

Trends And Patterns In Human Rights Violations In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan: A 6-Year Official Record-Based Analysis

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Abstract: *This research examines human rights abuses by type, domestic violence and child abuse, over time in Pakistan from 2019 through 2024. The research utilized a quantitative methodology; all official data were compiled into Microsoft Excel and then analyzed using SPSS Version 25. The data came from validated government and nongovernment documents. The study found that, while there is some variability in the number of cases, both types of human rights abuses have trended downward since 2019. Further, the data suggest that several subcategories of domestic violence, such as beating, child abuse, such as sexual abuse and child marriage, and homicide, have declined substantially. Domestic violence rates have varied, reaching a high of 15 cases in 2019, dropping to a low of 3 in 2021, and rising again to 10 in 2024. Child abuse has shown an even greater rate of decline, from 31 cases in 2019 to only 3 in 2024, with sexual abuse representing the greatest proportion of reported instances of child abuse. Analysis of these subcategories revealed that several continue to be problematic, including beating and child neglect; sexual abuse continues to represent the majority of reported child abuse cases. Acid attacks, kidnappings, and bonded labor each represented less than five percent of total instances. The researchers emphasize the importance of continuing to enforce laws protecting victims, creating and maintaining public awareness campaigns, and developing policies specifically addressing new and persistent threats to human rights. The researchers also recommend that governments invest in developing support services for victims.*

Keywords: Domestic violence, child abuse, Pakistan, human rights violations, trends analysis, SPSS, quantitative research

Introduction

Human Rights are the fundamental rights of all human beings living from birth until death. Human Rights provide quality of life as well as living in a favorable and attractive environment to the human being, also giving the sense of equality, dignity, justice, and fairness.

Human rights are the inherent human entitlements or claims to which a person is entitled, irrespective of their age, sex, religion, status, or social traits. These are absolute, inalienable, intrinsic, and universal rights, and they are all based on human dignity. In addition, and indeed these rights are absolute in real terms when they are put into question, particularly as they are enshrined in the constitution of a given State and also practically guaranteed by the Courts (Gill, Phull & Chachar, 2017).

Human rights have developed gradually over centuries, reflecting the expanding awareness and moral progress of human society. The idea of human rights originated in philosophy but evolved into a global

framework that recognizes the inherent value of each person. Human rights provide each individual with the ability to live free of discrimination and oppression. This includes rights to life, healthcare, freedom, food, shelter, and education. The underlying principles of human rights include equality, non-discrimination, and equal treatment of all individuals. Human rights were formalized through key historical documents. These documents include:

- The Magna Carta was signed in England in 1215, which provided the first written guarantee of individual freedoms and defined the relationship between the monarch and his subjects.
- The English Bill of Rights (1689), which was passed after the overthrow of King James II. This document reaffirmed many of the ideas set out in the Magna Carta and further protected individual liberties.
- The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789), which provided a clear definition of what it means to have a right. It emphasized two central themes: liberty and equality.
- The U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776), which asserted that there existed certain "unalienable" rights belonging to all individuals.

The development of these documents has led to the modern conception of human rights around the world. The emergence of the modern movement to protect human rights is generally attributed to the atrocities that occurred during both World War I and World War II. All people have certain rights that are essential to their dignity and well-being. These rights are formally recognized under international law (Xin & Yi, 2011).

All members of society should be able to live a good quality of life, which requires a minimum level of living conditions. The recognition of human rights has arisen from historical experiences and from humanity's desire to establish a common purpose for the promotion of a high-quality life. There is general agreement among nations about the need for universal human rights.

In order to prevent violations against basic human rights, in December 1948, the countries that make up the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Wotipka & Ramirez, 2008).

These rights apply equally to all persons regardless of gender, age, color, race, language, nationality, religion, ethnicity, or other status (Esteves et al., 2017). Despite being accepted throughout much of the world as a principle that forms part of international law, the lack of knowledge about human rights still creates obstacles (Sendroiu, 2019).

