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Islamic Microfinance and Women Empowerment: A Case Study of Akhuwat Foundation

Abstract

This study analyzes the role of Islamic microfinance in empowering women. For this purpose, fifty female borrowers who invested the loan in an income-generating activity were interviewed. Research questions were asked to find whether it has any impact on the material condition of female borrowers after using the loan, and how access to credit contributes to the empowerment of female borrowers. The findings show that, using the loan for an income generating activity, made women able to spend money on household expenses, health and education of the family. It was observed that microfinance had no impact on women's mobility and awareness level. Access to credit cannot be expected to lead to women's empowerment unless it is accompanied by awareness of rights. The study highlights that the purpose of the loan should not only be to improve the material situation of women, but also to improve their status and position in society

Keywords: *Women Empowerment, Islamic Microfinance, Access to Resources, Decision Making Power*

INTRODUCTION

Poor people do not have any material collateral and are not able to take loans from banks or other traditional financial institutions. In times of need, they borrow money from family or friends and in the worst case from moneylenders, who charge very high interest rates, and poor people usually lose their entire assets like land or house in trying to pay back the loans. Therefore, Microfinance institutions were introduced to solve the problems of the poor, by providing them loans without requiring any material collateral. The Grameen Bank model, which uses social collateral as guarantee, was followed widely and in Pakistan also. In this model individuals form a group of three or more to take loan, and it is the responsibility of the whole group to repay the loan, hence the group members monitor each other, which is helpful in reducing the transaction cost also (Ahmad, 2002). In Pakistan, being a patriarchal society, gender inequality is also the main concern of development agencies. Women are among the poorest segment of society due to discrimination in every sphere of life whether it be public or private. Therefore, many microfinance programmes focus more on giving loans to women. Microcredit programs were initiated in Pakistan in the 1980s by two community development

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organizations. The Agha Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) and the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP). In 1996 Specialized microfinance institutions like Kashf Foundation, was founded on the Grameen model. In 1998 when microfinance institutions started increasing in number, the Pakistan Microfinance Network was set up for monitoring the activities of already set up microfinance institutions and for representing the new MFIs (Khan, 2007). The impact of microfinance, as discussed by different researchers, is mixed. Being a patriarchal society, household decisions are dominated by men in Pakistan, however access to microfinance has increased women's decision-making power in purchase and sale of different household items (Rauf & Mehmood, 2009). On the other hand, there is evidence that shows that women's bargaining power has been limited especially with regard to their decisions regarding children's health, economic and social mobility (Rauf & Mehmood, 2009). A study by Noreen (2011), shows that empowerment of women is impacted by age, father's inheritance, number of sons alive, and husband's education. However, women who use the loan themselves are better as compared to women who do not use the loan themselves (Noreen, 2011).

There is a copious amount of literature, addressing the importance of microfinance, its role in women empowerment, and its shortcomings to achieve the required goals, but the focus of the majority of studies remains on conventional microfinance; a few studies have discussed Islamic microfinance as well, but only in terms of its sustainability and acceptability. Very little work is available that analyses changes in the status of women resulting from Islamic microfinance, therefore this study will focus on Islamic microfinance: Akhuwat foundation being an Islamic microfinance institution is analysed for its role in empowering women. In 2001, Akhuwat foundation was set up, to provide Islamic Microfinance, for poverty reduction and economic growth (Haider, Eisar, & Kazim, 2012). The approach of Akhuwat foundation is very different from the traditional Microfinance institutes, hence its impact on the borrowers is also very different. The main differences among the two are: Islamic microfinance is supposed to be without interest, but the other microfinance institutes charge interest on the borrowers. Islamic Microfinance provides loans by utilizing funds which are generated through charities and donations while conventional microfinance institutes use savings of clients and external funds to give credit to borrowers (Obaidullah, 2008).

Akhuwat provides loans purely on Islamic principles to alleviate poverty and achieve growth. Akhuwat Foundation currently has 855 branches, and has disbursed PKR 175,213,779,026 to 5,372,655 borrowers (Akhuwat Foundation, 2022). Akhuwat works in urban areas and has its focus on Punjab, but also has branches in KPK and Balochistan (Haider, Eisar, & Kazim, 2012). Although Akhuwat provides interest free loans, it is advised by the foundation to the borrowers to give some donation with every installment, so that someone else can also acquire a loan and become self-sufficient. Akhuwat follows some basic principles which are interest free credit, volunteerism, signatures of both husband and wife on the application, and guarantee is taken in the mosque or church to develop a relationship with religious places.

Theoretical Framework

For the present study, Sara Longwe's "Women's Empowerment Framework" is used to assess the effect of microfinance on women's empowerment. Sara Longwe's framework explains five levels of empowerment (Welfare, Access, Control, Participation and Conscientisation) (Leach,

2003; March, 1999). But for the present research only four levels of empowerment were analyzed, which are (i) Welfare, which is limited to material welfare e.g. food, shelter, cloths etc. (ii) Access is used for analyzing the access of borrowers to income generating activity and their mobility (iii) Control is used to assess the control of borrowers on their earned income. (iv) Conscientisation is assessed by analyzing their awareness regarding cultural norms, roles and their rights, (it was considered as explanatory and influencing factor).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the present research, a qualitative research method was used. In-depth interviews were conducted using an interview guide. The questions were regarding women's decision-making power, status/position, condition, mobility and awareness regarding their rights etc. The research was conducted with a sub branch of Akhuwat Foundation, which is located in Tench Bhatta, Rawalpindi. The population of this area consists of middle, lower middle, and lower class.

The study was conducted by interviewing fifty female borrowers who were

- using the loan in some earning activity,
- were between the age of 25-50 years (as maximum borrowers of Akhuwat fall in this age bracket),
- were taking the loan for at least two years
- and had completed one cycle of loan (one cycle is completed in a year)

Purposive sampling technique was used for the present research. As the purpose of the study was to take only those borrowers who were engaged in some income generating activity, the researcher after taking the permission of the branch manager, evaluated the application forms and spent three days in the office to select those borrowers who met the inclusion criteria for the research. After selecting the borrowers, the researcher went to the homes of borrowers (as the address was mentioned on the application forms) and collected the data.

The data was analyzed using themes from the interviews. The themes were generated through the responses of respondents.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION:

Characteristics of respondents and decision regarding taking the loans:

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

	Age group	
	25-37	38-50
No. of borrowers	25	25
Mean No. of Children	4	5
Mean Education	Middle	Primary
Mean of total income	PKR. 20,000	PKR. 35000
Decision regarding taking the loan		
Decisions about the loan	Borrowers	ages
	25-37	Borrowers ages 38-50 years
Decided by themselves	17	21
Took loan on husband's wish	5	2
Mutual Decision	3	2

The female borrowers who were between the ages of 25-50 were interviewed for the present study. The respondents were then divided into two age groups, one from age 25 to 37 and the other from 38 to 50 to reduce the chance of variation because of the age difference. After taking the demographic information of borrowers, it was analyzed that women who were between the age of 25-37 were more educated as compared to the women who were between the ages of 38-50. The total family income of women between the ages of 38-50 was higher than the women between the ages of 25-37, since younger women had smaller kids with more needs and the children of older women were earning too.

Material condition of the respondents

The material condition of the respondents was not good and that was the reason, they took loans from Akhuwat to start business. They were living in one or two room houses which were near “Nala-Lai”, had very poor sanitation.

Nature of Business:

Table 2: Nature of Business of the Borrowers between 25-37 yrs

	No of Borrowers	Average Income generated from loan investment (Per month)
Sewing and Embroidery	17	PKR 7000
Beauty Parlour	4	PKR 10000
Selling Fabric	4	PKR 6000

Nature of Business of the borrowers between 38-50 yrs

	No of Borrowers	Average Income generated from loan investment (per month)
Running Shops	15	PKR 15000
Keeping Cows and Buffaloes	5	PKR 20000
Selling undergarments, bangles etc.	5	PKR 7000

Among the women between the ages of 25-37, seventeen were either sewing clothes or doing embroidery work, four women were running a parlor and four were selling fabric, by inviting women to their home and showing them the fabric. As all of these works could be done within the four walls of the household therefore the young women opted for it. Among the older women 15 were running a shop in one room of the house. Five were keeping cows and buffaloes and five were selling undergarments and bangles. There is a significant difference in the nature of activities that the young and old women were doing. The younger women were doing work which does not require interaction with males or going outside.

Role of Women in Decisions

Initiating earning activity:

When it was asked by women how it was decided that they should do some income generating activity, eighty percent responded that they started work due to financial issues. Although it was their own choice to start work, they had no other option.

The other twenty percent of women responded that they wanted to do some productive work to utilize the extra time they had. None of the borrowers was forced by the family to do income

generating activity. The main concern of all women was to do something for their children and household and to help their husbands in financial matters.

Choosing earning activity

Ninety percent of the young women invested the loan in an activity which was home based and they knew how to do it. Since it was home-based their husbands permitted them to do it. Ten percent of young women chose that work because they thought it was easy to do. Among the older women, seventy five percent chose the activity because of being less hectic and demanded sitting in one place. The remaining twenty-five percent who used to go to different peoples' homes to sell goods responded that they needed money and they only knew this work so they started it.

Decisions regarding children's education, health and Marriage:

The ability to make decisions for children not only depends on their earning but also on their age, as the older women were more in a position to decide for their children as compared to younger women. Women aged 38-50 were more independent in making decisions about their children compared to women aged 25-37, since the children of older women were at an age when they didn't need parental assistance, as did the children of younger women; it was not easy for younger women to take one child to the doctor, leaving behind the remaining children. It was also not allowed for them to go out alone, therefore, they take the permission of husband or mother-in-law first and then go with some family member to see a doctor. The children of older women were employed themselves; these women were mostly illiterate and it was their husbands who decided whether and what kind of education the child (be it a girl or a boy) would receive - being illiterate themselves, the women seemed content if the son completed matriculation and did not study further. Older women did not attach importance to girls' education. In their opinion, girls should have the ability to run the house and to do the housework. They were of the view that girls should recite the Holy Quran, and should get religious education instead of going to school. A respondent while talking about the education of girls said that "girls should know how to read Holy Quran and should have the knowledge of Islam; worldly education has no use for girls, as they are supposed to fulfill the household responsibilities and should rear the children"¹. In contrast, younger women were very interested in the education of children (both male and female).

While asking about the choice of marriage, the older women responded that the decision regarding the marriage of children was taken by their husbands (be it girl or boy). Those women whose children were unmarried also reported that marriage related decisions would be taken by their husbands. The younger women were of the view that they and their husband both would decide about the marriage of their children.

Access and Control over Income

Seventy percent of the women responded that their income is used in household items and on children and they don't use it on their own selves, although no-one from the family forced them

¹ *Larhkion ko Quran parhna ana chahiey aur Islam ka pata hona chahiey, is se ziada taleem hasil ker ke unhon ne kia kerna he, Larhki ka asal kaam ghardaari sambhalna aur bache paalna hota he*

to do so. Twenty percent said that they use some of the income on their personal things. Ten percent responded that they give the earned money to their husbands. This shows that although the majority of the respondents were spending money of their own will, their families were facing financial issues therefore, they preferred to spend money on the household and children.

Status & Position

All the women answered that they became financially stable after investing the loans. Ninety percent of women said that their income-generating work is important to their family because it provides them with extra income to meet their daily household needs. All the women answered that their social life has also improved because they can now interact with more people while selling goods and services. This shows that microfinance has a positive impact on women's well-being and their social network is expanding through their income-generating activities.

Division of Labour

All the younger women stated that their work had been increased, twenty percent of women responded that their mother-in-law helps them in managing household chores within the earning activity. Eight percent responded that they do household chores themselves. None of the younger women were supported by their husbands in terms of doing household chores. It was observed that although women were ready to help their husbands in earning income, men were not ready to help them in household chores and considered it to be the responsibility of women to do all household chores. Among the older women, the majority do not have the burden of household chores, as either their daughters were young or they had daughters-in-law to take the responsibility of household chores. Therefore, they give more time to earning activity.

Financial independence

All women aged 25-37 were of the opinion that earning is very important for women to gain respect in the household. After starting an earning activity, they think they are more financially independent because they don't have to ask their husband for money for most things. Their husbands gave them more respect than before. Women aged 38-50 also believed that personal income is very important for women. Most of them said that it also became a source of "passing time" and meeting different people. Therefore, they are very happy after this job and think that they are useful for the family. This indicates that women feel the burden of increased workload, but are still in favor of work, because personal income is a source of satisfaction for them, and at the same time they can meet the needs of their children.

Conscientization (Awareness of rights)

The right to earn

Eighty percent of women said that women should earn only when needed. If they are financially stable, women should not be earning. Twenty percent of women said that women should have the right to earn and should earn whether it is needed or not. All the women said that if the husband does not want, they should not earn while most respondents were of the opinion that women should earn from home. When asked if financial problems become the reason for domestic violence, eighty percent of the respondents agreed and said that financial problems

are the main cause of domestic violence. Twenty percent of the women said that financial problems are not the reason for domestic violence, but if the wife is patient, the husband will not beat her. When asked if women who earn have more decision-making power, younger women agreed that when the women earn, they can make decisions in many areas. Seventy percent of older women responded that personal income strengthens the decision-making power they already have, as their husbands and children consult them on important decisions.

Right to Education

All the women said that women should have the right to education. As a reason, the respondents stated that if women have education, it can be useful in difficult times. Most women said that if they were educated, they could easily teach their children themselves.

Legal Rights:

All women, whether they were aged 25-37 or 38-50, were unaware of their legal rights. When asked what their legal rights were, they said "we don't know". When asked whether any of them received a share of the inheritance, eighty percent of the respondents answered that their parents had no property, therefore they did not inherit any property. They were of the opinion that even if their parents had property, they would not take their share because it is the right of the sons to have the property of the parents.

Voting rights:

Thirty percent of women said they had not voted before but would vote now. Seventy percent of women said they would vote. When asked how voting decisions are made, all women said that an older male family member (e.g. father-in-law) or their husband decides who to vote for, and the whole family then votes for the same candidate or the same political party. None of them decided to vote on their own.

Opinion regarding a happy life

Different answers were received as to what the qualities of a good husband are. Twenty percent of respondents said that a good husband is one who earns well and spends his earnings on his wife and children. Twenty percent answered that a good husband is one who prays five times a day and treats his wife according to the principles of Islam. Thirty percent answered that a good husband is one who cares about his family and can stand by his wife. Ten percent answered that a man who respects his wife and who listens to her suggestions is a good husband. Twenty percent answered that a good husband is one who takes care of the needs of his wife and children. Sixty percent of women described a prosperous life as having a good home and enough money; thirty percent said that if husband and wife understand each other's problems and solve them together, life will be prosperous. Ten percent said that if their children were pious and good-natured and had a higher education, their lives would be prosperous.

