gender-based violence. During COVID-19 lockdown situation, the country was facing economic crunch, as per above mentioned estimation many males vulnerably-employed-employees were either laid-off or lost their jobs, which ultimately increased frustration among them. The frustration among male populace combined with the firm patriarchal culture, women's financial dependence on men and lack of justice in Pakistan, gave rise to increase in number of VAW cases. Therefore, it is suggested under Marxist feminist framework that women's domestic and reproductive labour should be paid and have significant worth to reduce women's financial dependency on men.

Moreover, Marxist-feminism claims that women are more prone to suffer from economic crunch due to their higher vulnerable employment and underpaid labour. The official statistics issued by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics indicate that the share of vulnerable employment is around 56% (52% among male and 71% among female). This also indicates that number of females laid-off employees is expected to be more than males. Vulnerable employment of common in under-privileged class where women often work on daily wages in homes as maid, or in factories on extremely low wages and are often bread earners of their households. This further aggravates the condition of women in their households and makes them more vulnerable to violence.

In his essay “Gender and Cooperating Conflicts”, Sen (1990) describes that bargaining power of each household member depends on three factors 1) person’s fallback position which Sen termed as “breakdown well-being response”, 2) “perceived interest response” and 3) “perceived contribution response”. Here “perceived interest response” is defined as worth of one’s own interest in relation to worth of other’s interest in one’s eye as well as in the eye of society and “perceived contribution response” is defined as significance of one’s contribution to the household economy. In firm patriarchal structure, such as Pakistan, women have little or no perceived interest and contribution responses. They are conditioned to consider themselves as second class citizens having no interest response. In addition, their contribution either as housewives or as working women is considered as negligible and adds little to their well-being and social standing. Women’s contribution to the society as housewife as well as bread earner is considered as worthless. Moreover, women in such societies are given away in marriages and are also unable to claim their rights patrimony, which weaken their “break-down well-being position” in the husband’s household, hence, make them vulnerable to intimate partner violence.

5. Conclusion and Way Forward

The media tracking of the selected resources and official statistics pertaining to VAW cases registered and reported during COVID-19 period is alarmingly high mainly due to increasing unemployment and layoffs of vulnerable employment groups. This requires special attention of all the stakeholders including policy makers, government authorities, civil society, media personnel, and politicians to strategize collaborative mechanism to curtail the surge of violence against women and femicide in Pakistan.

Prudent government strategies and timely interventions can put economy on the trajectory of recovery and save the nation from very severe impact of COVID-19 pandemic. Further, special programmes to provide incentives to women laid-off employees and domestic workers should be initiated to empower women and save them from pandemic of misogyny.

In Pakistan, women constitute almost half of the population i.e. 48.4 percent of the country’s population. Protecting women from deadly pandemic of misogyny and empowering them should be the foremost agenda of the government and policy makers. The contribution of the women as

domestic and reproductive labor should also be recognized and paid due value. Their worth and contribution in the health and welfare of the whole family and community cannot be denied.

In line with fifth goal of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that is dedicated to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, the government should take initiatives to enable environment for equitable gender participation, vigilant justice system and ensure elimination of violence against women in all its manifestations to ensure health and reproductive rights, and provide conducive conditions for their economic, political, and social participation in their full capacity.

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Appendix:

Table 1.

Province wise prevalence of violence against Women and Children in Pakistan Jan-June 2020		
Province	Media Tracking	Official Record via RTI Law
Punjab	383	2069
Sindh	66	108
KPK	26	698
Islamabad	14	17
Baluchistan	4	286
Total	495	3148

