

## Child Rights And Gender-Based Violence: Cross-National Analysis: A Punjab, Pakistan Case Study

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### Abstract

Although most countries have signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), it has become nearly universal, and the level of violence against children and gender-based violence (GBV) has become so pervasive and entrenched in society. It is estimated globally that one billion children are subject to physical, sexual, or emotional violence annually and that one out of three women in the world population have been subjected to physical and /or sexual intimate partner violence. Research Objectives of this study are: To consider how the child rights violations and gender-based violence are interdependent in a cross-national setting in the country of Punjab, Pakistan. To determine and evaluate the socio-cultural, economic and institutional reasons that lead to the continuation of child rights abuse and gender-based violence in Punjab. To determine how the current legal systems, child protection systems, and policy-based interventions have worked to tackle gender-based violence and child rights protection in Punjab. To provide evidence-based policy suggestions and strategic interventions based on the best practices in other countries to enhance child protection systems and gender equity in Punjab, Pakistan. The research design utilized in this study was qualitative in nature in an attempt to understand the intersection point between child rights and gender-based violence on a cross-national analytical study, as applied to the case study of Punjab, Pakistan. This study was informed by an interpretivist paradigm with the acknowledgment that, social realities of violence and rights are culturally fashioned and constructed by cultural meanings. The study took place in Punjab, Pakistan, which is the most populous province of this country, and which has different socio-economic and cultural processes. The country of Punjab has recorded a large percentage of cases of child abuse and gender-based violence in the national rereader and thus, it is a vital location in qualitative research. Key stakeholders who participated in child protection and gender base violence response mechanisms formed the target population. An example of a purposive sampling methodology was used to choose those participants whose knowledge and experience were directly linked to child rights and gender base violence. This approach was used to make sure the data-rich cases can be included that can give in-depth information. A sample of about 15-25 participants was used in order to bring about data saturation that would guarantee depth and credibility of the findings. The semi-structured interviews were long-form in-depth interviews that were created in relation to the objective of the research through an interview guide.

**Keywords:** Child Rights, Gender-Based Violence, Child Protection Systems, patriarchal Norms.

### 1. Introduction

The rights of children and gender based violence are two important yet highly interconnected

challenges that affect the physical, psychological and socio-economic health of children across the globe. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has taught that all children have the right to be under protection against all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence (UN General Assembly, 1989). Although the entire world is committed to ensuring the rights of children and adolescents, their violations continue to be common, with their overrepresentation in socio-economically disadvantaged situations (Hill and Silva, 2018). The literature reports that gender norms, structural inequalities, and poor institutional protections are perpetuators of violence and restrictive access to fundamental rights that amplify cycles of violence that hinder children development and their engagement in the society (Peterson and Runyan, 2019).

Gender-based violence (GBV) as both an antecedent and effect of violation of child rights occurs in varied social environments and systems that make it particular to policy and practice. GBV is an umbrella term of the physical, emotional, and sexual violence based on gender discrimination and unequal power dynamics (World Health Organization, 2021). The culture of patriarchy and gendered inequalities in most areas such as South Asia do not just increase violence against girls but also influence society reaction in reaction to the violations of child rights (Jabeen & Farooq, 2020). Besides, there is emerging evidence that boys can also suffer a particular type of violence associated with strict gender roles, and it is critical to consider gender-inclusive methods of research (Heilman et al., 2020). The cross-national researches have highlighted the role of intersectionality of cultures, laws, and social services in contributing to the increased incidence of GBV and the efficacy of child protection efforts (Pinheiro, 2006).