The goal of microfinance is to help the poor by providing small loans to improve their living conditions. This study was conducted to determine the impact of microfinance on women's empowerment. The researcher collected data from Akhuwat Foundation, which is an Islamic microfinance institution. They provide small loans to enable borrowers to start some work to increase their monthly income. Being an Islamic microfinance institution, the loan process provided by Akhuwat Foundation is very different from conventional microfinance

institutions. In Pakistan, microfinance is provided by various types of microfinance institutions such as Kashf Foundation, NGOs, SPs and banks. However, these institutions provide microfinance with interest. They are poor because they don't have enough money, they are mostly unable to pay the interest, and this is the main reason why Akhuwat Islamic microfinance institution has gained popularity among the poor people.

For this study, Sara Longwe's empowerment framework was chosen to analyze the impact of microfinance on women's empowerment. The framework consists of five different levels of empowerment, which are welfare, access, control, participation and conscientisation. However, for this study, the researcher used four levels of the framework which are welfare, access, control and conscientization. Welfare was taken as material well-being. By asking about borrowers' access to food, income and medical care, the quality of the facilities they used was assessed. From the borrowers' responses, it was found that all borrowers had access to food, but no access to income and medical care before accessing microfinance. The respondents got access to money thanks to the loan and were also able to generate income and use this income to contribute to their children's education and medical care. The borrowers' answers also show that they used their income for the household and children and did not use it for themselves. The results of a previous study by Pitt et al (2006) are also consistent with the finding that women's income is more likely to be spent on household and children (Pitt, Khandker, & Cartwright, 2006). It was also noted from the borrowers' responses that female respondents were willing to share their income with their husbands.

Access was assessed as women borrowers' access to income-generating activities and mobility. Sample questions to assess the difference between women of different ages in access to loans were whether both types of borrowers have the same access to outdoor activities and whether women can leave their homes for economic activities. Similarly, the study asked whether women sell and buy things themselves or use others as "middlemen" to access markets. Women's access to income-generating activities and their mobility varied by age. Older women had more mobility compared to younger women. This is why women between the ages of 25-37 were restricted to indoor activities only. Women aged 38-50 were not restricted and engaged in income-generating activities that required them to leave the home. Pakistani society is patriarchal in nature and Purdah is strictly observed in most areas of Punjab, leading to restrictions on women's mobility (Isran & Isran, 2012). The study also shows that although women were into economic activities. However, they were still dependent on their husbands for social and economic activities.

Control was assessed by measuring borrowers' control over the decision-making process (all decisions related to children's health, schooling, marriage, earning money, use of earned money, etc.). The findings of the current research show that the borrowers decided to take the loan independently, although the decision was taken to alleviate their financial problems and the borrowers were forced to do some income-generating activity to meet the household expenses. From the borrowers' answers, it was evaluated that control over decisions about children's health, education and marriage is not only influenced by the loan they take, but also by relevant factors. Women's age was an important factor in decision-making control. In the case of decisions about children's education, women aged 25-37 were more aware of the

importance of education and wanted to educate their children, and were more independent in making decisions about their children's education after starting some income generating activity. Results of a study conducted by Pitt et al. also reveal that the children of women also reap the benefits of their income. The author explains that as women's access to economic resources increases, the number of children enrolled in school increases and the dropout rate decreases. The study also shows that women's earnings have a positive effect on girls' education. (Pitt, Khandker & Cartwright, 2006) The answers show that it is mostly men who decide on child marriages. Microfinance does not influence decisions about child marriages. Because Pakistan is a traditional society where marriages are arranged, based on the consent of the whole family and men are considered the authority to decide on the marriages of children, especially girls.

Conscientiousness was analyzed by measuring borrowers' awareness of gender roles and that these gender roles are culturally constructed. It was also analyzed by measuring borrowers' understanding of their rights. The borrowers' answers show that they are not well aware of their rights. Pakistani society is a patriarchal society and society expects women to be in a subordinate position. The respondents of this study, coming from the lower middle class of urban areas of Pakistan, showed the same attitude. They were very hesitant to talk about their legal, economic and social rights. Most of the respondents were of the opinion that the cause of domestic violence can be financial problems, they consider domestic violence as something bad that should not happen. But they consider it a husband's right. One of them said: "Women are beaten for their own actions, if the husband came home after work and was tired and the wife started telling him about the household expenses, then of course she would be beaten by him". The majority of respondents who were self-employed were of the opinion that there would be less domestic violence if financial problems were resolved. They said that if the wife contributes to the household income, she gets more respect and the husband does not beat her.

Kabeer points to the same in her study and states that women's economic contribution to the household leads to a reduction in domestic violence and strengthens their relative position in the relationship with their husbands (Kabeer, 1998). Questions were also asked to assess the extent to which the women were aware of their rights. The questions were about their property rights and their right to vote. Despite the existence of various women-friendly laws in Pakistan, most of the respondents were unaware of their inheritance and voting rights, and women who were somewhat aware of their rights were also very hesitant to talk about it. They were of the opinion that their brothers had a right to their parents' property, so if their parents gave them property even then, they would not take it; to take property from their brothers is to anger them. This shows that women give up their inheritance rights to please them and to gain the expected favour and help of the brothers in case there is any marital dispute in the future. Despite this, one of the main reasons is male dominated legal institutions and judiciary and lack of legal knowledge and economic resources of women, which prevents women from getting justice (Isran & Isran, 2012). When it came to questions regarding their view of a good husband and a good wife, almost all the women responded according to the existing gender roles of man and woman. Most of them said that if the husband earns well, takes care of his wife and children, he is good, and if the wife takes care of her children and fulfills her household duties, serves the elders, then she is a good wife.

The right to education was the only right that women knew and wanted to have since by getting education, they can cope with any unforeseen circumstances that may arise like husband's inability to earn etc. They also wanted to educate their children, be it daughters or sons. Being self-earning, they were now in a better position to fulfill their desire to educate their daughters. but they thought that if they had financial problems, the daughters would be the first to be unable to go to school because of the costs.

CONCLUSION:

The evidence of microcredit leading to women's empowerment based on the four indicators of welfare, access, control and Conscientisation is mixed from the given analysis and discussion. In this study, women with loans were interviewed to find out whether microfinance has an effect on women's empowerment or not. Findings suggest that after taking a loan and using it for some income-generating activity, women are empowered to spend money on household items, health and education of their children. It can therefore be concluded that the use of credit has a significant impact on the material situation of female borrowers. However, microcredit has no impact on women's mobility and awareness level. Age is an important factor for women's mobility. The findings also show that women are not well aware of their rights, be it economic, social or legal. Akhuwat Foundation, which is an Islamic microfinance institution, strives to inculcate moral values in borrowers. Initial sessions with borrowers (both male and female) include narrating the importance of donations/charity in Islam, these sessions can also be used to make borrowers aware of their legal, economic and social rights and responsibilities - including using links to Islam. Microcredit has some positive effects on women's decision-making and self-esteem and on household consumption, but it needs to be complemented with awareness raising and linked to aspects such as adult functional literacy, raising men's awareness of women's rights, etc. to play a transformative role in uplifting society.

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A Metamodernist Reading of Multiple Subjectivities in Orphan Black

Abstract

From a metamodern viewpoint, human subjectivity is an oscillation between two or more intrinsic extremes in the spectrum of self. The Canadian science fiction TV series Orphan Black uses clones to portray the concept of multiple subjectivities.. The goal of this study is to examine the manifestations of this multiplicity in order to gain an understanding of the existence of the subject in the contemporary metamodernist world. In order to locate the subjects from the selected texts in the metamodern world, the study will use textual analysis as a method under the qualitative paradigm.

Key words: *Metamodernism, Oscillation, As-if mindset, Subjectivity*

INTRODUCTION

In this research article, I attempt to explore the notion of human subjectivity with respect to the contemporary theoretical advancement of thought and how it is portrayed in the cultural productions of the present times. For this, I have chosen to examine the science fiction TV series *Orphan Black*. I intend to discuss the dynamic nature of the subject in the selected text and what allows it to manifest in a way that is characteristically different and unique as compared to how subjects are presented and discussed generally. The contemporary theoretical perspective of metamodernism discusses subjects as multi-faceted beings (Lipovetsky 2005 p.2), and all these dimensions to an individual make up the sense of self, so to speak. I argue that this multi-dimensional manifestation of subjectivity is achieved through the angle of human cloning in the selected text and allows the audience to view the said manifestation in a way that other productions, forms, and genres do not. I employ the method of textual analysis to explore the said notion of subjectivity in the light of metamodernism to answer the following question:

Q. In what ways do the characters in *Orphan Black* manifest their subjectivities, and how does this enable viewers to comprehend the metamodern sense of self?

Metamodernism

Robin van den Akker and Timotheus Vermeulen, in 2010, put forward the idea that the “postmodern years of plenty, pastiche, and parataxis are over” (p. 56) and have been abandoned for a “structure of feeling” (p. 57) which they call metamodern. They describe this structure of feeling as an oscillation between the enthusiasm of modernism and irony of postmodernism and highlight the resulting condition of in-between-ness as metamodern. This suggests that in the neither-nor and both relationships, a subject in the metamodern world is continuously oscillating between the polarities of (post) modernism and even beyond. The said structure of

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feeling for them is “. . . characterized by the oscillation between a typically modern commitment and a markedly postmodern detachment. . .” (p. 57). This structure of feeling, for Vermeulen and van den Akker, is epistemologically aligned with the negative idealism of Kant; unlike modernism and postmodernism which are associated with Hegel’s positive idealism and the view that history can (has) come to an end. The metamodern belief is an oscillation between the two polarities; highlighting a position of in-between-ness and making an impossibly possible commitment of finding the purpose of history as if it existed knowing fully well that it does not: keeping in line with Kant’s negative idealism. Therefore ontologically, metamodernism oscillates between modernism and postmodernism:

It oscillates between a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy, between naiveté and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity. (p. 67)

In doing so, the metamodern subject negotiates between the modern and the postmodern, but it does not entail that it adopts an either-or approach as at all times, the metamodern is in the position of oscillation, moving between numerous polarities; signifying a search for a truth that it knows does not exist. It would also mean that the subject would continuously be in motion: never really stopping at either polarities to take its complete characteristics and its nature swings it back to the other end and so forth. The authors explain it in a way that “one should be careful not to think of this oscillation as a balance; however, rather, it is a pendulum swinging between 2, 3, 5, 10, innumerable poles” (p. 68). If the positions and the poles are ‘innumerable’, the subject never really stops like a pendulum normally would, between two poles, but because here the polarities are infinite, the subject would adopt and adapt in accordance to the need in that particular moment giving rise to multiple subjectivities. The idea puts forth the notion that human beings living in the present day metamodern world occupy multiple or numberless subjective categories and can even temporarily let go of one position or category and adopt another position deliberately; signifying and reinforcing the idea that people are aware of the fact that they themselves and others, occupy these infinite positions. Furthermore, the need for letting go of a subjective category would highlight the need to ‘share subjectivities’ with others who are different from us.

The mentioned multiple positions allow the subjects to behave as agents in a manner that also makes use of the as-if mindset in the metamodernist sense. The said mindset puts forth this notion of progressing and improving as if progression is possible and it is not an “impossible possibility” (Akker and Vermeulen p. 8). Vermeulen and van den Akker discuss this idea with reference to Kant and his positive idealism and say that human history and development is studied in retrospect and in doing so it is acknowledged that the present moment cannot be discussed with surety. This is further explored with Kant’s idea of humanity being guided by a thread as if moving towards something whereas the reality of the matter is that everyone is unaware of what lies ahead and still is progressing in a forward direction. The importance of such a movement cannot be denied as the reverse and being stuck in the present is not possible; it is evident to the theorists here that with this movement, all one is doing is pretending to move towards a goal as if it will be meaningful. A metamodern subject, in this sense, tends to move because of this awareness, and in doing so strives to find a natural outcome or reach the truth

knowing fully well that such a search and movement would be futile. It is interesting because this knowledge does not stop the movement; in fact, the movement is the only point which gives the subject its agency and makes it act in a particular way and towards a particular direction.

***Orphan Black* as Science Fiction**

Orphan Black deals with the enthralling experiences of human clones and how they are a result of an experiment. The inclusion of clones and genetically enhanced individuals in the selected works make them fall under the category of Sci-Fi, making the series relatable in a sense that they cover different aspects of the contemporary technologically enhanced human subject. Moreover, the elements discussed in the series include human evolution, manufacturing creatures with human qualities, the ramifications and consequences of such an experiment, the clones considered as property of the manufactures leading to the moral and/or ethical dilemmas, and/or the notions of awe, terror, and speculation. Science Fiction as a genre allows both the creator and the reader to think beyond the usual way of looking at the subject matter because as a genre, it is speculative in nature and as such has the flexibility to entertain various alternative narrative possibilities. This makes *Orphan Black* a text which not only addresses the recent developments in science and technology but also brings to the forefront how the seemingly human characters (later identified as clones) struggle to break through these boundaries of singular selves coming in line with the metamodernist thought of the subject's oscillation.

Science Fiction, as Aldiss and Wingrove define it, is: “. . . the search for a definition of mankind and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mode” (1986 p.30) The important thing here is the mention of Gothic and post-Gothic, as it takes us back to Mary Shelley's work *Frankenstein*; which according to Aldiss is the beginning of this genre of Science Fiction in many a ways. The sense of desolation, the bleak scenery, and the protagonist's dilemma are all the characteristics of Science Fiction. No doubt, all of these features combined together give a ghastly appearance and feel to the story/work, but this is the requirement of the said genre. It was not till 1920s that the term science fiction was used for works which incorporated the above-mentioned features in the effort to demonstrate the diversity of the genre. Diverse in a sense that in and after 1920s, Science Fiction dealt with stories such as published in the pulp fiction magazines in America like *Amazing Stories*; it also dealt with stories about people going to other planets and exploring different species which was the focus of the work published in 1950s for which Aldiss states that “. . . the rocket-ship became SF's trade mark, and SF became 'space fiction'” (p. 29). Other than that, Science Fiction saw remarkable change in its content because with every passing year or so, new advancements found their way into the genre. And, it was not necessary for the writer to talk about interplanetary flights and new technological developments; largely it depended on the author's personal inclination which leads us to the notion of exploration and evolution in this genre.