Figure 1

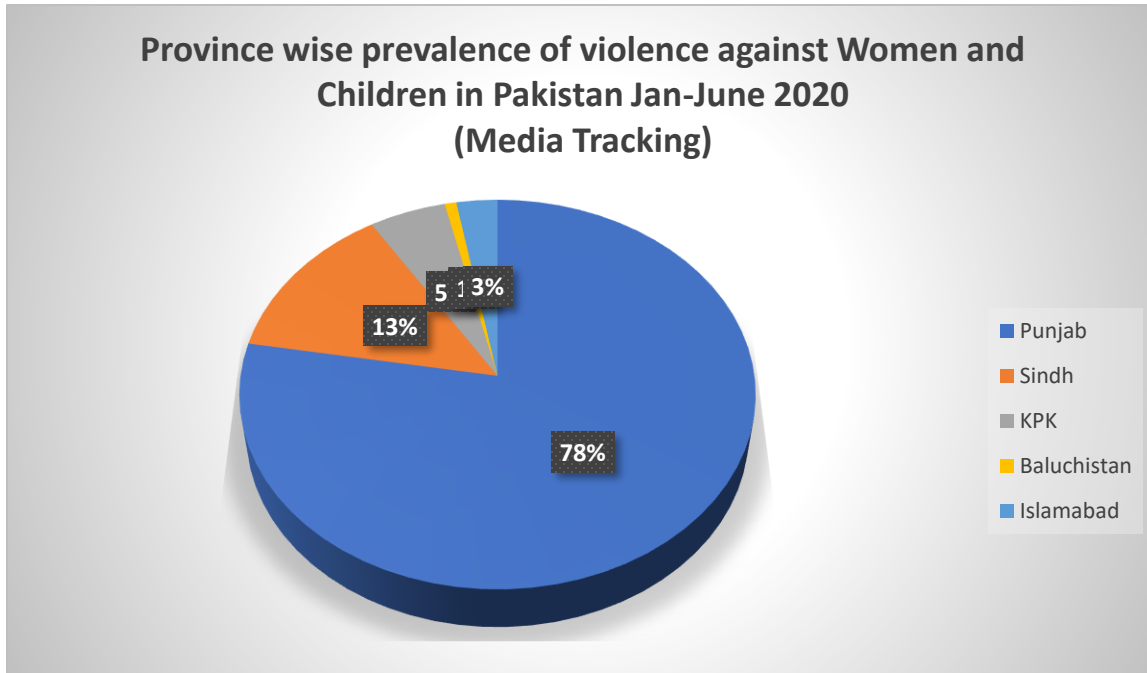


Figure 2

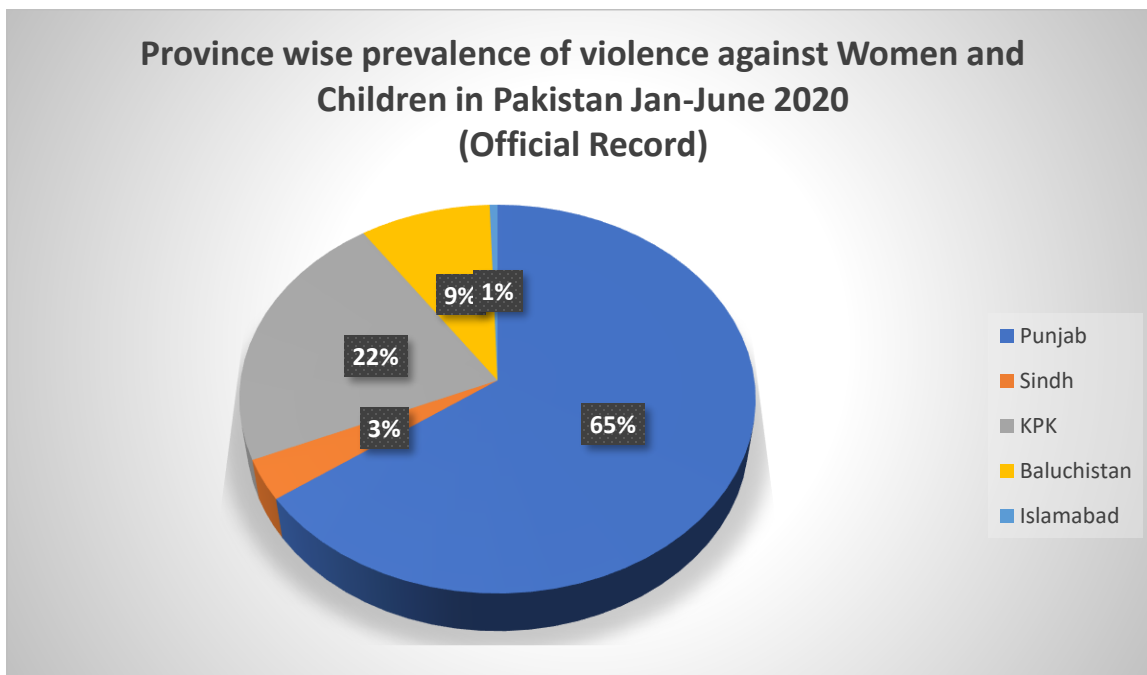


Table 2

Province wise prevalence of violence against Women and Children in Pakistan July-Dec 2020		
Province	Media Tracking	Official Record via RTI Law
Punjab	1042	5170
Sindh	235	440
KPK	44	478
Islamabad	77	21
Baluchistan	11	430
Total	1409	6253