It is on this background that the case of Punjab, Pakistan, suggests an interesting approach to the issue of the interplay between child rights and gender-based violence. Being the most populated province in Pakistan, the legal systems, cultural practices, and governances of Punjab influence the experiences of children on safety and equity in deep ways (UNICEF Pakistan, 2022). Although legislative efforts have been made to tackle child protection and gender equity issues (such as child protection law and gender equity policy) there are gaps in implementation and social opposition against these policies, which leads to continued violations and few measures that may be taken against the offending children (Amnesty International, 2023). Through the cross-national analysis and narrow case study in the state of Punjab, the study tends to explain the contextual determinants of GBV and child rights outcomes with comparative insights, which can be utilized in both local policy intervention in the area and global child protection efforts.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Violence against children and gender-based violence are widespread human rights offenses globally with long-term and dramatic implications on physical, emotional, and cognitive development. The United Nations states that children are vulnerable to various types of violence such as physical punishment, sexual abuse, exploitation, and trafficking in homes, schools, and communities all over the world and over 450 million children live in the conflict zones that increase the risks (United Nations, 2025). Outside the conflict context, structural inequalities and discriminating gender norms add to the GBV, and one out of three women is estimated to have been physically and/or sexually violent in their lifetime, which also represents larger weaknesses of girls and adolescents (UNICEF, 2024; UNFPA, n.d.; WHO, 2024). A study conducted by the World Health Organization also underscores the fact that violence against women and violence against children go hand in hand as well as that intimate partner violence against women puts children in the same households at further risk of maltreatment ( *Intersections between violence against children and violence against women*, 2024). All these global trends highlight the fact that abuse of child rights and GBV has no singular or cultural peculiarities but is engraved in the inequalities that are inherent in the systems that influence social development in various settings.

These world-problems take rather terrifying and complicated forms in Pakistan, and the province of Punjab, which is the most populated one in this country, carries a disproportionate burden of the

reported cases. Reports on child protection by civil society organizations based in Sahil and other civil society organizations indicate that almost 2,000 instances of child abuse were reported in the nation in the first half of 2025 with the proportion of 72% of them in the Punjab, sexual abuse, abductions, and exploitation. SSDO information also indicates that cases of child sexual abuse are on a steep rise of 220 percent in the last five years and that conviction rates are very low and in Punjab it is less than 1 percent conviction in child sexual abuse, thus creating a serious loophole in the criminal response to the issue. These trends are supported by sociological research which indicates a strong connection between abusive behavior and cultural norms, poverty, and lack of education as the factors that allow normalizing this behavior and hindering successful prevention (Ali, Athar, and Rasheed, 2024). These trends are exacerbated by the larger social conventions restricting the rights of girls and exposing them to early marriage and other gender forms of exploitation as well as exposing boys to other types of abuse that are usually not reported because of the stigma associated with them.

The legal and institutional provisions that were meant to shield the children and deal with the gender base violence in Pakistan have had some major strides, but the application has remained a challenge. In Pakistan, the international conventions including UN Convention on the Rights of the child have been ratified; provincial child protection cells have been established to protect children against violence and exploitation. Also, various legal measures have been enacted to suppress gender-based violence, such as domestic violence and anti-rape legislations, which would be targeted at women and children, but very low enforcement rate because of cultural barriers and lack of knowledge and awareness among law enforcement bodies. The local research including the analysis of the criminal justice response in District Kasur indicates the procedural delays, absence of specialized investigation departments, and victim support services as the primary barriers to justice in children sexual abuse survivors (Heise and Kotsadam, 2015). Within this framework, cross-national analysis on Punjab provides a remarkable contribution to the understanding of the mutual workings of violations of children rights and GBV in a socio-cultural and legal context, and to the realization of comparative approaches to the topic on the level of international relations and global practices that can be employed to enhance child protection and gender equity.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Although the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has been virtually universally ratified, violence against children and gender-based violence (GBV) continues to be at a very high level and deeply rooted in the social systems. It has been estimated that as many as one billion children suffer physical, sexual, or even emotional violence every year (Hillis et al., 2016), and one out of every three women in the world has been a victim of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (Sardinha et al., 2022). The scholars believe that child maltreatment and gender base violence are not only interrelation based but also structural due to patriarchal norms, unequal power relations, and gender discrimination that denies children their rights to protection and development. In addition, it has been shown that a high exposure to intimate partner violence in the homes also leads to a high probability of child abuse, which carries on intergenerational violence cycles (Fulu et al., 2017). Even though, cross-national studies have established these linkages, the study lacks sufficient contextual analysis that seeks to establish the relationship between child rights violation and gender base violence in the context of particular provincial and socio-cultural contexts, especially in South Asia.