Science fiction, among all other genres, is very much concerned about its own nature as a genre; thereby focusing on the evolutionary aspect as well, along with the much acknowledged and traditional aspect of technological development. This is vital to the understanding of the

genre because mostly, technological development is associated with the genre and things like space travel, scientific inventions and innovations, etc. make their way into the stories that fall under the category of Science Fiction. But at the same time, the evolutionary aspect cannot and should not be ignored as it is because of this aspect that we see human beings (protagonists or otherwise) adapting to their new environments and trying to survive despite the bleak state of circumstances. This double fold concern makes the subject matter of Science Fiction both diverse and richly complex in terms of human beings coming to terms with their ever-changing surroundings.

The present study makes use of metamodernism as a reading prop to highlight the nature of the subject under discussion and explore what it means to be an aware subject – in the sense of being multifaceted and usually conscious about it – in the current times with reference to the cultural development of thought on human subjects. This idea is interesting considering that it not only explores the subject as depicted in the selected texts but also makes a case for the present state of affairs when it comes to being human in the present times. The work, therefore, is an attempt to define and decipher the ways in which the subject from the selected text can be looked at from a metamodern perspective.

In this article, I attempt to answer the research question proposed in the beginning. The aim is to develop an understanding of how multiple subjectivities exist within the fictional narrative of the TV series. It is pertinent to mention here that the analysis takes into consideration a variety of positions that different subjects take within the narrative, irrespective of the chronological order of the series.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, I focus on Catherine Belsey's essay titled *Textual Analysis as a Research Method*. Belsey highlights how to analyze a visual text, and here I list the five points I gathered from the said essay and have used to analyze the selected text. First, she asserts that the researcher should "let the text set the agenda for research" (p. 161) and by this she means that a visual text presents a lot of information to the audience and one should find a starting point which is simultaneously useful for answering the question one wants answered and making a contribution to the field. In this article, the focus is to highlight the multiple positions that the subjects take simultaneously; the data taken from the selected text corresponds to these concerns. Belsey further states that "there is no such thing as a pure reading" (p. 163) as one gathers information and deciphers the text based on their own cultural and ideological foundations. This, of course, is extremely important in a qualitative study like this one, and it is because of this point that I believe a contribution to the field can be made, considering that the question designed for the study and how I answer it is situated within a cultural and ideological paradigm. Belsey argues that the text exists in its difference from us as readers (p. 166) and therefore requires a lot of attention from the reader or viewer. This signifies the importance of how the claims a researcher makes while analyzing a text have to be always backed up by logic, reason, and previous research and that there is definitely no room for vague assertions just because the analysis is subjective in nature. Belsey also places importance on dialogue between the reader and the text (p. 168). She argues that the meaning of any text comes to the forefront based on that back-and-forth communication between the audience and

the text. I rely on this the most, considering the present study is a qualitative one and the primary source of information is the selected text. The last and fifth point from the essay that I follow in my analysis is Belsey's assertion that "any specific textual analysis is made at a particular historical moment and from within a specific culture" (p. 169). This entails that the analysis is culturally grounded within a specific time period and forms one of the many possible readings that can exist for a particular text. The listed points make for a detailed analysis and I have attempted to answer the question employing the said method of textual analysis.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

In this study I have employed two conceptual metamodernist categories, in an attempt to answer the question at hand. The concepts of oscillation and the as-if mindset are used to explain the multiplicity of positions that the clones in *Orphan Black* occupy. The selected text revolves around the story of human clones and that establishes all of them as parts of one; this way of looking at the clones considering their evolutionary similarities allows the audience to situate them as multiple manifestations of one genetic code. This can be seen in the way the series portrays all of them and how one actor is playing all the parts; changes in hair, dress, and accents aside. This portrayal is unique in the sense that it becomes difficult for the other characters to distinguish between the clones and there are many instances throughout the series where the clones impersonate one another. While doing so, the clones are occupying multiple positions because they are neither completely one nor the other and are simultaneously performing as two individuals although they are portrayed as one. This back-and-forth movement between different subjective positions is inherently metamodern and is in line with how the theorists describe the concept of oscillation in relation to the subject.

This continuous oscillation creates a sense of motion and does not let the audience and/or other characters settle for one kind of representation which creates layers in the narrative, and it keeps functioning on all the different levels. For instance, in the opening sequence (Manson 2013), when Sarah observes Beth jump in front of the train, the audience is made to realize that these two women look alike and must be connected in one way or the other. When Sarah decides to take hold of Beth's bag, cards, and ultimately her life, the narrative already has two layers on which it is functioning; Sarah's own life with her daughter Kira and her foster mother S and brother Felix, and the other with Beth's life as a police officer considering that people in both their lives are unaware of these new revelations of Sarah and Beth being clones. Sarah soon discovers other clones and is made to stay in the police force (as Sarah-as-Beth) for as long as she can manage to gather information regarding Beth's involvement which can help the clones and figure out who Beth's monitor was and how much do they know about Beth being alive or dead (Manson 2013).

Sarah Manning is the central clone who is introduced to the audience in the opening sequence as a street-smart criminal who is returning to Canada to be near her daughter Kira and eventually gain custody (Manson 2013). In this sense, it is through her character that the audience gets to know other clones and hence she becomes the subject when the series starts. The discussion, then, looks at Sarah's character as the subject who initiates the action and then allows the audience to meet other clone characters. The five major clones are therefore looked at as off-

shoots of Sarah who function in relation to her and are evaluated to be further extensions of the LEDA project.

By holding a subjective position, I mean that the subjects would occupy a place where they are agents, are active, and can take decisions as far as their own individual self is concerned. This generally holds true before and after the clones become self-aware of the fact that they are human clones and are a result of an illegal experimentation carried out by the Dyad Institute and Neolution. The agency to wield power to work against these corporations and work towards their survival, however, stems from the knowledge of being clones and being aware, they decide consciously to take a subjective stance. Subjectivity, with reference to the said discussion, narrows down to the way an individual acts, the reasons for their actions, and the context in which the action takes place.

When the characters of Sarah, Beth, Cosima, Helena, or Alison are observed, it can be seen that all these clones are not only aware of being clones but are also aware that they have to keep this a secret from their respective communities such as neighbors, colleagues, friends, and/or family members. This awareness results in metamodern oscillation; the to-and-fro movement from being aware to being unaware, from being extraordinary to ordinary, and from being a clone to a normal human being. The narrative itself functions on both these levels; the layers that this constant and continuous move from ignorance to knowledge and back to ignorance creates and allows for the subjects to assume multiple subjective positions. Moreover, there is another level that this oscillation creates, the movement from being one clone to impersonating another and back to being their own self. This back-and-forth motion results in a continuous motion in the narrative and can be described as metamodern oscillation.

One clone, then, is simultaneously functioning as themselves, the other clone they are impersonating in a particular moment, their old self who was unaware of the fact that they are a clone and keeping up the act for their friends and family, and their actual self who is aware of being a clone and working towards their survival. This oscillation is, then, a form of negotiation in terms of not only coming to terms with the identity and agency that the subject occupies but also with reference to the context in which the transition from one position to the other takes place. This transition and the ability to morph into a variety of subjective positions makes the subject fall under the metamodern category. Akker and Vermeulen, describing this, state: "Indeed, by oscillating to and fro or back and forth, the metamodern negotiates . . . One should be careful not to think of this oscillation as a balance. . . rather, it is a pendulum swinging between 2, 3, 5, 10, innumerable poles". (6)

This movement of the 'pendulum' becomes extremely important as it is because of the subject continuously negotiating between being one and the other, taking a decision to occupy one place or the other, and assuming multiple identities in doing so. This movement is not a balanced movement per se as it is not necessary that the subject stays in two or more positions for an equal amount of time or remains in a position for an indefinite amount of time. This swinging motion is also indicative of the fact that the subject does not remain in a/any place long enough to assume the characteristics of an occupied position; meaning that the traits keep shifting and transitioning in relation to the continuous motion of the subject. The sense of

movement does not allow the audience to settle for one or the other representation and the audience is ready to accept the clones as much as a whole as they are accepted as separate individuals. Oscillation, then, manifests as this expectation in the audience, especially when they are ready to accept the shift from one subjective position to the other and are not only accepting of the multiple portrayal of the clones but are also keeping up with all the back-and-forth motions. To experience the series completely and in an immersive sense, then, the audience is also engaged in a continuous negotiation between different subjective positions that the clones occupy. For instance, when Sarah impersonates Beth (Manson 2013), or when Alison goes to visit Kira as Sarah (Fawcett 2013), or when Felix identifies Beth's body as Sarah (Manson 2013), the audience is aware of the transition that the clones go through whereas the characters in the series are not; the metamodern element of oscillation thus functions on this level as well. Audience involvement, in this way, is not fixed and keeps shifting from one story arc to another, from one clone to another, and how they are brought together as a whole. This type of active direct engagement aids in extending the metamodern oscillation beyond the confines of the fictional work. Oscillation, in a metamodern sense, then, extends beyond the confines of the work itself which manifests as an act of negotiation between the creator and the audience and how constantly the swinging motion helps in generating meaning with reference to the work under consideration.

The same can be said for *Orphan Black* as a text because it engages the audience on different levels, as a viewer given the visual nature of the TV series. In this way, this shift or oscillation, is not fixed and results in the audience's displacement as far as their focus is concerned and might also play with their sense of presence with regards to the engagement with content. This oscillation on the audience's part is something that fascinates me in terms of their subjectivity in relation to the characters' subjective stances. Despite knowing that one actor is playing all the clones, the audience chooses to resonate with one character at a time or perhaps with different character traits from different clones.

The form of the narrative allows the characters to occupy multiple positions and behave as agents in a manner that also makes use of the as-if mindset in the metamodernist sense. The said mindset puts forth this notion of progressing and improving as if progression is possible and it is not an "impossible possibility" (Akker and Vermeulen 8). Vermeulen and van den Akker discuss this idea with reference to Kant and his positive idealism and say that human history and development is studied in retrospect and in doing so it is acknowledged that the present moment cannot be discussed with surety. This is further explored with Kant's idea of humanity being guided by a thread as if moving towards something whereas the reality of the matter is that everyone is unaware of what lies ahead and still is progressing in a forward direction. The importance of such a movement cannot be denied as the reverse and being stuck in the present is not possible; it is evident to the theorists here that with this movement, all one is doing is pretending to move towards a goal as if it will be meaningful. A metamodern subject, in this sense, tends to move because of this awareness, and in doing so strives to find a natural outcome or reach the truth knowing fully well that such a search and movement would be futile. It is interesting because this knowledge does not stop the movement; in fact, the movement is the only point which gives the subject its agency and makes it act in a particular way and towards a particular direction.

When *Orphan Black* is looked at from this perspective, it can be said that the subjects are aware of their movement throughout the plot development, it is the very act of movement which gives them their agency and allows them to multiply. Whether it is Sarah observing Beth's suicide, Sarah acting as Beth, Alison acting as Sarah to meet Kira, or Helena acting as Sarah-as-Beth and entering the police station, it is clear that the clones are aware of their actions and movements and their subjective positions make them decide when and where they undergo transformation. Other instances such as Sarah watching the tapes to copy Beth's movements and accent (Manson 2013), Sarah coming to terms with the fact that Beth's boyfriend Paul was her monitor (Manson 2016), using Beth's surveillance tapes and data to dig out the truth, or Alison finding out that Donnie is her monitor (Pascoe 2013) and installing her own surveillance equipment to get ahead of Dr. Leekie and Neolution (Levine 2013), or Helena working against her captors and working with her sestras, all point towards the clones' decision to actively pursue what they believe is right in the moment they are making the decision and then further directing the course of the plot. This oscillation stems from the as-if mindset in a way that the clones believe as if there is a way to outrun the Dyad Institute and establish their own identities outside of being clones, which even towards the end of the TV series is not what they can achieve.

Despite the fact that Sarah, along with the other clones, topples over the Dyad Institute and Neolution, it can be seen that there are still clones that they do not know about, Rachel hands Felix a document with the details of 274 clones (Fawcett 2017) and it is very evident from this revelation that there is still a lot that they have to work towards; highlighting the metamodern move forward. This is significant because the clones looked at Dyad and Neolution as if finishing them would be the final step but the disclosure of the document and the list in the last episode speaks about their struggle and what is yet to come; moving ahead being completely aware that the move may be futile. Vermeulen and van den Akker use the metaphor of the donkey and the carrot to illustrate this notion, explaining that the metamodern donkey will keep chasing the carrot it never manages to eat, the reason being that the carrot is always out of its reach, but because it is out of reach and it does not get to eat the carrot, the donkey keeps chasing it (9).

This behavior is not confined to the characters within the TV series, it has its implications on a larger scale. The franchises keep producing the content (moving forward) because they are aware that it will be consumed by the audiences in one way or the other. The audience is equally invested to know if the clones will proceed further and doing so to create their own as-if tautology thinking that this matters and allows them to proceed further and expand the narrative further. When Vermeulen and van den Akker state that the "the metamodern discourse acknowledges that history's purpose will never be fulfilled because it does not exist" (7), it becomes relevant with regards to the text under discussion considering that the subject here, the clones, struggles for something that is beyond their reach. In doing so, they uncover parts of their history and development; being agents is important to them in this regard because the awareness of being clones takes away from them their sense of identity and individualization; the struggle to find out the truth is in fact a struggle to establish themselves as agents. The metamodern discourse, so to speak, can be understood here as the narrative itself, regardless

of the form it takes, because the narrative and its inherent sense of struggle is the thing that makes the characters exhibit this multiplicity. This said and discussed multiplicity manifests in terms of oscillation and the to-and-fro movement itself stems from the as-if mindset. This movement is made possible because of the nature of the plot and the clones therefore act accordingly and ensure the forward motion.

The site for exploring the kind of subjects in the selected text also provides an opportunity to see what kind of subjects exist in the metamodern world, since television is such an impactful medium for cultural representation. Portraying characters in search of truth and trying to establish themselves as agents is what makes the clones relatable as human subjects despite being clones. Their sense of identity and determining who they are outside the zone they are relegated to becomes an important part of the audiences' struggle.

CONCLUSION

This study deals with the idea of multiple subjectivities in *Orphan Black*. The methodology adopted reveals that the visual nature of these mediums shows not only separate appearances for different clones but also distinct storylines for each of the said clones, which establishes that the positions these clones occupy are very distinct from one another. It is further illustrated that the nature of the narrative made approaching the text from multiple positions possible, hence establishing the point that the clones do in fact capture multiple subjective positions. Another insight that follows is that the text makes it possible for the audience to enter and explore the narrative from multiple entry points, from the perspectives of different clones and create a world where they all come together to drive the story forward. An important finding, therefore, would be that the metamodern possibility of the existence of multiple subjectivities with reference to one individual is made possible within the selected narrative because of its form. This places the audience in a unique position with respect to the performative nature of the said subjectivity and how it manifests in keeping the plot going forward with regards to all the clones and their multiple subjective positions.