Figure 3

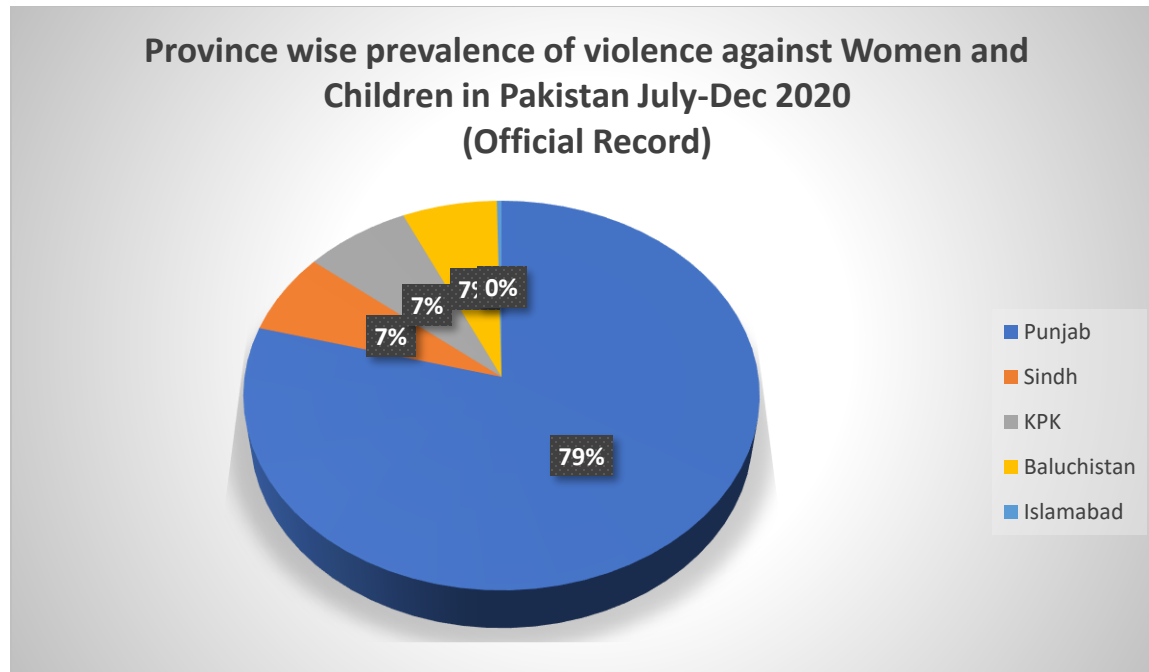


Figure 4

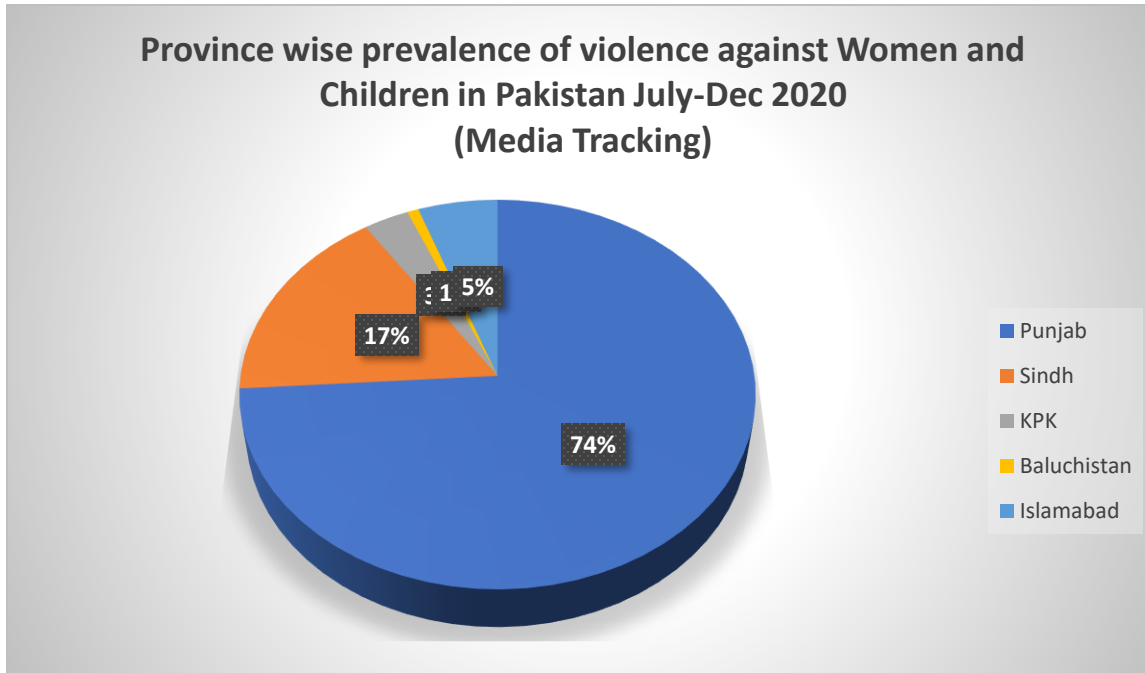


Table 3

Comparative Analysis of Data collected during Jan-June2020 and Data Collected during July-December 2020.		
Time Period	Official Statistics	Media Tracking
Jan-June 2020	3148	495
July-Dec 2020	6253	1409
	9401	1904
* Information collected from government departments at federal and provincial levels under “Right to Information Act”		* Information collected via. tracking the selected newspaper.

Figure 5