Child abuse, early and forced marriages, sexual exploitation, and domestic violence are also prevalent in Pakistan, especially in the Punjab province, which indicates a big gap between the commitments on the legislation and its actual implementation. According to empirical data, thousands of cases of child abuse are reported every year, and the conviction rates are extremely low because of delays in the process, poor investigation, and social stigma (Sustainable Social Development Organization [SSDO], 2025). Research also indicates that the vulnerability of children to abuse and the

constraining behavior of survivors to report abuses is supported by deep-rooted patriarchal beliefs, poverty, and access to the justice system (Ali, Athar, and Rasheed, 2024; Zakar et al., 2016). Although provincial laws and policies, like Protection of Women against Violence Act or child protection policies, are available, their implementation is uneven, especially in rural and marginalized societies (Jabeen and Jadoon, 2020). This renders a compelling necessity of a cross-national study that places Punjab on the world trend of child rights and gender base violence, structural and institutional loopholes, and evidence-based policy and response measures to bring about empowerments to the child protection mechanisms and ensure gender equity.

### 1.3 Research Questions

How does gender-based violence and child rights violations interrelate and where do Empowerment, generations, and stages of development vary between the case of Punjab, Pakistan, and other countries?

Which socio-cultural, legal, and institutional forces help to sustain the gender-based violence and violation of child rights in Punjab, Pakistan?

To what extent are the current legal frameworks, system of child protection and policy interventions effective in tackling the nexus between child rights and gender based violence in Punjab as opposed to those leading to best practice at the international level?

### 1.4 Research Objectives

1. To examine the interrelationship between child rights violations and gender-based violence within a cross-national context, with particular focus on Punjab, Pakistan.
2. To identify and analyze the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors contributing to the persistence of child rights violations and gender-based violence in Punjab.
3. To assess the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks, child protection mechanisms, and policy interventions in addressing gender-based violence and safeguarding child rights in Punjab.
4. To propose evidence-based policy recommendations and strategic interventions informed by cross-national best practices to strengthen child protection systems and promote gender equity in Punjab, Pakistan.

### 1.5 Conceptual Framework:

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender-Based Violence</li> <li>• Socio-Cultural and Institutional Factors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevalence of Child Rights Violations</li> <li>• Children’s Physical and Psychological Wellbeing</li> <li>• Access to Protection and Justice Mechanisms</li> <li>• Gender Equality and Child Protection Outcomes</li> </ul>

### 1.6 Conceptualization & Operationalization

#### 1.6.1 Independent Variables

**Gender-Based Violence:** It encompasses domestic assault, sexual abuse, early/forced marriage, psychological assault, and exploitation.

**Socio-Cultural and Institutional Factors:** These are the provisions of patriarchal norms, poverty, the legal system of enforcements, access to justice, the level of education, and the system of child protection.

## 1.62. Dependent Variables

**Child Rights Violations Prevalence:** Child abuse, neglect and exploitation, trafficking and child labor.

**Physical and Psychological Wellbeing of the Children:** The influence on the mental health, exposure to trauma, physical harm, and developmental outcomes.

**Availability of Protection and Justice Systems:** Reports on the rates of reporting, conviction, availability of child protection services.

**Gender Equality and Child Protection Outcomes:** Protection level, decreased cases of violence, successful implementation of policies, and protection measures.