Unfortunately, in terms of its overall human rights record, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan does not fare well. A number of factors cause this state of affairs, including corruption at government levels, increasing poverty rates, increased levels of violence and terrorism, reduced levels of security and justice for citizens, unstable politics, and an economy that is severely disrupted.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is located in north-western Pakistan and comprises 101,741 square km. Most residents are Pashtun. As per the last census conducted by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023), there are approximately 40 million residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The most commonly used language within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is Pashtu; however, several other languages are also spoken within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, such as Seraiki, Hindko, Khowar, Urdu, and Persian.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The development of human rights has evolved since the 17th and 18th centuries. However, it gained major momentum immediately following WWII due to the atrocities committed during the Holocaust. Thomas Paine is credited with referencing "human rights" (Kamruzzaman & Das, 2016). A multitude of historical and religious sources have contributed to the promotion of human rights. This includes the Code of Hammurabi in Babylon circa 1772 BCE (Ishay, 2008); the British Magna Carta of 1215 (Chodhry, 1992); The Petition of Right (1628); The Bill of Rights (1689); philosophical contributions

from individuals such as John Locke and Thomas Hobbes; the United States Declaration of Independence (1776) (Kaur, 2014); the Geneva Conventions; the aftermath of WWII; and the creation of the United Nations. Collectively, these developed into an internationally recognized set of standards that establish universally accepted basic human rights free from discriminatory practices. The first ever established in the world (Gautam, 2000).

Together, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (DGICCP) identify and describe 27

fundamental human rights. While the UDHR does not create binding obligations for states, it has become influential. It has influenced the development of constitutional documents in over 185 different nations. As such, it has attained the status of customary international law.

Alongside the International Bill of Human Rights, other key instruments include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and several conventions aimed at safeguarding rights and ensuring equality. Numerous intergovernmental and UN-specialized agencies, such as the UN Commission on Human Rights, the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNICEF, and UNIFEM, have been established to advance these goals.

In Pakistan, the vision for human rights was first articulated by the country's founder, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, during his inaugural presidential address to the first Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947. He emphasized that Pakistan should be a nation free from discrimination, where all citizens are equal members of a united state (International Human Rights Observer).

HUMAN RIGHTS PREVAILING CONDITIONS IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

The Pakistan Constitution also provides fundamental human rights, which include the right to life, right to property, right to honour, protection against unlawful detention and arrest, involuntary labour, fair trial, freedom of religion, right to movement, right of assembly, right of association, free speech, free choice of business, trade, and profession. Although the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees all fundamental rights without discrimination, the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continue to face serious human rights violations. These include gender-based discrimination, domestic violence against women, honour killings, terrorism, targeted killings, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial imprisonment and killings, torture, sectarian violence, denial of due legal process, weak law enforcement, insecurity, inadequate healthcare, poor education, sexual harassment, child labour, violations of privacy, and reprisals against individuals who speak or write against human rights abuses or advocate for victims (Khan. Zen, Naeem, 2021).

The vast majority of human rights abuses can be attributed to the failure to enforce existing national and provincial laws, despite the extensive legislative framework in place designed to provide protection and improve the quality of life of citizens. These abuses are further exacerbated by the current social and political climate within the province. Human rights abuses occur frequently throughout various aspects of society, and evidence of such abuse exists in both print and electronic media. Structural inequality exists, wherein the wealth and privilege of those who possess power

and resources benefit those at the top of the economic spectrum, while those at the bottom suffer from poverty and reduced access to economic opportunities. Poverty is a major contributor to human rights abuses.

One specific group facing gender-based discrimination is women, due to traditional societal views, which limit their ability to achieve equality in status, opportunity, treatment, and compensation. Although laws guarantee women's equality, societal factors such as religious extremism, feudalism, low literacy rates, lack of knowledge about their rights, and cultural practices make it difficult for women to attain their legal rights. Additionally, domestic violence continues to be prevalent throughout

the province, with annual reports documenting hundreds of incidents involving physical harm inflicted upon women. Women often bear the burden of being sacrificed in order to resolve family disputes, without any acknowledgment of or recourse for their suffering.