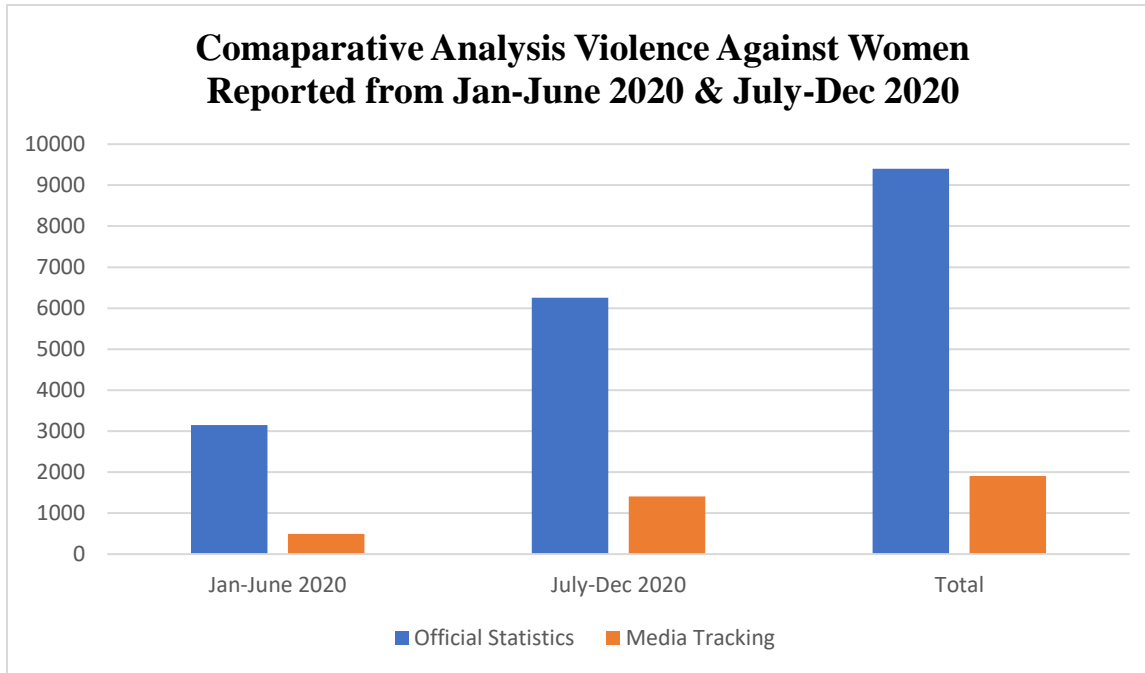


Table 4

Comparative Analysis of Data collected during Jan-June 2020 and Data Collected during Jan-June 2021 from Punjab and Sindh		
Time Period	Official Statistics	Media Tracking
Jan-June 2020	Punjab 2,069+ Sindh 108 = 2,177	Punjab 383+ Sindh 66 = 449
Jan-June 2021	Punjab 3,721+ Sindh 346 = 4067	Punjab 938+ Sindh 58 = 996
	* Information collected from government departments at federal and provincial levels under “Right to Information Act”	* Information collected via. tracking the selected newspaper.