## 2. Literature Review

International laws have acknowledged the protection of child rights as one of the basic human rights obligation especially after the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted in 1989. The CRC sets the rights of children concerning their survival, development, protection and participation and it underlines the role of the state to protect children against all forms of violence and exploitation. Although the majority of countries worldwide have ratified it, the experience of violence against children across the globe has yet to be controlled as it is estimated that around one billion children are subjected to violence each year (Hillis et al., 2016). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) defines violence against children as one of the key public health problems with long-term mental, educational, and socio-economic mobility outcomes. According to scholars, child protection systems are normally derailed by structural inequalities, weak governance, and social-cultural norms especially in low and middle-income nations (UNICEF, 2020). These trends on the world scene can be the basis of analyzing the intersection between child rights abuse and gender-based violence in various situations.

The gender-based violence (GBV) is a well-known phenomenon, which is considered as a human rights violation and structural disparity determinant. Sardinha et al. (2022) indicate that physical or sexual intimate partner violence has been experienced by almost one out of three women globally, which demonstrates the deep-rooted gender inequalities. The studies prove that the settings of intimacy violence often subject children to either direct violence or psychological abuse, which supports intergenerational patterns of violence (Fulu et al., 2017). Heise and Kotsadam (2015) state that both gender base violence and child maltreatment are highly likely to occur when the norms of patriarchy and strict gender roles are involved. The results indicate that the child rights violations could not be discussed out of context of the bigger gender processes, as the discriminatory norms define the relationships of power in the family and in the society. In that way, gender base violence acts as a predictive variable and a reinforcing factor of child deprivation of rights.

Cross-national research points out that there is a great difference in prevalence and manifestations of GBV and child abuse based on the socio-economic development, the enforcement of the law, and cultural influence. Comparative studies show that those countries that have a higher index of gender equality and well-developed child protection systems have fewer cases of violence against women and children (Heise and Kotsadam, 2015). On the contrary, the increased vulnerability is linked to weak institutional underpinnings and poverty (Hillis et al., 2016). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2020) points out that the child protection systems should be effective through interventions through legal, social, and community-based efforts. Transnational evidence promotes the significance of provincializing provincial settings like Punjab in the context of global settings to determine contextual issues as well as best practices that may be transferred.

Child abuse, early marriage, and domestic violence are consistent findings on research in the context of Pakistan, and demonstrates systematic issues on both prevention and response. According to Zakar et al. (2016), a common phenomenon is the intimate partner violence, which indirectly impacts children in the context of their wellbeing and safety. Ali, Athar, and Rasheed (2024) also state that poverty, ignorance, and deeply rooted patriarchal principles also lead to the normalization of violence

against children. Being the most populated province in the country, Punjab has a high percentage of reported cases of child abuse every year, but the conviction rates stand at a critical level (Sustainable Social Development Organization, 2025). Even though Pakistan has passed laws on child protection and domestic violence, the gaps in their implementation, the lack of institutional capacity, and the stigma of the society still pose a challenge to their performance. The results indicate a lack of connection between the law and realities.

Punjab has established a number of policy programs that serve to enhance child protection and the gender base violence such as provincial child protection units and gender violence laws. Nevertheless, according to the scholars, institutional responses are reactive, but not preventive (Jabeen & Jadoon, 2020). Lack of coordination between the law enforcement agencies, training, and prolonged procedures tend to demoralize victims to report abuse (SSDO, 2025). Moreover, the rural and the marginalized population experiences obstacles to access justice and social services. The World Health Organization (2021) notes that violence prevention ought to be a multi-sectoral process involving the community and gender-transformative strategies. It is argued in the literature that legislative reforms cannot significantly reduce child rights abuses or gender base violence without a concerted effort to deal with socio-cultural norms and institutional accountability.