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Resurrecting Voice: A Subaltern Study of Doshi and Singh's Selected Poems

Abstract

Due to the emerging academic scope of subaltern studies, it is crucial to have a nuanced understanding of peripheral narratives of/about the subaltern women exposed to brutality and injustices for a long time. This study aims at adding another dimension to Spivak's famous question, Can the Subaltern Speak? In the light of the selected poems, it can be said that the unheard stories of the subaltern have no means of expression because of the long-endured marginalization. Rather than dismissing the brutal treatment towards the women, it is significant to resurrect their voices. The present study attempts to revive and rejuvenate these voices and prevent them from fading away completely. The study does so by conducting a textual analysis of selected poems of Tishani Doshi and Chandni Singh.

Keywords: Subaltern, rape, harassment, unheard, resurrecting voice.

INTRODUCTION

When we think that the world has become a tolerant, accepting, and accessible space, news of women being raped and thrown in ditches opens our eyes to the stark reality that still prevails. We might think that globalization has resulted in diversity that no longer favors the center or disfavours the Global South (Sauvy, 1952) nothing can be farther from the truth. The globally widespread information about women's condition, mainly from the "peripheries," seems universal and common to all women as subalterns. Their marginalization has a shared effect which has a unified impact globally. As a result, a dimension in academia emerged known as Subaltern Studies (1970) to explore this shared effect. This field of study aims to provide room for the silenced subaltern's globally unified voices. It focuses on the portrayal of those who are on the periphery (Azad, 2016). The definition of subaltern focuses on the lives of women and the binary relationship between the subaltern women and their dominant other. Stephen (2003) aims to explore women's narratives about women's lived experiences worldwide from distinct marginalized communities.

Spivak (1998) defines subalterns in her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* as "the general non-specialists," "the illiterate peasantry," and "the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat" who are silenced or marginalized and subjected to epistemic violence (pp. 282-283). By epistemic violence, Spivak means to damage or destroy one's right to speak and be heard. The present

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study employs Gayatri Spivak's seminal work *Can the Subaltern Speak?* and explores literature and poems by different poets who create space for the Subaltern women to be heard. Various studies have highlighted the significance of the subaltern's marginality and explored other literary works that lent voices to the subaltern. In one similar study, Lovelace (2014) claims that June Jordan's poetry is a means of expression for the subaltern and their voices. Being marginalized and disconnected from the center, the subaltern has no space from which she can be heard, but poets like June Jordan, through their fierce commitment and empathy towards women and their unmet rights and struggles, speak for them. In her poem, *Moving towards Home*, on behalf of the silenced subaltern, June Jordan reclaims the efforts of the subaltern women worldwide. Jordan highlights what it is to be a woman and feel threatened in her "home." Sympathy with all the subalterns is deeply rooted in Jordan's poetry. She believes there is a dire need to advocate for them so that their unheard voices and unacknowledged actions find a medium to be heard globally, i.e., through literature. The sole purpose of doing so is the representation of the subaltern for recognition that should not be overlooked but acknowledged.

The present study aims to represent the struggles of Subaltern women and resurrect their voices. Women who have lost their lives to oppression and patriarchal injustices or have been marginalized to the extent that they can no longer speak and thus need space to share their issues. Hence, the deeply rooted need to address the silenced and marginalized for this study will be analyzed through selected poems of Tishani Doshi and Chandni Singh.

Context of Problem

Subaltern studies serve as a befitting platform for addressing the colonial exploitations of the superior over the weak and inferior (Giri, 2021) to provide resistance to the cultural and social hegemony that encompasses the marginalized based on gender. In the postcolonial context, people who are marginalized based on their gender become "Other." Significantly, natives were the "Other" during colonial rule; postcolonialism formed its own "Others" and subalterns. As a befitting explanation of ethnic minorities, lower castes and classes, especially women, have become "Others" (Nayar, p. 100) In addition to the dead subaltern, numerous women are subjected to harassment that goes unnoticed or unattended by society. From their homes to different outdoor places, women experience harassment against which they are forced to stay silent by patriarchal agents. Neil Bissonadath in *A Casual Brutality* states:

"As they (the colonizers) exploited us, so we (the postcolonial) exploited each other. As they raped our land, so we raped our land. As they took, so we took. We have absorbed the attitude of the colonizers, and we have mimicked the worst in them" (Nayar, pp. 99-100).

In the Indian context, the patriarchal norms have become as oppressive and dominant as that of the colonizers. They tend to marginalize, oppress, and decimate the women in society. Male dominance is exploiting and raping their nation's women, similar to the colonizers. Gayatri Spivak contributed to the postcolonial canon with her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak* (1983) and established that women, as oppressed subjects, are silenced through patriarchal and colonial agencies. On the other hand, Said (1978) advocates the subaltern's consciousness. Said calls it a spirit of resistance as opposed to a passive outlook of bearing oppression silently;

Said's claim remains significant and necessary to address the adverse situations that the marginalized women in India witness and experience. The study aims to rediscover the suppressed feelings and anxiety of the women in India subjected to brutal patriarchal treatment and traumatizing harassment. Such women, according to Spivak, are silenced through agencies of patriarchy and are voiceless. However, resistance through literature could support the silenced and marginalized in such adverse situations. Significantly, the poems written by women for women serve as mutual support, exemplifying courage to one another and establishing affinity with other native women.

Significance of the Study

Mishra et al. (2022) have claimed that "silencing the voice of women at home or outside has been the practice of patriarchal society irrespective of caste, color, creed, or community all over the world." His claim suggests that the subaltern can't speak from the position of subalternity. Hence, this study aims to acknowledge the poets who attempt to reclaim the voices of the unheard and silenced subalterns. Since their voices are never accepted from their subaltern position, prominent literary figures like Doshi and Singh contribute by bringing their issues to the center.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The 21st century feminist praxis in research has witnessed a visible shift from the representation of women's victimization to their resistance against patriarchy (Bandopadhyay, 2020). Despite the significant change in focus, the dominant narrative and mainstream discourse project, subaltern women as victims are incapable of resistance against oppression. Delimiting the vast axis through which women are oppressed, such as race, class, ethnicity, gender, etc., the current study focuses on the transformative and reconstructed narratives around harassment and rape required where the subaltern women challenges and deviate from the conventional victimization. Such texts would thus demonstrate that rape and physical violence needs to be reconstructed through a feminist lens. Presently, there is only a grass-root level of resistance from the women challenging the system and oppression, promoting societal change, although different studies have highlighted the significance of subaltern marginality and explored various literary works that lent voices to the subaltern. In a similar study, Lovelace (2014) claims that June Jordan's poetry is a means of expression for the subaltern and their voices, i.e. being marginalized and disconnected from the center; the subaltern has no space from which she can be heard, but poets like June Jordan, through their fierce commitment and empathy towards women and their unmet rights and struggles, speak for them. In her poem, *Moving towards Home*, on behalf of the silenced subaltern, she restores and reclaims the efforts of subaltern women worldwide. Jordan highlights what it is to be a woman and feel threatened in her "home." Sympathy for the Subalterns is deeply rooted in Jordan's poetry. She believes there is a dire need to advocate for them so that their unheard voices and unacknowledged actions find a medium to be heard globally, i.e., through literature. The sole purpose of doing so is the representation of the subaltern for recognition that should not be overlooked but acknowledged. There is a need for a study to develop and advance the feminist praxis. It is poignant to build narratives that challenge the rape stigma through deconstruction and make subaltern women's resistance on an individual level.

Spivak advises practicing strategic essentialism (Grosz 1985, Narayan 1997) which is connected with feminism and subalternity (Spivak, 1988, 1996). Spivak, herself, is seen as a strategic essentialist because she is regarded as the representative of third-world women (Eide, 2016). In strategic essentialism, people from diverse experiences and vast areas with one or many defining factors unify and form groups, classes, or categories to achieve social and political goals. For example, this strategy can be employed in opposing and fighting against patriarchal and gender oppression to help diminish oppressive structures and sufferings of the subaltern. According to Phillips (2010), Strategic essentialism plays a significant role in feminist theory and politics. Considering this claim, it is reasonable to say that poets like Doshi and Singh are essentialists. Their literary works use Spivak's essentialism to liberate the oppressed and diminished identities. Spivak propounds that rape and harassment are horrors and crimes based on originality, where the subaltern is punished or victimized because she is essentially a woman (Spivak, 2015). She claims that a group intentionally takes on stereotypes about themselves through strategic essentialism to subvert the marginalized dominance which takes the form of abuse and rape. The dead subaltern is represented and given a voice which appears to be different from its core understanding of strategic essentialism, where Spivak defines it as a concept where an oppressed group unifies and applies their power strategically in the acts of strategic resistance against the systemic regime. Since the harassed or dead subaltern women have no agency it is poignant for women such as Doshi and Singh to use their strategic resistance on behalf of the subaltern women and resurrect the silenced voices. This voice-lending will help the dead women and result in the survival of the frozen and scarred identities of the harassed and abused.

Rape and sexual and physical harassment are pervasive in Indian society. Bandopadhyay (2020) has explored the praxis of feminist resistance against oppression within patriarchal, colonial, and neoliberal-capital systems. This study analyses three texts: Buchi Emecheta's *The Rape of Shavi*, Mahasweta Devi's *Draupadi*, and Rigoberta Mechu's *I Rigoberta Menchu*. These literary texts deviate from expected victimization to reconstruct, transform, and challenge the traditional hierarchies, where the subaltern challenges the established values and norms. Such narrative escapes the conventional boundaries of rape and sexual violence that confines such violent actions as phallogocentric. Instead, through such texts, rape and physical violence are reconstructed in a way that dehumanizes the perpetrator and disregards his former privileged identity. Many writers validate the healing process and acknowledge the victims' feelings by penning poems. *One Day* by Smitha Sehgal is a poignant poem on child rape. The poem is an intense account of the child's trauma and search for his lost childhood after the sexual violence. However, the title *One Day* signifies hope and expectation for emotional healing. Rupi Kaur has contributed with her poem *It is Rape*, which is a powerful account explaining the difference between rape and a consensual sexual relationship. Kaur addresses the subject as an essential need for the Indian nation to discuss such issues by highlighting the boundaries in relationships.

Farhan Akhtar the famous Bollywood actor, director, and founder of a social campaign called MARD (Men Against Rape & Discrimination), also provides comforting words in the poem *Let's Talk about Rape*. His encouraging and optimistic words remind the victims to love

themselves when the perpetrator has hurt them. Literary texts that create a safe place for subaltern women and retrace the historical colonial patterns from feminist perspectives significantly challenge Spivak's conclusion about the impossibility of subaltern speech.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods - Tishani Doshi:

This is a significant literary piece due to the poignancy of the subject and theme. It addresses the cruel, violent, and inhuman treatment of women through the disturbing, grieving, and heartbreaking suffering of rape leading to death. The rape case of Jyoti Singh in Delhi in 2016 served as an inspiration for writing the poem. In an interview with Karthika Nair, Doshi revealed that "The rape of Joyti Singh was a trigger, but then the stories kept coming, three sisters under the age of 11 raped and murdered and found at the bottom of a well. And on and on."

Spivak's theory focuses on women who are under the influence of patriarchy and violence to the extent that their voices are considered insignificant. They are no longer heard in society and can therefore be defined as *subalterns* where the term "Subaltern" refers to the lowest or being below everything. In an essay by Spivak titled "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" the term is defined as the oppressed, unheard, or those from an "inferior rank" (p. 283). The lives of subaltern women who experience the violence and the ensuing trauma live in subjugation and anonymity. The crux of Spivak's essay *Can the Subaltern Speak* is based on the following significant factors contributing to her idea that the subaltern cannot speak. The essay is concluded with the impossibility of the subaltern's speech because:

- 1) Subaltern women cannot be heard since many things get in the way of her message being listened to socially and politically.
- 2) She is no longer considered a subaltern if someone else lends her a voice or speaks on her behalf. Spivak's subalternity questions the subaltern's ability to say "for her" without being lent a voice and suggests that if someone else lends her voice to speak her stories, that cannot escape "Othering."
- 3) "There is no space from which the sexed subaltern can speak. The subaltern as a woman cannot speak." (p. 104).

The paper considers these significant elements of Spivak's stance as a lens to look into Doshi's and Singh's poems. The attempt in doing so is to bring an alternative to Spivak's objection and question her view on the impossibility of the subaltern's speech and develop an understanding that the conclusions mentioned in Spivak's essay can be viewed from a different angle which can lead to a different conclusion than that of Spivak's. It is significant to mention that the study is based on two literary works. At the core, it aims at proving that the subalterns subjected to oppression, violence, and harassment daily require people such as Doshi and Singh, who must make contribution and attempt to revive and reclaim their voices rather than enabling them to fade away completely. Therefore, it is crucial to prove that representation for recognition should not be disregarded and overlooked but regarded and acknowledged.

Another factor contributing to the need for this study is that it is an area less explored where literature talks about the dead subaltern's voice and those who are silenced due to the endemic problem of harassment and sexual assaults in the light of Spivak's essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (2008). It is noteworthy that Singh's account of women being violated in the poem *I am a Woman in India* attempts to highlight the poignant cases of rape resulting in murder, similar to issues portrayed by Doshi in her poem *Girls are Coming Out of the Woods*. It implies that the subaltern women who experience harassment, rape, and assault are not in power to speak against it; they belong to a position or space from which they cannot be heard. Men muffle their voices and struggle to tell their stories of harassment and rape, and other violations (Houston & Kramarae, 1991).

The poems under study serve as an opportunity and possibility for the subaltern women to speak out about the atrocities they have faced. It also aims at registering a powerful protest against the oppression so that the sexual abuse can be witnessed and registered, and the rage can be acknowledged. The subsequent attempts prove that Doshi's poem is an influential remonstrance dedicated to rape victims. The victims can defy and refuse to give in or submit to the patriarchy through their representations in literature. They can be heard even if they are dead; their voices and screams can echo across the globe. The subalterns, marginalized and degraded to an inferior status or rank in society by male dominance, patriarchy, violence, and inhumane treatment by men leading to death, need a voice. Significant literary figures such as Tishani Doshi and many others endeavor to give the dead Subalterns a voice through their poetry. Derrida (1995) asserts that "what cannot be said above all must not be silenced but written; we must think and do the impossible."

Following the concept of writing and doing the impossible, Doshi states in an interview: I know people who have experienced abuse and violence, and I have to respond to it. Part of that response is wondering what we can do with the voices of those killed, murdered, or raped. Do they fade into the never after or is there a way to renew them? Can we remember them, or do we forget and move on. Doshi lends voice to the voiceless subaltern through her poetry. She is breaking the silence and helping to ensure that the subaltern voices do not fade away in the loud and clear domination of patriarchy. Considering the significant elements from Spivak's theory of subalternity, we can investigate each element and challenge, question, and negotiate them through our explanation backed with relevant textual evidence.