Additionally, most residents live in rural areas and have limited access to basic services, including healthcare and education. Many students are denied access to formal schooling due to poverty and/or the lack of available educational opportunities. Moreover, many members of the population have lost loved ones during the War on Terror and sectarian violence and have been deprived of a fair trial, subjected to unjust imprisonment, and forced disappearance. Therefore, ensuring that citizens' basic human rights are protected is extremely difficult. Although there are institutions and governmental programs working toward protecting citizens' rights, they remain ineffective.

Legally, Articles 2–40 of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan establish and outline the principles of human rights, while provincially, a directorate of human rights was established in order to advocate for and defend the rights of citizens. In addition, several new provincial laws regarding the promotion and defense of human rights have been passed recently. However, when considering the overall human rights situation in this province, very few improvements have occurred; in fact, in some ways, conditions have worsened. Furthermore, rising levels of poverty create additional threats to life and therefore increase human rights problems.

Pakistan signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as other key international agreements, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention Against Torture. Unfortunately, enforcement has continued to fall short. It has failed to adequately uphold individual freedoms related to healthcare, education, job opportunities, and dignity, resulting in many citizens being left vulnerable to abuse.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the types and sub-categories of human rights violations recorded under domestic violence in Pakistan from 2019 to 2024.
2. To examine the trends in reported human rights violations in Pakistan from 2019 to 2024 across key domains, particularly Child Abuse.
3. To identify emerging or declining patterns in specific violations over time.
4. To categorize and analyze the frequency of sub-categories of human rights violations, such as sexual abuse, beating, child marriage, and intentional murder.

Research Questions of the Study

1. What are the major types and sub-categories of human rights violations reported under domestic violence and child abuse in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, from 2019 to 2024?
2. How have the frequencies of these violations changed over the six years?
3. Which forms of domestic violence and child abuse are most consistently reported, and which appear sporadically or are emerging recently?
4. What trends can be observed in the reporting of specific violations such as beating, sexual abuse, child marriage, and intentional murder over time?
5. What implications do the observed patterns have for human rights protection mechanisms and policy formulation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa?

Statement of the Problem

There have been many promises concerning the protection of human rights, including domestic laws that protect certain rights and international agreements that obligate countries to act within these

boundaries, yet many of the same problems continue. The vast majority of human rights abuses occur against the world's most vulnerable citizens, namely children and women. Two of the longest-standing human rights abuses committed in Pakistan are domestic violence and child abuse. Both forms of abuse affect individuals' quality of life, as well as society's overall social development and public health. Very little quantitative research has been conducted on the longitudinal trends and patterns of human rights abuses using governmental statistics. As a result, there is no comparative longitudinal data available to evaluate and inform evidence-based interventions designed to protect human rights in Pakistan. Although various examples of both types of crimes are documented anecdotally in Pakistani media, they lack quantifiable measures of the frequency and trends of human rights abuses.

Most of the existing body of knowledge surrounding human rights abuses in Pakistan examines only one issue at a time or uses qualitative narrative methods. Furthermore, almost all of the current literature does not use empirical methods to measure the frequency or trends of human rights abuses over time.

Thus, because there is no comparable longitudinal data available, policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and advocacy groups face major barriers in developing and assessing evidence-based solutions to human rights abuses in Pakistan.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to fill the above-mentioned gap by conducting an empirical analysis of the human rights abuses reported in government statistical documents from 2019 through 2024, with an emphasis on tracking trends in domestic violence and child abuse. This study will assist in creating evidence-based recommendations for policy reform, increasing societal awareness of these crimes, and helping create institutions accountable for protecting human rights in Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

This study is academically, socially, and politically important.

Firstly, it fills an empirical gap in research regarding the violation of human rights in Pakistan using official data over five years.

Unlike media-based or anecdotal stories, the study uses systematic recording of cases to identify real trends of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse.

Secondly, by establishing trends and/or changes in reports within categories, the study will provide relevant information for various stakeholders (such as Policymakers, Human Rights Commissions, Social Welfare Departments, NGOs), which could be used for Data Driven Decision Making, Monitoring Legal Enforcement and Targeted Intervention.