Although the current body of knowledge offers sufficient information on child protection and gender-based violence as independent variables, there is a knowledge gap in terms of systematic analysis of the two variables in a cross-national comparative context, especially in a specific case of Punjab, Pakistan. The majority of the Pakistani research focuses on prevalence rates or legal research, lacks the inclusion of wider gender theory or international standards (Ali et al., 2024; Zakar et al., 2016). Besides, there is a lack of empirical focus on the effects of the combined impact of socio-cultural norms, institutional enforcement and gender base violence on child rights outcomes. To fill this gap, this paper approaches gender base violence conceptualization and socio-institutional factors as a set of independent variables that determine the outcomes of child rights violation and protection. The study will help advance the theoretical work in the field of gender and child rights by placing Punjab in a global comparative context, and provide policy-practical value to the enhancement of child protection systems.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research design was a qualitative research that investigated the interaction of child rights and gender-based violence into a cross-national analytical design which was independent of any particular focus, although it was a case-study of Punjab, Pakistan. Qualitative studies are especially suitable where the focus is on studying a complex social phenomenon in the cultural, institutional, and structural contexts (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Considering that the violation of child rights and gender base violence are significantly conditioned by socio-cultural norms, gender relationships, and institutional actions, a qualitative methodology allowed gaining an in-depth insight into the experiences and visions of the lived phenomenon and institutional issues. The research involved a case study approach to the study, which gave it an opportunity to conduct a contextualized and detailed analysis of Punjab and place the findings in the context of the wider trends of child protection and gender equity around the world.

#### **3.2 Research Approach**

This research was dedicated to an interpretivist paradigm, which acknowledges that the realities of the social world in terms of violence and rights are created and culturally infused with meanings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). The research aimed at knowing how the stakeholders such as policymakers, social workers, lawyers, NGOs representatives and community members perceive and react to the violation of child rights and gender base violence. This method enabled experimenting with other aspects of exploration beyond statistical prevalence and experimented with institutional

gaps, normative beliefs, and power dynamics that determine protection outcomes.

### **3.3 Study Area**

The study was carried out in Punjab, Pakistan, which happens to be the most populous province in the nation with varied socio-economic and cultural forces. National records of child abuse and gender-based violence have indicated a high percentage in Punjab, which is a site of critical inquiry in the study through qualitative methods. The provincial jurisdiction laws such as the child protection units and the legislation on domestic violence offered a suitable institutional setting in the analysis of policy issues and the effectiveness of its implementation.

### **3.4 Population and Sampling**

The key stakeholders who took part in the target population, included those engaged in the child protection and gender base violence response mechanisms. Purposive sampling technique was used to identify the participants who had firsthand information and experience in issues on child rights and gender base violence. The approach would make sure that the cases that were included contained wealth of information that could lead to detailed insights (Patton, 2015). About 15-25 respondents were chosen to reach the level of data saturation, which would guarantee depth and credibility of results.

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods**

Towards data collection the following qualitative methods were used:

#### **3.5.1 Semi-Structured Interviews**

The interview guide was based on the objectives of the research and in-depth semi-structured interviews were applied. The approach also gave a degree of flexibility, but it was thematically consistent (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). The perceptions of the prevalence of gender base violence, child rights abuse, institutional responses to the same, and hindrances to justice were discussed during interviews.

#### **3.5.2 Key Informant Interviews**

The institutional and policy-level perspective was to be achieved through key informants, who are specialized in child protection and gender policy.

#### **3.5.3 Document Analysis**

Triangulation of primary data was done through the examination of relevant legal documents, policy frameworks, government reports, NGO publications, and international conventions. This involved child protection, gender base violence as well as international child rights frameworks.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

The thematic analysis was used as the study was conducted using the six-step model suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), including familiarization, coding, theme development, reviewing themes, defining themes, and reporting. The transcripts of interviews were coded either by hand (or, with the assistance of qualitative software like NVivo, in that case). New themes were placed within the larger fields of socio-cultural norms, institutional effectiveness, gaps in legal implementation, and the experiences of the survivors. International best practice and world literature were used as sources of cross-national comparisons as part of the analysis.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

Since the child rights and gender base violence issues were very sensitive, high ethical standards were observed. All the participants were informed and thus gave informed consent, which guaranteed

voluntary participation and confidentiality. Anonymity was guaranteed to the participants by the use of pseudonyms and the data were kept securely. The referrals to the relevant support services were made where survivors were concerned. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles regarding the work with vulnerable population. Besides, there was cultural sensitivity during data collection and reporting.