Figure 6

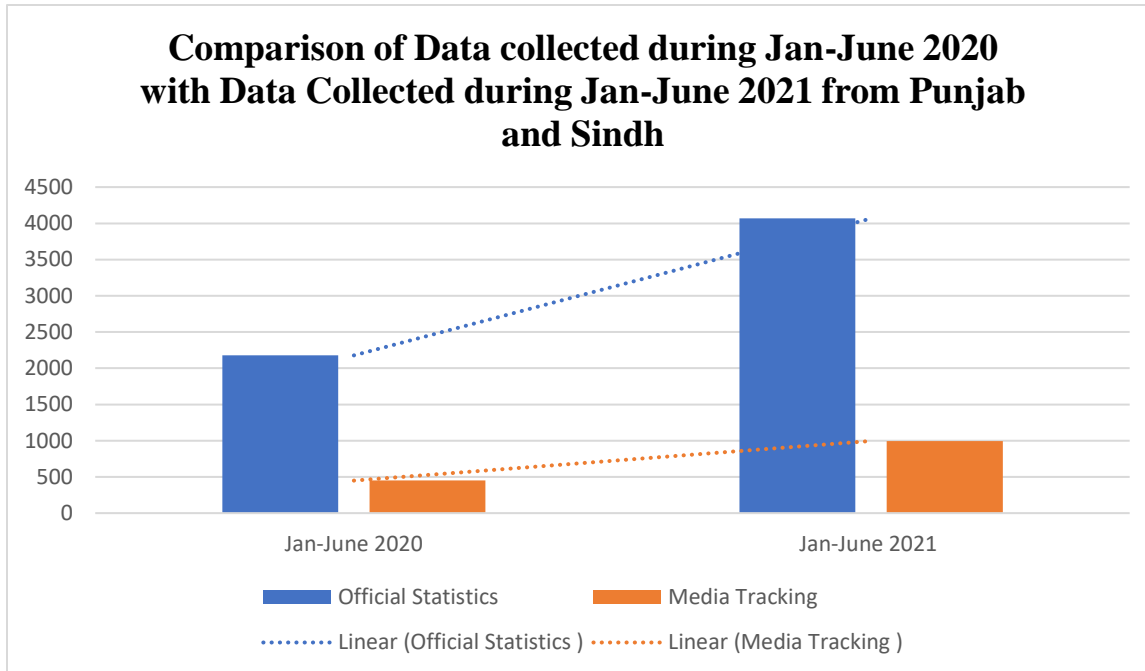
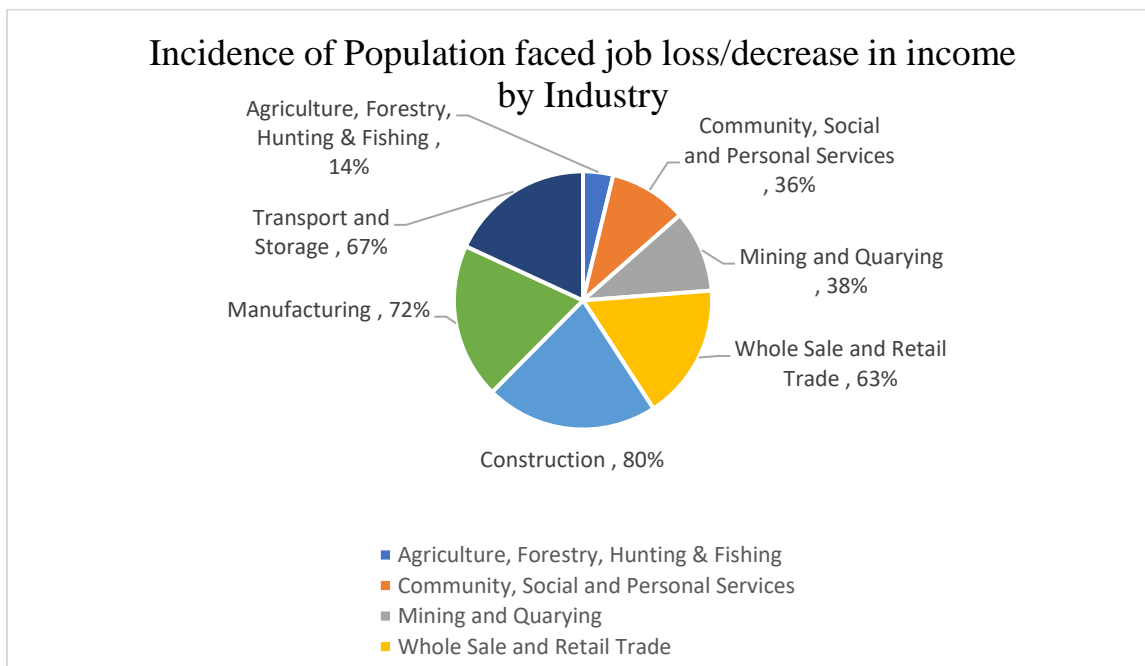