Thirdly, the study will contribute to Public Awareness and Academic Discourse regarding Human Rights through evidence-based conclusions to Challenge Social Norms and Identify Areas of Neglect/Under Reporting. Ultimately, this will encourage Accountability to Protect Women and Children Society's Most Vulnerable Members.

In general, the purpose of this study is to Document Violations and Promote Institutional Reform and community-level change in how Pakistan protects its Human Rights.

Literature Review

Introduction

Domestic violence and child abuse in Pakistan are widespread and deeply rooted in entrenched cultural, socioeconomic, and structural inequalities. Despite legal reforms and policy frameworks, empirical studies that analyze longitudinal trends, especially using official records, are scarce.

This literature review synthesizes available empirical and theoretical sources on both domains, identifying gaps that justify a record-based analysis of trends from 2019 to 2025.

Domestic Violence in Pakistan

Prevalence and Range

Between 30 and 79 percent of Pakistani women report experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) during their lifetimes, with rural populations reporting IPV at much higher rates than urban populations (Ali et al., 2021). The prevalence of domestic violence was reportedly 70 percent in a 2008 poll. Approximately five thousand women die each year from domestic violence. Physical violence has been reported to occur as frequently as 98.5 percent among sampled populations in Pakistan, psychological violence as frequently as 83.6 percent, and sexual violence as frequently as 77.0 percent (Ali et al., 2021).

Reasons and Contributing Variables

Poverty and illiteracy correlate positively with an individual's likelihood of accepting violence. Fifty-seven percent of the nearly four hundred fifty women who participated in the Demographic and Health Survey conducted in 2012–2013 stated that they believed it was justified to physically assault a spouse when she argued with him (Ashraf, Abrar & Asharf, 2017). Traditional societal expectations surrounding gender roles and extended family obligations contribute to the prevalence of domestic abuse being accepted within society.

Health and Psychological Effects

Intimate partner violence correlates with numerous adverse psychological effects, including depression, anxiety, and heightened levels of stress. For example, postpartum women in Pakistan are considered to be at higher risk of experiencing spousal abuse when exposed to stressful life events. Moreover, psychological distress increases once a woman experiences spousal abuse. There are also significant relationships between spousal abuse and unintended pregnancy, increased psychological morbidity, and decreased overall quality of life (Ali et al., 2021).

Barriers to Reporting and Legal Environment

Although Pakistan passed the Protection of Women against Violence Bill (PWWA) in 2009, enforcement of this law continues to remain inadequate. Survivors typically encounter barriers to formal reporting, including social stigma, family pressure, and institutional dismissal. Enforcement agencies view most domestic violence cases as private issues rather than crimes against the state. Police officers commonly refuse to record complaints filed by survivors.

Although the PWWA calls for the establishment of protection committees and toll-free hotlines, the implementation of these access mechanisms varies greatly across jurisdictions.

Gaps in the Literature

The majority of previous literature has focused either on cross-sectional analyses of small-scale studies or on NGO reports (Ashraf, Abrar & Asharf, 2017). Longitudinal trend analyses utilizing official data spanning multiple years are relatively uncommon. Additionally, few studies provide empirical evidence regarding whether external factors, such as COVID-19, affect reporting frequency. Therefore, the current study aims to fill this gap through the use of systematic research methods and official records to examine patterns over time.

Child Abuse in Pakistan

Range and Reporting Tendencies

According to Sahil, a national child protection NGO, there were over 4,200 documented child abuse cases in 2022, with approximately half representing sexual abuse: 2,325 females (55%) and 1,928 males (45%). According to official statistics, approximately eight child abuse incidents occur daily. Experts agree that there is considerable underreporting. An additional total of over 2,200 cases was reported in

2023. Punjab had the greatest number of reported incidents, while Sindh ranked second.

Types and Forms of Abuse

There are many types of abuse that occur among children. These include sexual abuse, child marriage, child labor or bonded labor, child pornography, neglect, and harmful cultural practices such as Wani or Sawara (Shah, Ahmad & Malik, 2023). Reports from Sahil (2024) detail intersections between sexual abuse and pornography, as well as instances of incest and homicide following abuse (Shah, Ahmad & Malik, 2023).