### **3.8 Limitations of the Study**

Although qualitative research is highly rich in contextual information, the results might not be statistically generalizable. The research was based on Punjab province hence other provinces in Pakistan might not be fully represented. Moreover, the societal stigma of gendered violence might have affected the project members in their desire to share confidential data.

## **4. Data Analysis**

This chapter gives the results of the qualitative data analysis done using the semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews and document analysis. Data were coded, categorized and classified into major themes and sub-themes in line with the objectives of the research using the thematic analysis framework by Braun and Clarke (2006). The paper examines the intersection of the child rights violation and gender-based violence (GENDER BASE VIOLENCE) in Punjab, Pakistan, and puts results into a broader cross-national context.

### **Theme 1: Socio-Cultural Values and Gendered Power Systems.**

#### **Sub-Theme 1.1.1: Patriarchal Values and Violence as the Norm.**

The respondents always pointed out the role entrenched patriarchal norms played in the perpetration of child rights violations as well as gender base violence. Domestic violence and cruel discipline of children are usually justified by cultural beliefs of male dominance and strict gender roles. As observed by respondents, physical punishment has often been seen as a common, or normal way of raising children especially in the rural society. On the same note, intimate partner violence is mostly perceived as a family issue and not a crime. Such normalization strengthens silence and make reporting less likely, as well as contributes to violence through several generations.

#### **Sub-Theme 1.3: Discrimination on the basis of gender and susceptibility to girls.**

The statistics showed that discrimination in cultural practices that expose girls to greater vulnerability include early and forced marriages, limited movements, and lack of access to education. The participants noted that early marriage not only infringes the rights of children, but it also subjects girls to young domestic and sexual violence. Though boys too suffer abuse, they are not disclosed due to the social stigma especially when it comes to sexual exploitation. The results suggest that gender-based discrimination is a structural agent of denying children their rights.

### **Theme 2: Weak Institutionalization and Structure of Ineffective Enforcement.**

#### **Sub-Theme 2.1: Ineffective Legal Implementation.**

Although Punjab has initiated child protection and gender base violence -related laws, participants pointed out the huge inequality between the policy implementation and formulation. The police officers attributed inadequate training, absence of special investigation departments and delays in bureaucracy as some of the greatest obstacles to successful prosecution. Low conviction rates were also often cited as a reason that makes people lose their faith in the justice system and discourage reporting.

#### **Sub-Theme 2.2a: restriction in Access to Justice and Support services.**

The study found that there was a low accessibility of child friendly courts, shelter homes, psychosocial services and rehabilitation programs especially in the rural set up. Procedural delays, victim-blaming attitude, and the absence of confidentiality were identified as barriers to obtaining justice by the survivors and service providers. NGOs tend to supply gaps in services; there is still

inconsistency in coordination between civil society and government agencies. Such results indicate institutional vulnerabilities in institutional responsive systems.

### **Theme 3: Child rights violations: Socio-Economic Determinants**

#### **Sub-Theme 3.2: Gender Inequality and Child Prostitution.**

Economic hardship proved to be a major contributor to child labor, trafficking and forced marriages. Respondents illustrated that families that are below poverty line usually turn to child labour as a survival mechanism. Economic dependency contributes to further vulnerability of women to domestic violence indirectly influencing the wellbeing of children. Poverty is thus a risk factor as well as a strengthening mechanism in the cycle of violence.

##### **Sub-Theme 3.2.1: Not being Educated and Aware.**

The lack of awareness of the laws on child rights and gender base violence was seen to be a major challenge. Most community members do not know the legal protections and the support services that are available. Schools were considered as one of the areas where awareness campaign could be carried out but the lackluster application of child protection policies in schools diminishes the preventive effect of the school based campaign. The participants stressed that long-term behavioral change should be based on comprehensive awareness programs.