The idea is that if the subaltern attempts to speak, her voice will be suppressed to the extent that she cannot be heard since many things get in the way of her message being heard socially and politically. However, as claimed by Djébar (1985), "Writing does not silence the voice, but awakens it, above all, to resurrect so many vanished sisters" (p. 204). Therefore, it can be deduced that such issues should overlook the social and political hindrances in the patriarchal society and voice the opinions and stances which seem reasonable to the subalterns. It is more significant than ever to lend a voice or contribute to reclaiming the voices of the subalterns who suffered in their lives and left the world suffering. Doshi's (2017) poem highlights and challenges Spivak's take on the subaltern's inability to be heard, which is exhibited in the lines from the poem "*with panties tied around their lips making such a noise, / it is impossible to hear.*" This suggests the idea of the subaltern women who are forced to be silent, with their

lips tied and voices suppressed. However, despite all the obstacles, they make such a noise that it becomes impossible to hear. The term “panties tied around their lips” could be understood as the forces such as patriarchy, attempting to silence the subaltern; the male who attempted rape, society, law, and other social and political hindrances that get in the way of the subaltern’s message to be heard. Despite that, breaking the silence against oppression should not stop. As stated by Spivak, representation is a speech act that serves as a communicative interaction between a speaker and listener, but the subaltern as a speaker does not have any listeners; therefore, the subaltern cannot be heard. However, the crucial element of rape and violence leading to the subaltern’s death makes it necessary for people like Doshi to speak on their behalf. This then lends them their voices to put the message out to the world regarding the insensitivity of the men who attempt to rape the subalterns, taking away their voices and lives. The silence is broken through the language of the body and through the analysis of the poems, it becomes evident that she uses the metaphor of the body as a resisting entity, refusing to get lost in the oblivion of representing women:

The body dances in a darkened room
 Turning itself inside out
 So that skin can face the light in fractures,
 Slip like shadow through skeleton walls,
 Begin to cry — really — to scream
 About the tarnished weight of dreams. (Doshi, 2017, lines 1-8)

The body, despite its fractures, strives to break free from its skeletal walls and “begin(s) to cry-really-to scream.” Doshi is a witness to this act of resilience and, through her poetry, resurrects the sounds emanating from the body seeking enlightenment and visibility.

Spivak claims, “There is no space from which the sexed subaltern can speak. The subaltern as a woman cannot speak” (p.104). In the literal sense, it is true that the subaltern cannot speak because she is dead. However, after her death, there is “space” from which the subaltern can speak, i.e., through literature. Doshi’s collection of poems is not based on her experiences as a Subaltern or a rape victim but rather a second-hand expertise based on the stories about rape victims. Doshi’s writing has faced criticism with claims that she writes about issues in which she does not have first-hand experience, such as writing about rape. She justifies and addresses the criticism by stating that her idea of representation is to serve her work, through the reclamation of women’s voices. She believes in talking about women’s atrocious and horrible societal situation by giving voice to the voiceless. Her work can be considered as a “space” for the subaltern’s protesting voice. Connecting this point to Spivak’s theory, we may consider the example of *Sati*. If there is no “space from which the sexed subaltern can speak,” only the subaltern who has experienced subalternity can represent herself. A question might arise here regarding Spivak’s representation of *Sati* in her essay. What is the role of Spivak in defining *Sati*? How accurately does Spivak represent *Sati*, since Spivak has no experience of being in *Sati*’s shoes. Thus, if Spivak can represent *Sati* in her essay as a literary figure, other writers and poets like Doshi lend their voices to subalterns who are no longer a part of this world. If Spivak has created a space in her essay for the Subaltern *Sati*, then it is reasonable to say that

a poem like “*Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods*” can also create space for the dead subalterns. Thus, Spivak’s voice for *Sati* contradicts her idea that subaltern women cannot be heard. Spivak’s subalternity questions the subaltern’s ability to speak “for her,” suggesting or concluding that they cannot talk. Is this her attempt as an “intellectual to be benevolent or progressive that ends up silencing the subalterns?” Spivak believes that if someone lends her voice to speak her stories, then that cannot escape “Othering.” After critically analyzing it, one can deduce that Spivak is making a solid and non-negotiable claim regarding the oppressed subaltern even though Spivak is not a subaltern who is speaking “for herself.” Thus, Spivak can speak or lend voice to all the subalterns and claim that they cannot talk or be heard. Therefore, it is essential to accept and appreciate the attempts made by artists like Doshi to reclaim the voices of the dead subalterns. In this case, the subaltern Doshi is a voice to the dead subaltern.

In her poem, Doshi projects through her narrative resistance and battle against the inhuman torture of rape

Girls are coming out of the wood, lifting (13)
 Their broken legs high, leaking secrets (14)
 From unfastened thighs, all the lies (15)
 Whispered by strangers and swimming (16)
 Coaches and uncles, especially uncles (17)

These lines exhibit haunting visions of the wronged, raped, and murdered women who are victims of torture and violence. As indicated, they are resurrected to confront society's gendered violence. The poignancy of Doshi’s poem is that it can serve as a tool against the counter offense and resistance, foreshadowing the nexus of Spivak’s gendered subalternity. She has placed the women or girls in the forefront, giving them a significant part and role in the narrative in which they are challenging, revolting, and protesting against male violence. The patriarchal discourse or approach is deconstructed by Doshi’s portrayal of the dead victims of the brutality and inhumanity of men

Wrapped in cloaks and hoods, (2)
 Carrying iron bars and candles (3)
 And a multitude of scars,(4)
 Collected on acres of premature grass and (5)
 City buses, in temples and bars. (6)

The tides of rage and anger indicate that the dead subaltern women refuse to give in and accept the patriarchal oppression and violence. The poem exhibits a brave attempt to reclaim the voices of subalterns who had lost their lives to male oppression and violence. However, such literary pieces' significance lies in lending the voices to the subalterns who were not allowed to speak for themselves. However, it does not mean that the traditional male dominance and violence won in silencing the subaltern. Instead, they provided scope for literary figures like Doshi, who, even after their deaths, attempted to reclaim their voices to the extent that a male-dominated society and mindset cannot easily accommodate.

Even those girls found naked in ditches and wells/ those forgotten in neglected attics and buried on river like sediments have crawled their way out (Doshi, 2017, lines 26-30). The death of the subalterns should serve as an example to at least the static social hierarchy and to think beyond the patriarchal narrative. Spivak's claim about the impossibility of the subalterns being heard is discouraging because if the subaltern is raped and dead, she is not left with an agency to voice her stories. There is a dire need for an agency that can help reclaim their voices and lash out at the binary of the gender hierarchy. Doshi skilfully narrates, challenges, and protests the oppression the female subalterns face in the patriarchal society. Normally, subalterns who are victims of rape surrender against men; however, Doshi reclaimed the protesting voices of the dead rape victims who have decided to "come out of the woods" protest and disregard the male notions of society.

I am a Woman in India - Chandni Singh:

In addition to the dead subaltern, numerous women are subjected to harassment that goes unnoticed or unattended by society. From their homes to different outdoor places, women experience harassment about which they are forced to stay silent by patriarchal agents. Mishra et al. (2022) have claimed that "silencing the voice of women at home or outside has been the practice of patriarchal society irrespective of caste, color, creed, or community all over the world." The root cause of such harassment lies in the traditional gender roles imposed by our culture. In such cases, the subaltern woman is repeatedly silenced by close acquaintances under the emotional influence of honor and prestige of the family or by force or power of the dominant patriarchal ideology. Such repressed voices must be reclaimed through different modes. One such role of reclaiming the voices of Subaltern women is done through poems of protest, resistance, and empowerment. Like Tishani Doshi, Chandni Singh also supports the subaltern through her poems against the day-to-day harassment and abuse of the Subaltern women in India. Singh's poem titled "I am a Woman in India" is a poignant account of the harassment faced by women in India.

I have my breast fondled/ not by a lover/ but by strangers on a bus (2-4).

I have had penises flashed at me/ whose owner I know not (9-10).

They only come with a pair of lust-laced eyes and a soulless smile (11-12)

The above lines from the poem display the heartfelt account of the women harassed and besieged by strangers as they step out of their homes for their daily routine. The experience has been so common that it engulfed them to the extent that they "have lost count/ there are too many to fight" (24-25). This line exhibits the harrowing experiences faced by the Subaltern women, who cannot speak and raise their voices due to the patriarchal dominance. Tishani's poem poignantly points towards the reality that these stories of horrendous violations will no longer be kept hidden in ditches and gulches but spread out in open clearings: "Girls are coming out of the woods," "clearing the ground," "to scatter their stories."

Singh also sheds light on the harassers as "crotch-clutching goondas" (23) who are "too many to fight" (25). These lines are a relatable and relevant account of the humiliation the Subaltern

witnesses, as Singh puts it, “every morning.” The mental distress and harm caused by such incidents lead to helplessness and vulnerability. According to Singh (2013):

I may be liberated.
 And educated, but my fire has been doused
 Neither rhetoric nor review can
 bring me solace. (25-28)

These lines best incorporate the gist of a study by Sharma & Sharma (2014), who claim that women of all geographical locations are vulnerable to abuse and harassment. Hence, it is an important problem with a poignant need to address the peripheral women through literature so that their issues and struggles in a male-oriented society get global recognition.

From Spivak’s claim, one cannot simply make the invisible subaltern visible and lend a voice. If the subaltern cannot speak from her space, it is necessary for the ones who can bring the subaltern's message from the peripheries to the central attention of the world.

CONCLUSION

The subalterns cannot speak because their voices and lives have been taken away by patriarchy, male dominance, violence, and inhuman treatment. However, their voices can be reclaimed and brought to attention by literary figures such as Doshi and Singh, who are doing their part in breaking the silence. As claimed by Hopes in her book **If I Could Tell You**, “If you see oppression, violence, injustices, and evil deeds, unzip your silence and uncaring indifference; do something and act against all these unethical instances” (Hopes, 2014). We are detached from the marginalized, depriving us of a more profound and greater understanding of their issues and problems. It is significant to create, produce and promote narratives that generate awareness and empathy for the subaltern. Spivak suggests that subaltern women are as mute as ever and more deeply in the shadows than the others; such literary works can bring a change by breaking their silence and extracting them from the dark shadows and influence of male dominance and violence.

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Altered Notion of Time, Space and Privacy: Teaching in times of the COVID Pandemic

Abstract

Based on an exploratory study, this article centers on teachers' reflections on their experience of online teaching during COVID-19. Revolving around the work versus home distinction, it delineates how the experience of an online classroom whilst being present in the comfort of homes, has if not completely then significantly altered the women's perception of work. It primarily focuses on the binaries of work-leisure and private-public and how these have been affected. The methodology is narrative based, conversational interviews, conducted with female instructors at university level in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, who have had to adapt to online teaching since the start of the pandemic. Women struggled with their private, domestic space being made public via the online class with their cameras and recordings. This was experienced under the backdrop of the cultural, patriarchal values, which altered women's perception of work.

Key words: *Online learning, Co-Vid, work-leisure, public-private*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a life changing experience for individuals across the globe. It has created circumstances in which the world had to instantly adapt to avoiding the public space and the risks that came with it. Upon realizing that the need of the hour is adjustment, rather than avoidance, different professional spheres adopted varied adaptation strategies to strike a balance between work-home life, with most of the world's workforce being quarantined. In the education sector, this meant that the universities in the developing world, which had previously viewed electronic media as an alternative to studying, were forced to depend on the virtual space to continue their job of educating the youth. As of July 2020, 98.6% of the children and youth in 200 countries were affected by the pandemic (United Nations, 2020) where homeschooling and virtual classrooms became the need of the hour to make learning possible (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Considering the fact that the education sector is the base for socio-economic growth, without the transformation of teachers and their adaptability, the quality of education would be at risk (Memon et al., 2010). However, this conversion of the classroom to virtual space was not without its challenges, especially for a country like Pakistan, where technology itself is a privilege.

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While e-learning tools have played a vital role all across the world during this pandemic, facilitating student learning, (Subedi et al., 2020) it proved to be a challenge in the developing countries. Identification of these challenges with regard to the students relate to the accessibility, flexibility, affordability, life-long learning and educational policy (Murgatrottd, 2020). However, challenges faced by teachers in the same environment have not been highlighted as often. Teachers are the most critical component of any education system and their performance is dependent on the management structures and environment within which they are required to perform their roles (Memon, 2007). With both being drastically changed with the advent of COVID, this led to teachers struggling to adapt to their changing teaching environment. Apart from the technical issues faced, there were also some cultural and personal issues, which have been seldom talked about or analyzed.

This article focuses specifically on women in the education sector, working as lecturers in universities, whose perception of work was altered as a result of mandatory online teaching during the Co-Vid pandemic. Focusing on reflections of these women, the article carries out a thematic analysis under the domains of space, privacy and time, analyzing how within these domains, the binaries of public-private and work-leisure were blurred.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early in 2020 with the onset of pandemic, similar to other spheres of life, the education sector was hit hard. COVID 19 was officially declared by WHO as a pandemic in March 2020. And with the pandemic getting out of control the decision to shift education to online mode was taken across the globe; a much needed yet ad hoc decision leading to unplanned transition. The entire education system was to be shifted online irrespective of grade, degree and type of education. However, given the inadequacies and incompetence of the system; this shift was neither swift nor efficient. Risk involved with change can be temporary if the change is a step towards sound strategic goals and incremental improvement (McNeill, 2011). However, in this case, faculty at universities, who already were struggling with existing issues within the traditional education system, were now pressed with new issues (Houlden and Veletsianos 2020).

Virtual Education

Virtual Education is a learning/teaching process derived from the characteristics of distance education. It makes the teaching resources available to the learners on an individual study basis (Morris, 1997). It is an innovative instructional paradigm that is supported by technologies that assist in instructions, like Learning Management System, Youtube and Video Conferences (Hussain, 2012). The general understanding is that virtual education is intelligent learning, which aids in an effective teaching and learning process (Ghorbani, 2012). With the new system of remote/digital/online learning, which was already known as virtual education, new issues emerged on a daily basis. These were not limited to the lesser developed countries, but extended to the “developed” world. Blume’s extensive study on the issues faced by teachers in Germany with reference to digital learning is insightful (Blume: 2020). In Pakistan, the Higher Education Commission, in order to avoid any educational loss of students, instructed the universities to shift online. Especially since virtual education itself is an emerging concept, the general public’s knowledge is limited to the formal education system (Hussain, 2007) which

means that such a massive shift in the entire education system in a developing country like Pakistan posed serious challenges, argues Mahmood (2020). Virtual education assists in the provision of educational activities 24/7, at any time and at any place. Students may make convenient study schedules according to their own time and place, without disruption in the daily routines (Hussain et al., 2019). Not only do the learners have the opportunity to attend the lectures but also interact with their tutors through technologies that are highly interactive (Kearsley, 2000). Even before the pandemic, the general consensus was that virtual education is student-oriented rather than instructor driven approach in a classroom (Dastijerdi, 2013) where the online learning programs and their creation was more time consuming and faculty who design them had to be compensated (Siddique, 2013). However, with virtual education the need of the hour, it was required of the instructors to adapt and teach in a virtual environment.