Figure 7



Source: Pakistan Economic Survey 2020

Table 5

	KPK	PUNJAB	SINDH	BALAUCHISTAN
Provincial Employment	7.5	38.6	14.7	2.5
Vulnerable Employment	4.1	22.4	7.3	1.4
Stage II	2.0	10.1	3.3	0.6
Stage III	2.3	12.1	4.1	0.7

Source: Authors' analysis based on the Labour Force Survey, PBS 2017-18 as cited in PIDE COVID-19 book.

Note: Stage II = 50% and Stage III = 60% loss in Vulnerable Employment (Ref: PIDE Bulletin 04)

Table 6

Province	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20 Estimate
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	7.16	10.27	13.38
Punjab	5.97	7.4	8.83
Sindh	4.92	4	4.46
Baluchistan	4.09	4.62	5.15

Figure 8

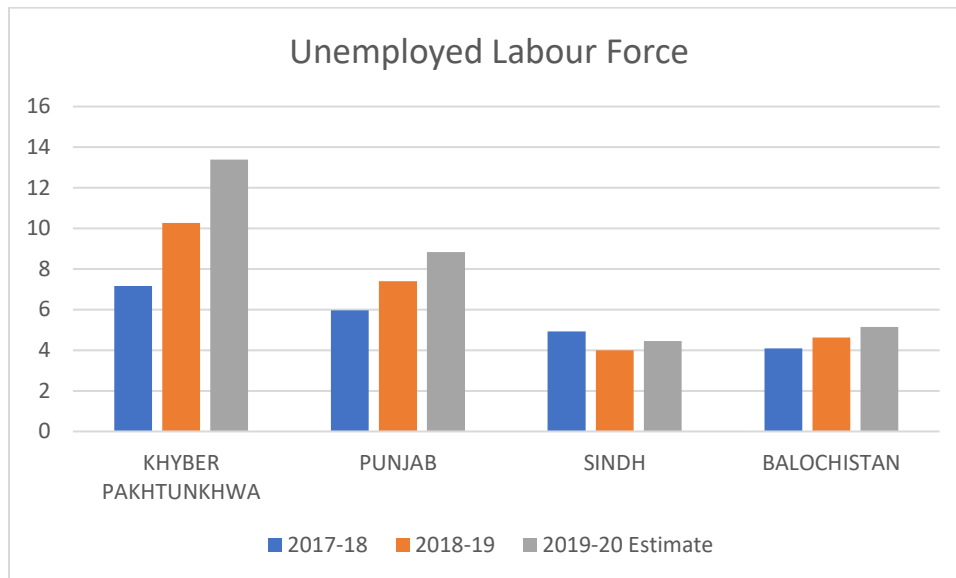


Table 7

Province	VAW cases reported in official statistics Jan-Dec 2020	VAW cases reported in the media Jan-Dec 2020	Unemployed Labour Force 2019-20 (Forecasted)
Punjab	7237	1042	8.83
Sindh	548	235	4.46
KPK	176	44	13.38
Baluchistan	430	11	5.15