### **Theme 4: Psychological and Developmental Effect on children.**

#### **Video: Feminism and Mental Health Consequences.**

The severity of psychological impacts of violence on children according to the interview data included anxiety, depression, behavioral issues, and post-traumatic stress factors. Even when children were not direct victims of domestic violence between parents, it was indicated that the long-term emotional effects were long lasting. The development of mental health services is low and this reduces the chance of recovery and rehabilitation.

#### **Sub-Theme 4.2: Education and Social Becoming Marginalized.**

When abused or exploited, children often leave school, which narrows their opportunities in future life, perpetuating poverty. Girls who are married off usually end the education that they have received. The respondents emphasized that educational disruption does not only interfere with the rights of children to development, but it also contributes to gender inequality and social-economic marginalization.

### **Theme 5: Comparative Insights and Best Practices.**

#### **Lessons of International Child Protection Systems.**

The international best practice comparison showed that the countries with integrated child protection systems, specialized court and multi-sectoral coordination document more successful response to violence. Respondents observed that there were no elaborate data systems and monitoring systems in Punjab, as it was in the developed environment. Combined use of education, health, and legal services was found as important to preventive success.

#### **Sub-Theme 5.2: Gender-Transformative and Community-Based Approaches are needed.**

The evidence of cross-national is focused on gender-transformative interventions that disrupt negative norms and encourage equality. The respondents promoted communal intervention measures of engaging religious leaders, teachers and local councils in order to combat the institutionalized patriarchal tendencies. Prevention should be sustainable and this cannot be achieved by only using punitive legal actions.

## **Summary of Findings**

Thematic analysis shows that child rights abuse and gender-based violence are related in Punjab and are supported by socio-cultural forces, economical weaknesses, and failure of institutions. Legislative frameworks are present, but the gaps in the protection, lack of awareness, and the lack of support services prevent proper protection. The results highlight the importance of multi-sectoral cooperation, gender-focused policy changes, and community-oriented prevention policies and practices in accordance with the global best practices.

This discussion gives a situational interpretation of how the independent variables gender base violence and socio-cultural/ institutional variables influence dependent variables in terms of child rights violations, psychological wellbeing, access to justice, and overall protection effectiveness.

## **5. Discussion**

The evidence presented in this research supports the findings of other scholars across the world that child rights abuse and gender-based violence are phenomena that are structurally related and reinforcing. The thematic analysis unveiled that the patriarchal norms and strict gender roles in Punjab make domestic violence and severe disciplinary actions toward children normal, which is experienced in cross-national studies (Heise and Kotsadam, 2015; Fulu et al., 2017). In line with the world estimates that indicate that one billion children may face violence every year (Hillis et al., 2016), respondents highlighted that violence may be deeply rooted in normal family and community relationships. The naturalization of physical punishment and the culture of silence on sexual abuse show that cultural acceptance has an enormous impact on the personalization of child protection systems. These results correspond with those provided by UNICEF (2020) and WHO (2021), which state that violence against women and children are often observed in the same families, and such violence is passed down to the next generations. Therefore, the research validates the fact that gender base violence is not only a social issue on its own but also a structural factor that has an influence on child rights outcome.

Moreover, the review reveals that there is an acute discrepancy between laws and institutionalization in Punjab. Even though the province has laws that tackle domestic violence and child protection, the lack of effective enforcement systems, a low conviction rate, and delays in the process of the law greatly diminish their effectiveness. This result is aligned with previous Pakistani literature that proves that legal reforms are ineffective without institutional responsibility and gender sensitivity implementation (Zakar et al., 2016; Jabeen and Jadoon, 2020). Systemic weaknesses in participants reporting on their limited access to child-friendly courts, psychosocial services, and rural outreach mechanisms are also linked to systemic weaknesses that are found in other areas across South Asia. The existing cross-national evidence indicates that the better the multi-sectoral systems of child protection (health, education, law enforcement, and social services) are coordinated, the more effective prevention and response results are expected (Heise and Kotsadam, 2015). Conversely, the Punjab seems to lack coherent institutional reactions in order to support proactive protection and victim-oriented justice.