Virtual Education and Online Teaching

One of the major issues faced within a virtual environment was the lack of skills, since online teaching requires a special skill set. Online teaching and learning imply a certain pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), mainly related to designing and organizing for better learning experiences and creating distinctive learning environments, with the help of digital technologies (Rapanta, C., Botturi, L., Goodyear, P. *et al.*: 2020) which is considerably different from the customary, mainstream form of learning. A whole new process of learning new forms of teaching and unlearning or revisiting traditional forms was experienced by the faculty. Technology requires teachers to take more of a facilitator's role, rather than an authoritative one, which conflicts with traditional teaching methods. Many online guides and manuals appeared advising teachers on the dos and don'ts of online teaching (Bates 2020, Gewin, 2020). Much of this advice focuses on tools and materials that teachers can use to replace their face-to-face classes. In addition, teachers have been offered hundreds of 'tips and tricks', mostly without the contextualizing knowledge needed to judge which teaching tactic is likely to work where (Rapanta, C., Botturi, L., Goodyear, P. *et al.*: 2020) The varied ways this new form of teaching affected individuals led to a change in the habitat of the teachers; habitat being "the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them' (Wacquant 2005). The change in habits and habitat of the faculty's experiences of online teaching is the focus of this article.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this research was within the qualitative paradigm, where the data aided in understanding the concepts and put emphasis on the voices of the participants. The focus was on narratives, which would allow the experiences of the respondents to take center stage. The data collection methods used were conversational, unstructured and in-depth interviews, and a purposive sampling method was used to identify the respondents. For the purpose of the research, 20 respondents were interviewed from public and private universities in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Thematic data analysis was carried out in order to identify, analyze and interpret common themes emerging from the qualitative data acquired.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The narratives of the respondents were analyzed, and three domains were identified, which signified the work versus home distinction, systematically providing an understanding of the teachers' perception of work during online teaching.

Space

The first domain identified was that of space, which was largely associated with the teachers ensuring that they transform their domestic space into some semblance of professional space on the camera, to lend authority to their presence on the screen. To achieve this, almost all of the respondents stated that they designated a specific place in their homes to take their classes. According to a female respondent:

"I did designate a spot in my house, it was my drawing room so it was a secluded corner so it helped me a lot especially since my classes were early in the morning. I basically created a space for myself which was completely quiet, till the afternoon at least."

The emphasis here is on the designated space being in the drawing room, which is the only room in one's house which serves the purpose of accommodating strangers or guests. The choice of this room, for the respondent, was symbolic of her not letting the students into her domestic space i.e. her bedroom or lounge. It was her attempt to keep this breach of her domestic space in control. This was partially also because she wished for complete silence during her class. This is associated with her need to ensure authority while taking the class because lack of control over background noise relinquishes it. This is exemplified by another respondent:

"It (online class) never gave the environment of a classroom because of the house chores going on around the house, presence of children, even birds chirping outside the window. When your phone vibrates, it distracts you because you wonder who is calling, since you are at home and in the middle of the domestic space."

The respondent, in clearly defining it as her domestic space, puts emphasis on the fact that it is filled with distractions in the shape of house chores, children and even chirping of birds. Psychologically, when one is physically present at home, even something as simple as a phone call can be a distraction. The chirping of birds may be seen as something mundane, but another respondent narrated an experience that says otherwise:

"When I started taking the online classes, I was very conscious of any loud noise around me that would disrupt the lecture on my end. Once, I was speaking and two crows started crowing right outside my window. They were so loud that I had to stop talking. I could see some of the students smiling, and I had difficulty retaining my authority and the thread of my lecture."

From this experience, we can extrapolate that any kind of noise - even one that is outside the teacher's control - jeopardized their semblance of a professional space within their domestic space, and in turn, their authority. This is the reason why most of the teachers made it a priority to separate their domestic and professional space by assigning allocated spaces for themselves. This is further explained by another respondent:

“I didn’t want to take the class from my bed. Chair seems a bit more action oriented. The desk with its chair, gave resemblance to a classroom. It was comfortable because I had my tea and biscuits with me on the side. The table was divided: space for my notes, for my laptop, and for my snacks. I looked forward to taking a class from the table then.”

According to this respondent, she further divided her table, on which she took her classes, into separate allocated spaces: for notes, for laptop and for snacks. This also gave her the control over this neutral space that she had designated to act as her class room. Therefore, when the boundaries were blurred within her sense of space, she dealt with it by controlling the neutral space assigned within her domestic space.

In the blurring of boundaries between domestic and work space, it was also evident that the teachers didn’t want to let their students view their domestic space via the camera. They stated:

“I was not comfortable with switching the camera on, because it was like I was allowing my students inside my home. Even in university, I have office timings to keep boundaries. Online teaching threatened this.”

“In the beginning, we (students and I) made a Facebook group, where the course content was shared. I normally wouldn’t have done that (interacted with my students on a social media platform) because they would be able to view my personal profile.”

With specified work timings, teachers maintained boundaries with the students even in university. This was threatened when the domestic space and professional spaces were blended together and their online personal presence clashed with their professional presence as a teacher. With this, the domain of space was also intertwined with the domain of privacy, because personal presence online and domestic space are built on the premise of privacy, which was invaded when the boundaries between the teacher and students were tested with the invasion of personal space. Closely linked are issues specific to women working in the public sphere within a patriarchal system. For one respondent, who always found it difficult to convince her family that her going for work is similar to her husband’s job. And while the latter gets acknowledged and appreciated for contributing to his family by “the sweat of his brow”, the former’s work in the public space is mostly interpreted as her leisure time and/or time away from her primary responsibilities, that is, motherhood. However, she received support from other members of the joint family in the form of child care. With this new system of “work from home” this support was lost.

“I hope that normalcy resumes soon and I am able to go back to the office for work. Even if I am taking a lecture and no matter the innumerable repeated requests for private space and time during lecture hours; if my boy is crying he is brought straight to my room. The mother has to take care of the child, not grandmother, not aunt, not even father; only the mother! What can one do! It is embarrassing. And I feel guilty for not being able to give due attention to both: my work and my children.”

This lack of familial support for women’s professional work within the domestic space is a complaint that resonated in many interviews that we conducted. Even the husbands who were

faced with similar issues under the current pandemic, failed to show the concern that women had when their husband was working. Another respondent narrated satirically that her husband's "urge to use the restroom" during her lecture hours is much higher than compared to any other hour during the day. She soon revised and said or he would just come to the room where she was working for one or the other task that could have waited. Whether embarrassingly or satirically, the respondent pointed to lack of support from the family as a major issue. The findings indicate that there was a distinction between personal and professional or neutral space within the homes and the teachers attempted to maintain control and authority by reducing external elements like noise, division of neutral space to suit their needs, and in many instances, tried to keep the professional space separate when the boundaries with students were blurred by the use of electronic media for interaction.

Privacy

In the domain of privacy, the findings again indicate the distinction between domestic and professional privacy - both concepts emerging from the narratives of the respondents. As mentioned above, privacy was intertwined with the concept of space and how, in spite of specified allocation of space within their homes, the teachers struggled to retain the element of privacy. According to a respondent (who is also a mother):

"I had my own bedroom designated for the class. I think if you have kids around, it's difficult to make them understand that their mother is taking a class and they have to be quiet. So I had to mute the microphone whenever my child came into the room. Because I could not lock the bedroom while at home."

Here, there is a need to investigate the concept of 'domestic privacy', which is mostly faced by female teachers when taking an online class in their homes. Since they were also simultaneously taking on their roles as mothers, in the vicinity of their domestic space: the boundary between work and home was blurred because of their presence in their homes. Since the teacher is the one delivering the lecture, they have to keep their microphone unmuted. This means that any sound or disruption in the background, whether it's their children or other voices in their domestic sphere, would instantly be relayed to their students. Another respondent's experience added to this:

"Initially, the department notified that all the teachers and students have to turn on their cameras and keep the microphones unmuted. With time, they realized that they need to allow for muting the microphone because there are other people in the house as well and if you are sitting in a communal space, then people will be talking in the background."

In the early days of adaptation to online teaching, there were a lot of rules and regulations set, especially for the teachers, by the universities' administrations. The unmuted of microphones and video cameras being on in the duration of the lectures was one of these. As the respondent noted, this was not practical, mainly due to the concept of 'domestic privacy' at both ends: one has only so much control over other people in the house. One respondent said with a laugh:

“Once I was taking my class and I had explicitly told my husband that I was not to be disturbed. He forgot and barged in the room, asking me where I had kept his socks. This was very embarrassing for me.”

This incident demonstrates how invasion of domestic privacy can also threaten the authority of the teacher even in a virtual classroom, because this gives the students an opportunity to make them the subject of amusement. The embarrassment felt would also throw the teacher off and would have affected the quality of the lecture. Other teachers opined that while they were comfortable with the video cameras being turned on, what they were not comfortable with was the recording of the lectures. The recordings were intended to provide accountability to both teachers and students, and a way for absentees to catch up to the delivered lectures at their own time. For the teachers, however, this led to a higher level of difficulty when trying to maintain their domestic privacy:

“Since the lecture was being recorded, it was also recording what I said in the middle of the lecture to my son, who interrupted sometimes. I was very conscious of when to mute and remember to unmute. It was very difficult.”

Due to the recorded lectures, the teachers were conscious of the fact that any interruptions during their lecture were being cemented in the virtual space and could be revisited by the students or the administration at any time. Thus, not only was it out of their control because of the reversal of spaces, this invasion of their domestic privacy was also being documented so the binary of public-private was reversed. The mandatory recording is also linked to the concept of ‘professional privacy’:

“I felt comfortable with my video on, only for the purpose of effective content delivery with non-verbal gestures. However, the issue was that it was being recorded so the usual jokes that I tell in the classroom or personal narratives, I stopped telling those. This affected my relatability with the students and led to boring lectures.”

When professional privacy was breached, this impacted the quality of the lectures delivered by the teachers because they were conscious of the fact that they were being recorded. According to the respondents, the notion of professional privacy also had to be altered because of the overlapping of communication via media:

“I usually don’t share my personal number with anyone except the class representative. However, with online teaching, we were required to make Whatsapp Groups for the class so that everyone could keep up to date. The students then thought they could contact me personally, at any time. My phone number entered my professional space, which I was not comfortable with.”

According to the findings, the boundaries of private and professional were blurred with the advent of online teaching. What was ‘need of the hour’ became essential, while the teacher’s professional privacy took a back seat. Here, the domain of privacy intertwined with the domain of time, because with the personal number at students’ disposal, they were able to message/call

the teachers at any time of the day. For the students, this was not viewed as unethical because their classroom and its teacher existed in the virtual arena and they felt they were at liberty to contact them. However, for the teachers, this was a breach in professional privacy and blurring of the lines when it came to determining what time their ‘work’ ended and personal life started.

Time

The perception of time can be analyzed not only in terms of the work versus leisure binary, as stated previously, but also in terms of being conscious of the class time and punctuality. One of the respondents related her punctuality and efficiency in delivering the lecture to unforeseen circumstances in her domestic space which were out of her control:

“If there was a power outage, then we had to be sure that we had some backup power like UPS or generator. So we had to be very conscious of the time of the class and whether it would be disrupted suddenly.”

Another respondent added:

“I requested the administration that my classes be shifted to early in the morning so that I could ensure that my child and husband were asleep. It was so difficult because they were also home due to Co-Vid so I had to schedule everything around when I would be alone.”

Therefore, since the domestic space rife with unforeseen elements that would disrupt their class, the teachers had to be conscious of taking their class at a time when they would be disturbed the least: whether it was due to power outage or family members. However, this was also very complicated because the students were far from accommodating:

“Delivering the lecture was also a challenge because students were not punctual in waking up in the morning (my class was at 8.30 am) and it was very annoying and distracting for the teacher to wait until the entire class woke up and was online, to start the lecture.”

Due to lack of punctuality by the students, precious time was wasted once the class started. The balancing of authority versus cooperation became difficult because according to the respondents, one could not ascertain who was actually having connectivity issues and who was lying, so they had to accommodate the lack of punctuality. According to a respondent:

“Honestly, with so many students, it was difficult to keep track of who was still in the meeting and who was not. After some time, I stopped calling them out because it was distracting and a waste of time.”

Students had to be allowed to ‘leave’ the class early, because of yet again, blurring of the boundaries between what was acceptable in a virtual space, versus in a physical classroom. Even if the students left without asking for permission from the teacher, it had to be acceptable for the latter. This was also a challenge for authority and control which had to be relinquished at a certain level. It can be seen, from the analysis of findings, how the perception of work was altered in the intertwined domains of space, privacy and time. The blurring of boundaries between domestic space and professional space led to the teachers attempting some form of

control by trying to reduce external disruptive elements and trying to have an allocated professional space within their domestic space. However, with the invasion of their personal/domestic space, they also experienced invasion of their domestic privacy, which was made more challenging with the mandatory recording of lectures. The professional privacy was similarly threatened with the open communication channels, whereby the boundaries between work timings and leisure timings blurred significantly. The teachers experienced challenges to their authority and control in all the arenas and were seen to be struggling with this altered notion of interaction with the students.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we talk about reversals: the sense of space, time and privacy were reversed, as reflected in the experiences of the teachers, where the work versus home and public versus private distinction was lost in the blurring of boundaries between domestic and professional space, domestic and professional privacy and work vs leisure time. The adaptation to these reversals required from the teachers not only relevant skills, but also relinquishing of authority and control to a certain extent. The findings and their analysis indicate how the binaries of work-leisure and private-public have been affected in the female teachers' experience of taking online classes during the Co-Vid pandemic. The themes that emerge center around control, authority and the cultural context, ranging from trying to maintain authority by controlling the neutral space from where they took their classes, to difficulty in maintaining domestic and professional privacy in the face of recording of lectures to issues of punctuality and domestic life disrupting class time. The women's perception of work was altered in the context of their domestic space and privacy being invaded by their work. They struggled with their private, domestic space being made public via the online class with their cameras and recordings. This was also experienced under the backdrop of the cultural, patriarchal values where the women were expected to also carry out their roles of mothers and wives in lieu of their presence within the domestic space, regardless of whether they were working or not. In identification of the three domains, we have attempted to systematically analyze how the boundaries between private-public and work-leisure have been blurred but we also acknowledge the fact these three domains are also intertwined with each other. Further research on each domain would be fruitful in investigating how online teaching has changed women's perception of work.