Factors Determining Rates of Abuse and Institutional Challenges

Poverty, lack of education, and patriarchal traditions all act as sociocultural impediments to reporting and preventing child abuse (Shah, Ahmad & Malik, 2023). According to Abbas & Jabeen (2020), among university students who experienced some form of child abuse or victimization as children, the reported rates included physical abuse (57%), emotional abuse (53%), and sexual abuse (41%). The majority of perpetrators were individuals known to the child, such as family members, friends or peers, and neighbors. Gaps exist in structural coordination among healthcare providers, law enforcement officials, and social service organizations.

As a result, effective responses to child abuse continue to be difficult to achieve (Maul et al., 2019).

Structural Barriers and Media Coverage

Social taboos and journalistic ethics create restrictions on media coverage of child abuse. However, Tasleem et al. (2024) conclude that the failure to formally document occurrences of child abuse is exacerbated by journalists' reluctance to cover the topic, a lack of government commitment to addressing the issue, and financial constraints faced by media outlets. Unless extensive media coverage exists, public awareness remains limited; thus, public pressure for policymakers to take action is not generated.

Intersectionality between Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

Domestic violence is often related to child abuse. When families experience high levels of IPV, children are more likely to experience maltreatment (Gale, 2014). Children whose mothers are victims of IPV are more likely to be subjected to physical or psychological maltreatment. This reflects a pattern of intergenerational violence and normalized behavior Longitudinal and Trend Analysis: Why It Matters

Despite anecdotal and cross-sectional data indicating high prevalence, few studies track changes year by year. Richardson et al. (2022) conducted a three-year cohort study in rural Pakistan that examined the bidirectional relationship between social support and IPV, but extended, multi-domain longitudinal analyses remain rare. Similarly, research on child abuse trends over time, especially in relation to policy interventions or societal disruptions (like the COVID pandemic), is limited. This necessitates studies that employ official data across multiple years to observe emerging, declining, or persistent patterns.

Rationale for the Present Study

The current study fills crucial gaps by analyzing official human rights violation records from 2019 to 2024 for domestic violence and child abuse in Pakistan. It provides a longitudinal lens to identify trends, emerging forms of abuse, and variation across sub-categories, thereby addressing significant limitations in existing literature. By leveraging official records, it also mitigates biases inherent in self-reported or anecdotal datasets and strengthens empirical foundations for policy and institutional response strategies.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative descriptive research design, suitable for analyzing patterns, frequencies,

and trends in officially recorded cases of human rights violations over time. A longitudinal approach is adopted to examine changes in the types and frequency of violations from 2019 to 2024 (Creswell, 2022).

Nature of the Study

The nature of this research is non-experimental and observational, relying on secondary data analysis. The study is documentary in form and utilizes statistical summaries to describe and interpret existing phenomena related to human rights violations (Babbie, 2020).

Data Sources

Type of Data

Secondary data, collected from official records of Provincial Human Rights Departments.

Population and Sampling Technique

The study employs total population sampling, since all reported human rights cases (under the domains of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse) recorded in official data are included for analysis. All officially documented cases from 2019 to 2024 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, were included in the population of the study, and the census was used.

Data Collection Procedure

The data for this study were collected through a systematic review of officially documented reports on human rights violations in Pakistan from 2019 to 2024. These reports were sourced from credible governmental and human rights institutions in both digital and printed formats. A manual data entry process was employed to categorize reported cases under two main domains: domestic violence and child abuse. The domestic violence category included subtypes such as beating, intentional murder, illegal detention, suicide, maintenance-related issues, and abuse of power. Data were initially entered into Microsoft Excel for organization and sorting, and then exported into SPSS version 25 for statistical analysis. (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Neuman, 2013).