Lastly, the paper highlights the paramount place of social economic vulnerability and lack of awareness in fostering gender base violence as well as child violation of rights. Child labor, early marriage and discontinuation of education were often mentioned as ways of coping in disadvantaged households that supported the cycles of exploitation and gender inequality. These results are aligned with the global literature that shows a correlation between economic dependency and gender inequality with an increased likelihood of being exposed to violence (Sardinha et al., 2022). In addition, the lack of community-level prevention by virtue of limited awareness of the rights and reporting pathways is detrimental to the legal rights. The discussion thus recommends that to enact any meaningful reform, it is necessary not merely to enforce the law but to engage communities in gender-transformative processes of community, poverty alleviation strategies and educative interventions to transform detrimental norms. The relevance that this study has to the scholarship of global children rights is that by placing Punjab in cross-national comparative contexts, this paper

would show that gender base violence is mediated to produce child protection outcomes by local socio-cultural and institutional forces and requires integrated and context-specific policy solutions.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has discussed the convergence of child rights and gender-based violence on a cross-national analysis perspective with a case study on Punjab, Pakistan. This evidence provides the findings that child rights abuses and gender base violence are closely intertwined issues, which exist in socio-cultural, economic and institutional systems and environments. Households that rely on patriarchal principles, gender discrimination and acceptance of violence greatly reduce the rights of children in relation to protection, development and participation. Even though legislative frameworks and policy programs are in place in Punjab to combat domestic violence and child protection, the systems have a lot of gaps in terms of enforcement, accountability, and access to justice. The fact that low conviction rates, lack of supportive services, and lack of awareness remain implies the manifestation of systemic vulnerabilities that do not support effective protection and result in the intergenerational reproduction processes.

In addition, the paper demonstrates the need to have a gender-transformative and holistic perspective of child protection. Solutions to child rights abuses should not be isolated of the more prevalent gender disparities, because this will not be as effective as possible. Children are further exposed to risks especially girls in the event of socio-economic vulnerabilities especially poverty and lack of access to education. International lessons of best practice stress the need to have integrated, multi-sectoral systems, which offer the combination of legal enforcement, community participation, psychosocial support, and preventive education. Hence, to achieve sustainable development in Punjab, it is necessary to enhance institutional coordination and the change of norms at the community level as well as align provincial efforts with international child protection practices. This study can serve policy-making discussions by placing local contexts in a larger cross-national context to help create safer and more just settings in which the rights of children are fully realized.

## 7. Recommendations

1. Enhance enforcement procedures by establishing police and judicial systems of child protection and gender-based violence departments to help increase incident investigation and conviction rate.
2. Establish coordination mechanisms of a multi-sectoral nature between health, education, social welfare and the law enforcement agencies in order to respond to child rights violations and gender base violence in a comprehensive manner.
3. Create child friendly-courts and support services such as shelters, legal and psychosocial counseling especially in rural and marginalized regions of Punjab.
4. Conduct awareness efforts in the community to break patriarchal structures and increase gender equality and child rights at grassroots.
5. Implement gender-transformative school intervention programs to deal with negative stereotypes and instill non-violent conflict resolution early in life.
6. Improve capacity-building and training of police officers, social workers, teachers, and the judicial staff in child sensitive and survivor-centered approaches.
7. Enhance the quality of data collection and monitoring systems to achieve credible reporting, evidence-based policymaking and highly accountable cases involving child protection.
8. Encourage poverty reducing and social protection programs to minimize economic vulnerabilities that lead to child labour, early marriage, exploitation etc.

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