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Behind Closed Doors: Women Experiencing Rising Family Violence Amidst COVID-19 Lockdown In Ghana

Abstract

This study examined family violence cases during the coronavirus lockdown in Ghana. The study adopted an explanatory design and gathered quantitative data using a questionnaire from 159 women who lived with their spouses or intimate partners. The study also conducted focus group discussions to gather qualitative data. Results showed that 41% of respondents suffered sexual violence, 27% experienced psychological violence and 32% experienced to physical violence. The finding showed that social isolation, loss of jobs, and boredom, which are consequences of lockdown, breed frustration in men, expressed through abusive behaviors towards women. The study recommended strengthening research and planning on novel diseases, providing temporary living arrangements for victims and those at risk of family violence, mechanisms for reporting suspected and actual abuse, and enforcement of pandemic surveillance and emergency preparedness plan. The study concluded with the optimism that the findings would stimulate further research on pandemic management and family violence.

Key Words: COVID-19, lockdown, abuse, family violence, intimate partner

INTRODUCTION

The novel coronavirus disease, COVID-19, first detected in Wuhan, China, is an infection with severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2) that leads to febrile illness with respiratory symptoms. This disease is caused by a novel coronavirus known as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2) Ashtuti (2020). This novel disease was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020 (Ashtuti, 2020) because the disease was causing enormous havoc due to its novel nature. The damage caused by the disease could be observed in the scale and rate of infection and related death. The world urgently needed to study this unknown virus and find a solution. As a result, national governments resorted to total or partial lockdowns, curfews and mass quarantines, depending on their situations, as a strategy to control the spread of the virus. In Ghana, refusal to comply with government directives, mainly lockdowns, could attract court fines and prison sentences. These measures were believed to be essential to stop the further spread of the coronavirus although they ultimately proved ineffective. But for women in abusive relationships, although purported to be essential for staying alive, these measures had the knock-on effect of exposing them to another threat to their lives. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, violence against women and girls has been reported to be on the rise.

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These women were exposed to and trapped with their abusive partners throughout the lockdown. For such vulnerable women, more time spent at home with abusive partners most likely meant enduring mistreatment of different kinds from their perpetrators. The UN women note that emerging data and reports from those on the front lines show increases in various types of violence against women and girls during the COVID-19 lockdown, predominantly domestic violence (UN Women 2020).

Additionally, it is estimated that during the COVID-19 global lockdowns, one in three women worldwide experienced physical or sexual violence, primarily by an intimate partner (UN Women, 2020). The Secretary-General further warned that while many more people were told to stay at home, the threat loomed largest for some. Women, in particular, suffered different forms of domestic abuse and violence within the walls of their homes. Instead of being a haven, the home environment became a place of violence, with victims and perpetrators living under the same roof. The upsurge in domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic reflects what usually happens during global pandemics. Some authors have established that family violence takes an upward turn during pandemics due to more exposure to exploitative and toxic behaviors, availability of few support options, economic stress, and instability resulting from disaster (Peterman et al. 2020). Family violence refers to all actions and attitudes that constitute threatening or violent behaviors among people within a family or a family-like relationship (Peterman et al., 2020: Van Gelder et al., 2020). These violent behaviours may be physical, sexual, psychological or economic, including child abuse and intimate partner violence (Peterman et al., 2020: Van Gelder et al., 2020).

For this study, family violence refers to all forms of violent behaviors women suffered at the hands of male persons with whom they live together within the context of a marriage or a marriage-like relationship. This kind of family violence could include the use of force and power, either actual or threatened by an intimate partner. It is also recognized that using such force and control can lead to deprivation, harm and, in some cases, death. The study adopts the definition of family violence by Alpert et al. (1997) to include intentional intimidation, physical or sexual abuse, and battering by a family member. Since the beginning of quarantines and lockdowns resulting from the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, reports of violence against women have increased globally, perpetrated mainly by intimate partners. This paper examined how the COVID-19 lockdown in Ghana influenced family violence, the causes, and the implications for future pandemics and other emergencies. In the course of the study, it emerged that respondents were unwilling to talk about their experiences with family violence for two reasons. Firstly, respondents perceived such information as sensitive, and secondly, they preferred to conform to society's expectations of couples to act happy and keep all abusive issues secret. The author assured respondents about confidentiality and anonymity and explained to them that they did not have to provide their names or any other information which could lead or point to anyone else either directly or indirectly.

Problem statement

The coronavirus pandemic compelled governments to institute mechanisms to halt the further spread and transmission of the virus and keep their citizens safe. Such mechanisms included

total or partial lockdowns of countries. Consequently, citizens were required to stay in their homes and not mingle with those not members of their households.

Other researchers have found that mechanisms resulted in the increased perpetuation of violence against women within the confines of their homes, mainly by an intimate partner.

Although family violence increased during the COVID-19 lockdowns, there is limited or no information on the forms of violence and why they occurred. Using data from Ghana, this research article sought to find out the following:

- the forms of family violence that occurred during the COVID-19 lockdown in Ghana
- the causes of such violence and;
- Implications for future pandemics and other emergencies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Current understanding of the emergence of COVID-19 is limited. However, Yee et al. (2020) have indicated that this novel coronavirus which causes an acute illness with severe symptoms, was isolated in Wuhan, Hubei province in China. This unknown virus is the seventh identified human coronavirus Zhu et al. (2020). The genetic composition of this virus resembles the 2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and the 2012 Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (Zhu et al. 2020). The novel coronavirus COVID-19 can be transmitted among humans in several ways (Ahmad et al., 2020).

Firstly, human-to-human transmission of the novel coronavirus occurs through direct contact, aerosols (World Health Organization 2020) and droplets generated through sneezing, coughing and speaking (Singhal, 2020). Secondly, the virus spreads through asymptomatic patients or during incubation (Singhal, 2020). Based on this information and in the wake of the United Nations declaring COVID-19 a global pandemic, national governments resorted to partial or total lockdowns as one of the ways of restricting the human-to-human contact that facilitate the spread of the virus by both symptomatic and asymptomatic patients.

While this approach was designed to be in reducing the virus's global spread, it created unanticipated threats and challenges. In the wake of these lockdowns, news headlines began to report increasing global incidences and cases of family violence against women in different parts of the world. In the Middle East and North Africa, Tunisia's Women's Affairs Minister sounded the alarm on the increasing number of domestic violence cases during the coronavirus lockdown, stating that existing numbers have increased fivefold (Shahatit 2020). In Turkey, women's rights activists such as the 'We Will Stop Femicide Platform' reported that there had been more family violence cases in the country since the beginning of the lockdown (Unker & Bellut 2020). This is shown in the significant increase in people calling their domestic violence hotlines (Unker & Bellut, 2020). Lebanon recorded a 20% increase in family violence cases after the government instituted lockdown measures in March 2020. Europe was not left out as France's Secretary of State for Gender Equality revealed that reports on family violence during the lockdown increased by 32% countrywide and 36% in Paris alone (EURACTIV Network 2020). In Australia, a survey on domestic violence using frontline workers as respondents showed that 40% of the workers reported increases in the request for help, and 70% reported increases in the complexity of cases (Lattouf 2020).

Scholars have attempted to establish the relationship between family violence and lockdowns resulting from global pandemics. Firstly, Van Gelder et al. (2020) explains that social isolation measures implemented globally to slow down the rate of infections exacerbated the personal and collective vulnerabilities of people already living in volatile situations for family violence in their homes. Data from countries such as Australia, Brazil, China and the United States shows increases in intimate partner, women, and children violence due to quarantines and isolation (Campbell 2020; Peterman et al. 2020; Van Gelder et al. 2020). This study notes that social isolation and quarantines, which required families to remain in their homes, created the atmosphere for existing abusive relationships to explode by constantly bringing abusers and the abused in close contact without the opportunity for the abused to seek help and support. Hence the increase in family violence and domestic violence figures globally. Secondly, economic stressors emanating from the loss of jobs during the pandemic paired with potentially harmful coping strategies can work together and lead to or cause family violence van Gelder et al., (2020). The study notes that economic stressors, the adverse psychological effects of isolation and quarantines, and harmful coping mechanisms such as excessive drinking and smoking could result in new family violence cases or increases in homes where family violence already occurs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study sites

The study was conducted in Ghana's Greater Accra Region and Greater Kumasi areas. The two locations were the most affected areas in Ghana during the COVID-19 pandemic. These two locations were thus the only places in Ghana that went into a total lockdown. The author thus recognizes that the study's objectives would be better achieved if the two most affected lockdown locations shown in figures 1 and 2 were studied.



Figure 1: Map showing the Greater Accra Region

Source: Wikipedia Commons 2022

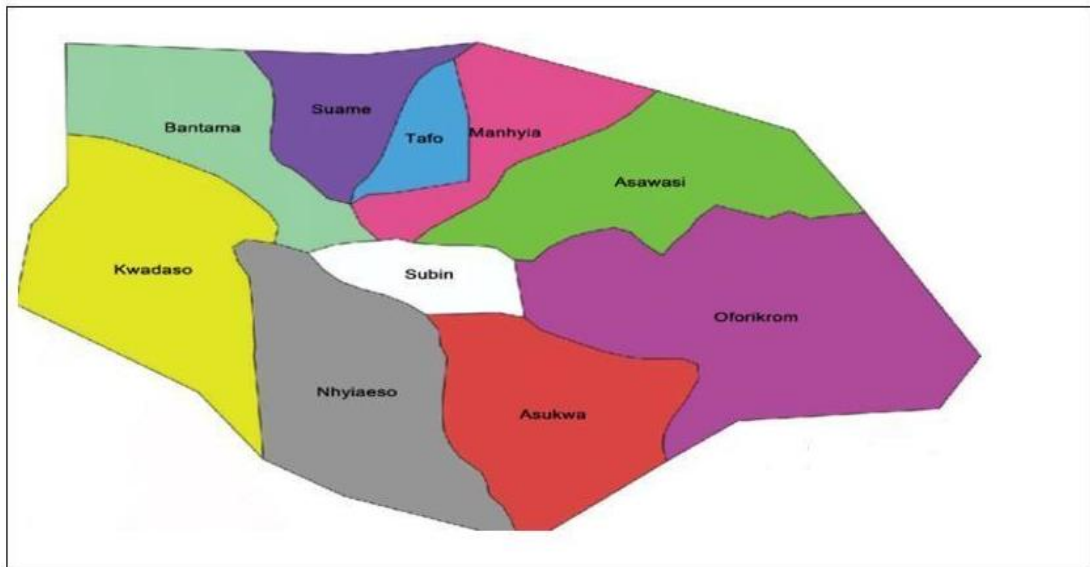


Figure 2: Map showing the Greater Kumasi Area

Source: Otoo et al., 2019

ii. Study design

The study adopted the explanatory approach due to the lack of information on the coronavirus lockdown and its effect on family violence in Ghana. No accessible published evidence was found on the subject of study in comparable situations elsewhere. Consequently, the current study was conducted with as few preconditions as possible, no specific framework for analyzing family violence, and no pre-identified theory tested.

Study instruments

A questionnaire solicited quantitative data from married women regarding their experiences with family violence during the COVID-19 lockdown. Google forms were used to structure the questionnaire. It was sent to platforms of identified women's associations within the greater Kumasi area and Greater Accra region. Specific associations that were purposively selected were:

- Hairdressers and Beauticians association
- Tailors and dressmakers association
- Bankers associations
- Market women's associations
- Teachers Associations

A focus group discussion guide was used to collect data from some members of the identified associations selected through simple random sampling. The discussions generated qualitative data on women's experiences with family violence during the COVID-19 lockdowns and the possible factors that led to their occurrence. Two focus group discussions were held, one at each study site. Focus groups consisted of eight members in each group. Women who participated in the focus group discussions did not participate in the quantitative data collection. Each discussion started with predefined questions to guide the direction and kick-start the

conversation. The discussions did not require the women to respond to specific confidential and sensitive features and aspects of their lives, which may be vital to understanding family violence. Instead, the women mentioned various types and forms of family violence they experienced during the lockdown. They explained the causes of family violence as they saw it in their respective households

Study respondents

The study comprised 159 married women who provided quantitative data on their experiences and incidences of family violence during the coronavirus lockdown in Ghana. A total of 93 women representing 59% of total responses, were from the Greater Kumasi area, while the remaining 66 women, representing 41%, came from the Greater Accra region.

In addition, sixteen women, eight from each study site, participated in the focus group discussion to provide qualitative data for the study.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Respondents included in the study were married or living in a male-headed household, lived in a community affected by the COVID-19 lockdown and were of legal age of 18 years. Unmarried women who did not live in a male-headed household and did not belong to any of the identified associations were excluded. In each group, one association member was identified and trained to guide other members willing to participate in the study to fill out the google forms; 159 women responded to the questionnaire.