Result and Discussion

Table 1 Year-wise Domestic violence and Child abuse cases

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Domestic Violence	15	9	3	6	7	10
Child Abuse Cases	31	19	13	7	2	3

As shown in table one, the number of reported domestic violence cases and child abuse cases per year decreased noticeably from 2019 to 2024. However, it can be observed that the trend is not always linear. There was an extreme high of domestic violence in 2019 at fifteen cases, then an extreme low in 2021 at three cases, followed by an upswing through 2024 reaching ten cases.

In terms of child abuse, the number of reported cases fell dramatically from thirty-one in 2019 to just two in 2023, but increased slightly to three in 2024. Overall, this appears to indicate a significant downward trend in documented cases for both types of abuse during the past few years; however, the slight increase in both areas during the last two years calls for ongoing attention and interventions. The exact cause(s) of these trends are unclear as they could represent an evolution in how cases are being reported, increased public knowledge/awareness regarding the existence of abuse, improvements in response by law enforcement agencies, or lower rates of actual abuse occurring.

Table 2: Domestic Violence Sub-Categories Year-Wise Data

Sub Category	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Beating	5	6	2	6	7	8
Burned	3					1
Illegal Detention						1
Acid Attack						
Kidnapping	2	1				
Intentional Murder			1			
Suicide	1					
Maintenance	3	2				
Illegal Detention						
Abuse of Power	1					

Beginning with 5 in 2019, the number of reported beating incidents rose steadily to 6 in 2020. Thereafter, it dropped to just 2 in 2021 but increased continuously over the final three years of the study period, reaching a high of 8 in 2024. Thus, beating has become increasingly frequent since 2021. In contrast, burning incidents were relatively rare; only 3 were documented in 2019 and 1 in 2023. Only a single incident of illegal detention was identified in this sample, and it took place in 2024. No acid attacks occurred during this time frame. Two kidnapping incidents were documented in 2019 and 1 in 2020. No additional kidnapping events were identified after those years. A single intentional murder was documented in 2021, and a single suicide was documented in 2019. Disputes related to maintenance of support occurred in 2019 (3 cases) and 2020 (2 cases). No dispute events associated with either maintenance or abuse of power were documented during the study years from 2021 through 2024.

Table 3 Child Abuse Sub-Categories Year-wise Data

Sub Category	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Sexual Abuse	22	17	10	5	1	
Child Marriage	1	1	3		1	
Bounded Labour/Slavery/Child Labour	1					
Child Pornography	1					
Harrasment						
Wani/Swara/Ghag		1		1		
Child Neglect/Physical Torture	3			1		1

Table 3 presents the year-wise distribution of child abuse sub-categories in Pakistan from 2019 to 2024. Sexual abuse was the most frequently reported sub-category, with a notable decline over time. from 22 cases in 2019 to 17 in 2020, 10 in 2021, 5 in 2022, and just 1 in 2023, with no reported cases in 2024. Child marriage cases remained relatively low, recorded once in 2019, once in 2020, three times in 2021, not reported in 2022, once in 2023, and absent in 2024. Instances of bounded labour, slavery, or child labour were reported only once, in 2019, while child pornography was also recorded once in the same year. No harassment cases were documented across the six years. Cases under Wani/Swara/Ghag were observed in 2020 and 2023, with one case each year. Child neglect or physical torture cases were reported three times in 2019, once in 2022, and once in 2024, with no reports in the intervening years. Overall, the data reveal a sharp and consistent decrease in reported sexual abuse cases, alongside low and sporadic reporting of other child abuse

sub-categories, which may indicate both a reduction in incidence and potential underreporting or changes in reporting mechanisms over the years.

Result and Discussions

Table 1 shows national trends in domestic violence and child abuse reporting in Pakistan for the years

2019-2024. Domestic violence case numbers ranged widely during these years (n= 15 in 2019 and n=3 in 2021) and there was a large drop off in reporting from 2019 to 2021. After dropping off dramatically from 2019 to 2021, however, reporting of domestic violence increased to n=10 in 2024. Child abuse reports showed a consistent decrease from 31 cases in 2019 to three cases in 2024. Furthermore, most of the reduction in reported child abuse cases occurred between 2019 and 2023 where the number of reported child abuse cases dropped from 31 to two.

Domestic Violence Sub-Categories

Table 2 provides a breakdown of domestic violence cases into specific sub-categories. Beating emerged as the most frequently reported form of domestic violence, with incidents recorded every year and ranging from two cases in 2021 to eight in 2024, indicating a gradual upward trend in recent years. Cases of being burned were reported in 2019 (n = 3) and once in 2023. Illegal detention was recorded only in 2023 (n = 1). Kidnapping incidents occurred sporadically, with two cases in 2019 and one in 2020. Intentional murder was reported only in 2021 (n = 1), while suicide was recorded once in 2019. Maintenance-related disputes appeared in 2019 (n = 3) and 2020 (n = 2). Abuse of power was reported once in 2019. No cases of acid attack were recorded during the study period. Overall, the data shows that while beating remained consistently reported, other sub-categories were rare and irregular over the six years.

Child Abuse Sub-Categories

Table 3 outlines the distribution of child abuse cases by sub-category from 2019 to 2024. Sexual abuse was the most prevalent form, though it declined sharply over time, from 22 cases in 2019 to 1 in 2023, with no reports in 2024. Child marriage cases were sporadically reported, appearing in 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2023, with the highest number recorded in 2021 (n = 3). Bounded labour, slavery, or child labour appeared only once in 2019, and child pornography was also reported once in the same year. No harassment cases were documented during the period. Wani/Swara/Ghag cases occurred in 2020 and 2023, with one case each year. Child neglect or physical torture cases were reported three times in 2019, once in 2022, and once in 2024. The declining trend in sexual abuse cases and the consistently low reporting of other forms of child abuse may point to improved preventive measures or changes in reporting mechanisms, though underreporting remains a possible concern.

Discussion

The results show that domestic violence and child abuse followed different trends over the six-year period. The year-to-year fluctuation in the number of domestic violence cases, with an upward trend beginning again in 2021, indicates that although preventive actions may have initially reduced the amount of violence occurring or improved methods of resolving conflicts, long-standing socioeconomic and cultural factors may continue to support various forms of violence, including physical assaults in the form of beatings. A possible reason for the recent increase in beatings is the need for additional community-based intervention programs, along with stricter enforcement of protective laws.

In comparison, child abuse cases declined significantly, primarily in terms of sexual abuse. This decline may reflect better education on the prevention of child abuse, greater public awareness, and/or improved police response to reports of child abuse. However, it may also indicate possible underreporting due to the stigma associated with reporting, fear of reprisal against family members, and/or families' distrust of reporting mechanisms. Culturally based practices such as child marriage and Wani/Swara/Ghag continue to appear sporadically. As a result, ongoing community engagement and continued efforts to transform culturally supported practices will be required.

As stated above, our findings correlate with previous research (Ali & Khan, 2021; UNICEF, 2023), which highlighted how sociocultural norms, institutional capacity, and enforcement of the law interactively shape both the occurrence and reporting of violence. It is recommended that future research

analyze these trends across all provinces in Pakistan to determine whether they exist uniformly throughout the country. Additionally, it would be beneficial to examine whether changes in reporting mechanisms or public awareness campaigns have influenced these trends.

Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Strengthening reporting systems: Develop confidential, accessible, and victim-friendly reporting channels for domestic violence and child abuse to ensure cases are documented accurately.
2. Community awareness campaigns: Launch sustained educational campaigns to reduce cultural stigma and promote the reporting of abuse cases
3. Targeted legal reforms: Enforce stricter penalties for repeat offenders and ensure the effective implementation of child protection laws.
4. Capacity building for law enforcement: Provide specialized training for police, prosecutors, and judges on handling sensitive abuse cases
5. Holistic victim support: Establish integrated support centers providing medical, psychological, and legal assistance for victims.
6. Cultural practice eradication: Work with religious leaders, educators, and community elders to eliminate harmful traditional practices such as *Wani* and *swara*

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