Data analysis and presentation

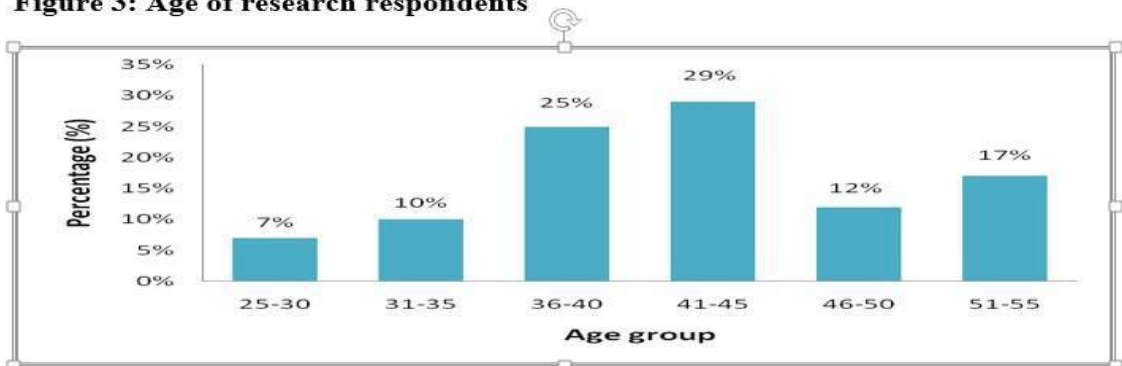
Quantitative data generated from the questionnaire were extracted from the google forms into a spreadsheet and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for analysis. The results were presented using graphs and tables. The qualitative data from the focus group discussions were transcribed, analyzed, and transformed into a concise summary of relevant results and findings using the content analytical steps.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Age and marital status of research respondents

The study interviewed 159 women to establish whether the COVID-19 lockdowns resulted in family violence in their respective households. All the research respondents were between twenty-five (25) and fifty-five (55) years of age. The specific breakdown is shown in figure 3

Figure 3: Age of research respondents



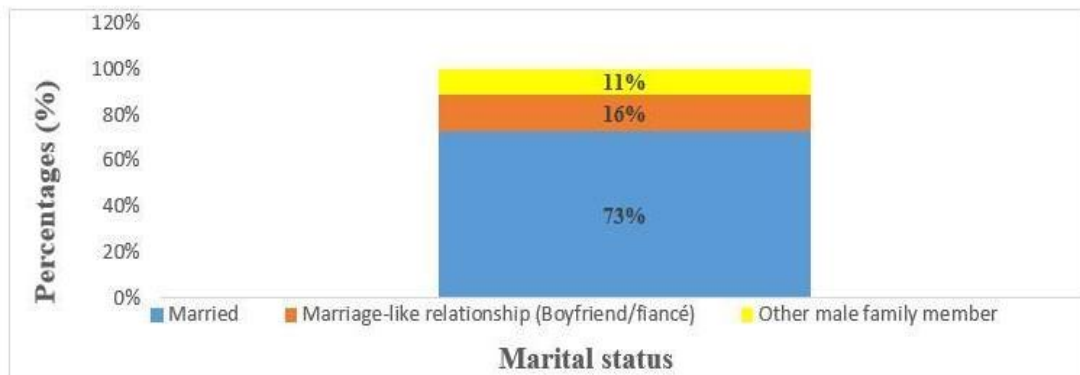
From figure 3, the age range of the women in the study is from 25 years to 55 years. Most women are between the ages of 41-45, representing 29% of the respondents.

This finding differs from those reported by the Domestic Violence Report on Ghana. In that report, the Institute for Development Studies et al. (2016) found that in Ghana, women in the youngest age category (15-19 years) recorded the highest levels of violence: 37.5%. The variation between this study's findings and the domestic violence report can be explained two-fold. First, in this study, the emphasis was on women who are married or in marriage-like relations. Therefore, girls between the ages of 15-19 years could not be included because, by law, girls below 18 years are not permitted to marry in Ghana. Secondly, girls aged 19 years are usually in school and unmarried. Hence the disparity in the findings for girls.

Marital status

The marital status of women is an essential factor in their likelihood of being exposed to or being victims of family violence, as well as the type and form of violence they experience. Some scholars have argued that within the domestic arena, the unequal power relations between men and women give rise to different forms of violence against women (Ozpinar et al. 2016). In traditional patriarchal societies, existing structures provide different cultural hierarchies and other activities for men and women (Gölge et al. 2016), within which violence perpetrated by men against women is perceived as a demonstration and strengthening of the man's position and power as household head. Hence, the study looked at the marital status of respondents. The findings showed that 73% of women were married, 16% were in a marriage-like relationship, and 11% lived with other male family members. This is shown in figure 4.

Figure 4: Marital status of study respondents

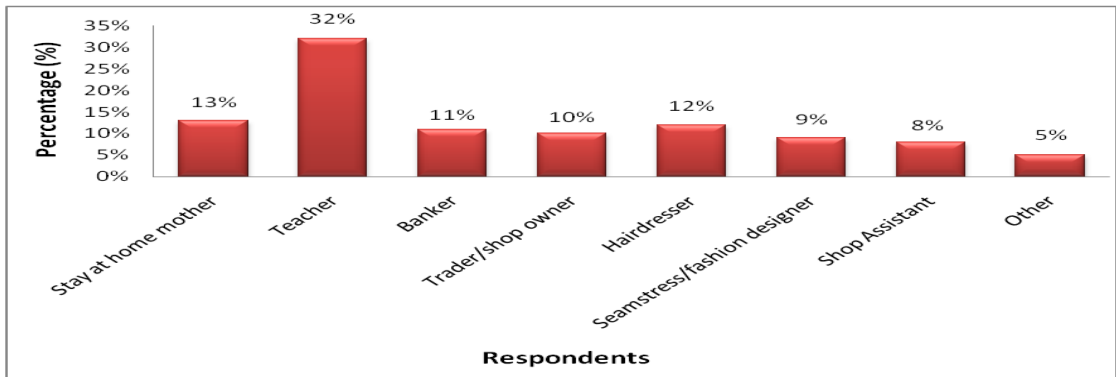


iii. Employment status

A theory put forward by marital dependency theorists to explain the relationship between violence against women and their participation in the labor market is that employed women are less likely to tolerate and be victims of abusive behaviors because they depend less on their partners (Vyas & Watts, 2009; Kalmuss & Straus, 1990; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980; Strube & Barbour, 1983). The resource theory, a recognized framework for studying family power, is based on the understanding that resources consist of anything an individual family member can offer another to help them obtain their needs or attain a goal (Hesse-Biber & Williamson, 1984). Accordingly, the respective member of the family who can offer the highest

resource has the greater power within the family unit (Hesse-Biber, & Williamson, 1984). Thus, the power imbalance created by the imbalance in access and ownership of resources can lead to violence (Villarreal, 2007). The study, therefore, collected and analyzed data on the respondents' employment status. The results showed that respondents participated in the labor market in different capacities. A total of 32% were teachers, and 12% were hairdressers. The remaining respondents worked in other sectors, as depicted in figure 5.

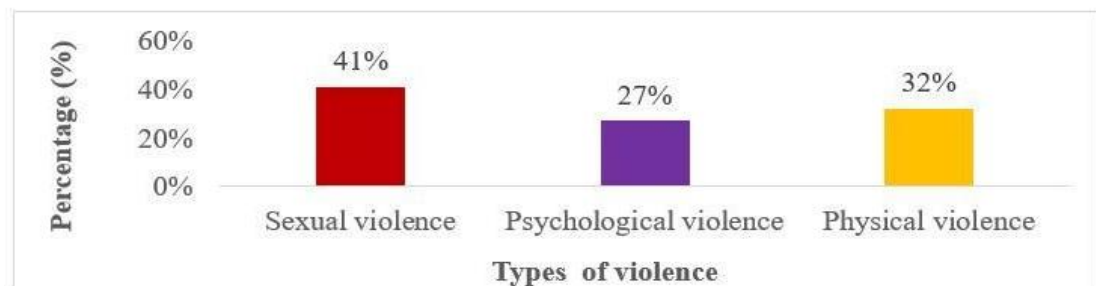
Figure 5: Employment status of study respondents



iv. Types and forms of violence reported by research respondents

The women who responded to the questionnaires reported different forms of family violence per the three primary forms of violence identified by the current study. These were sexual, psychological and physical violence. Respondents were first requested to indicate which identified forms of violence they experienced while under lockdown. The result is shown in figure 6

Figure 6: Types of violence experienced by the research respondents



From figure 6, the leading form of family violence experienced by the study respondents was sexual violence. A total of 41%, representing more than a third of respondents, indicated experiencing sexual violence during the COVID-19 lockdown in Ghana.

Sexual violence is defined as all forms of unwanted sexual acts, such as sexual advances, comments and other coercive actions directed at an intimate partner to forcefully get them to engage in sexual acts perceived to be humiliating or degrading (Burelomova et al., 2018, GarciaMorena et al. 2015). In this non-consensual sexual act, women reported incidences of forced sex and unwanted sexual advances.

The second most common form of family violence experienced by the respondents was physical violence. This accounted for 32% of total responses. Physical violence means using physical force to inflict pain, injury and suffering on victims (Burelomova et al., 2018). The respondents indicated slapping, beating, pushing and shoving as the kind of physical violence they experienced. The study defines psychological violence as all offensive, humiliating, or degrading acts targeted at another, usually verbal, and may include threats, restrictions, ridicule, and withholding of affection (Burelomova et al., 2018). Of the number that responded, 27% indicated psychological violence through threats, insults, restrictions and withholding of affection.

Table 1: Types and forms of abuse suffered by research respondents

No.	Type of abuse	Percentage reported	Form of abuse
1	Sexual violence	41	Forced sex, unwanted sexual advances
3	Physical violence	32	Slapping, beating, pushing, shoving
4	Psychological violence	27	Threats, insults, restrictions, withholding affection

Discussions and explanations regarding why and how family violence occurred

The respondents associated the violence they experienced with three main factors. Firstly, being locked down in the house without possibly going out, meeting friends, and socializing was frustrating. The focus group discussants added that the frustration was compounded by men losing their jobs and being unable to earn incomes to feed their families and perform their gender roles as expected. Hence the helplessness men felt was expressed negatively through the perpetuation of violence towards their spouses or intimate partner within the domestic arena.

Secondly, the women noted that the boredom of idling in the house without being able to do what they usually do makes men more susceptible to abuse. In the case of the lockdowns instituted as mitigation measures against the spread of the coronavirus, men who were caught up found their spouses and intimate partners easy targets for expressing their frustration. Thus, many women experienced violence from their spouses and intimate partners.

Thirdly, closely linked to these factors is that there already existed a tendency for domestic violence, which was never addressed. The focus group discussants reported family structures, the power inequality and imbalance in the family before the COVID-19 pandemic and the

subtle societal acceptance of husbands using violence against their wives to exert power and authority as some of the reasons for the violence they experienced. For these respondents and discussants, the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in Ghana was a catalyst that brought acts of violence, which were already lurking below the surface, waiting for the opportunity to surface. This explanation, however, is in no way justifying the actions of frustrated and helpless men who chose to commit acts of violence when the whole world was already suffering and going through pain for several reasons emerging from the coronavirus pandemic. Neither is it meant to negate the effects and possible lifelong consequences of the acts of violence on victims. Instead, the objective is to draw attention to different forms of human behavior that may arise when people are indefinitely confined to a limited space where they are isolated from the healthy benefits of actual human physical contact, connections and socialization. This explanation also serves as a platform to open a deeper academic discourse on whether strategies such as lockdowns and curfews are effective. These confinement measures, which resulted in the isolation of humans from each other, were deemed workable and sustainable in the face of unforeseen global emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, a study notes that social isolation per se may not present only negative consequences as those already discussed but also lead to some positive effects, such as the need to belong and thus promote the renewal of social connections.

What are the implications of the study's findings for future pandemics?

Based on the discussions above, the study participants deliberated on the implications of findings for future pandemics. These implications are perceived as critical ingredients for preparing and mitigating the effects of future pandemics whenever they occur.

i. Implications for planning and research

Planners and researchers have always stressed that family violence could be prevented or dealt with because the causes are known and well-established. Of course, no one could have predicted the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the toll and disruption it brought to the global population. Perhaps this is a wake-up call for stakeholders, including governments and gender advocates, on the need to look beyond what is known on the subject of family violence towards what is still unknown. Thus, the need to widen the scope of the studies, research and discussions on family violence at the local and national levels. This requires investments in financial, human capital and infrastructure suitable for developing, managing and maintaining robust research at all operational levels. Such research work requires a collaborative approach to encourage bridging the gap between researchers, industry and practitioners.

ii. Implications for the provision of alternative and temporary living facilities for victims and those at risk

The overwhelming need to create different avenues for victims of domestic violence to report and receive the coronavirus pandemic and the accompanying lockdowns have adequately evidenced assistance. In some countries, dedicated hotline numbers were available to receive calls from victims. But the limitations to this strategy arise if women have no access to secure telephone lines or private call time. For these reasons, the study anticipates the need for institutions responsible for dealing with family violence issues, such as the Domestic Violence

and Victims Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service, to embark on house-to-house visits to ascertain for themselves and gather firsthand information on reports and suspected cases of domestic violence during the coronavirus lockdowns and provide the necessary support and interventions. Again, available shelters for domestic violence victims should continue to operate during the pandemic. Indeed, these shelters need to be expanded to accommodate new victims until remedial action is taken and they can safely return home. Inevitably, this calls for collective action between government, the private sector and individuals, and appropriate personnel and organizations resourcing.

iii. Implications for the provision of alternative modes for reporting actual or suspected violent cases

In recent times, the fast growth rate and access to telecommunication services and devices, including their use for different purposes, indicate how lives have changed. Telecommunication devices are now being used for activities such as accessing banking services and organizing meetings. More people have access to these devices, such as mobile phones and computers. The research notes that with such devices within reach, they could be used to report abuse if efficient hotlines are made available. With this approach, family violence victims could rely on such devices to call for reliable support and help in the case of unforeseen emergencies and pandemics. This implies that information on hotline numbers to call should work effectively and efficiently. Monitoring existing vulnerable and volatile situations during emergencies will help reduce the incidence of family violence during pandemics and other emergencies. This requires a database of such vulnerable victims even before the onset of emergencies.

iv. Implications for surveillance and emergency preparedness

Let's suppose that COVID-19 has taught the world many lessons. In that case, it has brought the need for continuous and uninterrupted systems that look for ongoing patterns of disease occurrence and the potential for developing novel diseases. Surveillance is also necessary to ensure that up-to-date and informative disease control mechanisms, prevention and containment strategies are available to provide real-time information which is accessible in real-time. The World Health Organization (WHO) notes that an effective surveillance system is essential to detecting outbreaks quickly before they spread, cost lives and become difficult to control.

CONCLUSION

To date, global pandemics have emerged to the surprise of stakeholders. Addressing these pandemics has also seemed arduous for national governments and international communities, mainly because countries do not plan for such unforeseen emergencies. Unfortunately, when such emergencies as global pandemics are not adequately addressed in real time due to challenges ranging from financial, infrastructural, personnel and other logistics, development takes a downward trend. People living on the fringes of poverty are pushed deeper into the already bad and chaotic situation where they find themselves. In this paper, the author has established that for women living and suffering abuse from their intimate partners, emergencies such as the coronavirus pandemic and lockdowns exposed them to more abuse, increasing family violence cases in Ghana. The author has discussed the abuses suffered by women

respondents in the study and how violence perpetrated has been justified, establishing the interrelationships between recorded acts of violence and the coronavirus lockdown. The author then explained the usefulness of planning and research, reporting mechanisms and approaches, alternative living spaces for victims of violence and surveillance as some means of preparing for pandemics. The author hopes that the issues raised in this study and the accompanying reviews will stimulate interest in researchers and academics to contribute to the existing literature and body of knowledge on how pandemics exacerbate the family violence women suffer at the hands of their intimate partners.

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Notes To Contributors

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