

A FORMATIVE RESEARCH

Construction and Manifestation of Masculinities among Hindu Communities of Mirpurkhas and Tharparkar, Sindh

The information provided in this book is for wider dissemination and may be used by anyone with due acknowledgement to Rozan.

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ABOUT ROZAN

Rozan is an Islamabad-based non-government and non-profit organization, registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860 on 22nd December 1998. Rozan came into being 18 years ago and has evolved over the years from a small local organization to a national that is running six diverse programs and units and working with state and civil society actors.

ROZAN'S MISSION

To work with all people, especially vulnerable groups, to collectively strive for a society that is violence free, self-aware and accepting of itself and others

ROZAN'S THEMATIC AREAS

- Emotional health
- Gender
- Violence against women and children
- Sexual and reproductive health of youth

ROZAN'S CORE PROGRAMS

1. Aangan (Children and Youth Program) works as a Resource Centre on the emotional health of children, focusing on Child Sexual Abuse.
2. Zeest (Women's Program) works on the emotional health of women, focusing on issues of gender and Violence against Women (VAW).
3. Rabta (Police Training Program)

works with the Police to create capacity and ownership to deal with Violence against Women and children.

4. Humqadam (Men's Program) conducts research on masculinities and works with men and boys in the community to mobilize them against VAW.

ROZAN'S SUPPORT UNITS

1. Rozan Helpline offers telephonic, in-person, email counseling and organizes counseling camps for children, youth and women.
2. Munsalik (Media and Advocacy Unit) coordinates all advocacy activities of the programs and provides media support and sensitization about Rozan's thematic areas.

ABOUT HUMQADAM (ROZAN'S PROGRAM FOR MEN)

Working with men and boys has been an essential feature of all Rozan activities since its inception in 1998. Where some activities have sought to involve men as key allies, be it policemen or young male volunteers in the White Ribbon Campaign, others have addressed men's vulnerabilities, such as working with male survivors of child sexual abuse and male youth that call Rozan's counseling service, the Rozan Helpline.

Rozan's extensive experience in working with communities on gender-based violence has highlighted the need for work with men and boys as important stakeholders and partners in the process of social change. In 2008, Rozan set up a separate program unit called Humqadam. Aiming to create spaces for men and boys to engage on gender issues, with a special focus on involving men and boys in stopping violence against women, the program has three long-term strategies:

1. Expansion of knowledge and resource base through research.
2. Transfer of learning and capacity building through networking and training.
3. Program intervention and evaluation in community settings.

To date, the program has published the following:

- Rozan's Work with Men and Boys in Rehmatabad - An Evaluation Study, 2012
- A Training Module for Boys and Young Men, 2011
- Partners for Change: A Mapping Study of Organizations working with Men and Boys on Gender Equality in Pakistan, 2011
- Understanding Masculinities: A Formative Research on Masculinities and Gender-based Violence, 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rozan conducted this study in Tharparkar and Mirpurkhas districts to explore the construction of masculinity and its manifestations in the day-to-day lives of Hindu men and women. Specifically, this study was designed to:

- Better understand the construct and manifestations of masculinities at the grassroots level in local communities of Mirpurkhas and Tharparkar in Sindh.
- Add value to the existing work of Rozan which includes engaging communities and service providers (such as Baahn Beli, a local partner NGO) and educating them on masculinities and its link with different forms of violence and its effects on the well-being of not just women but also men, children, their families and communities as a whole.

Data was collected from 54 respondents through Key Informant Interviews, In-depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussions. In terms of construction of masculinity that contributes to violence, this report looked at birth rituals for boys and girls; early childhood preferential treatment with respect to food, health, and education, dress, games and chores of boys and girls, as well as the issue of effeminate behavior.

Rabari is a unique community in context of masculinity and VAW. During the research, least violence was reported from this community. Generally, men did not beat women. In case of severe anger, they preferred to leave the premises instead of opting for violence. Moreover, women of this community are more empowered as compared to that of Kohlis and Bheels. They also have a major contribution in the economic activities and economic decision making at household level. Buying and selling of animals is done by them. They go to markets for groceries and other things. Surprisingly, men of this community are comfortable with this. Rabari community reflects a shade of a more egalitarian society (in context of men & women relationship) as patriarchal practices such as aggression and control, which are prevalent in adjacent communities.

The study found that in the urban settings and in Meghwar community, girls are educated. Meghwar men are more inclined towards education and secure government jobs so that their community can earn more respect in the surrounding areas. In Tharparkar district, Meghwars are moving towards urban places like mainland Karachi and obtaining education. Two-three decades ago, Meghwars were considered the lowest among the Schedule Castes, but their social status rose due to their higher education level. Violence against women was also found to be

less among Meghwars as compared to Kohlis and Bheels. In fact, Kohlis are more inclined towards violence against women as compared to other castes. While boys generally get more attention and liberties, the study found that the people from the Meghwar community claim more gender equality.

In this study and in Rozan's work in general, we have found that there is a correlation between the construction of masculinity by the family and society and its manifestation in the form of violence in the later stages of men's lives. Given how they are raised, men perceive that it is their natural right to be superior to women, and so they try to ensure that they are respected and their needs are given priority. If a woman fails to do her assigned tasks or disagrees, she is subjected to violence which can take multiple forms such as beating, name calling, taunts, inadequate food provision, additional work load, rape, marital rape, divorce and death.

In Tharparkar, it was found that more married women committed suicides as compared to unmarried women. Furthermore, suicide was reported more in the communities where violence against women was prevalent. Respondents reported that there was zero suicide rates among Rabari women. This is indicative of a direct relationship between violence and suicide. We also found that physical, sexual, and psychological violence on female members of the family was most

visible in marital relationships. Bheels and Kohlis had higher rates of physical violence as compared to the Rabaris and Meghwars.

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence is a pressing issue in Pakistan which is affecting millions of women and girls. A survey carried out by Thomson Reuters Foundation in 2011 ranked 'Pakistan as the third most dangerous country in the world for women' (Bhalla 2016), whereas according to a 2009 Human Rights Watch study, it was estimated that between '70 and 90 percent of women in Pakistan have suffered some form of abuse' (Shah 2016).

'Violence against women has been categorized as crimes which include abduction/kidnapping, murder, domestic violence, suicide, honor killing, rape/gang rape, sexual assault, acid throwing and burning' (Asmat 2016; Aurat Foundation 2014). The situation is worse for women living in Tharparkar and Mirpurkhas (Sindh), where an estimated 35 percent of the population is Hindu. Women in these areas also face forced religious conversion, restricted mobility, and child marriages. 95 percent of the perpetrators are male and majority of violence against women is caused by men. Due to dominant patriarchal upbringing most men take it as their birth right to control women and consider them as inferior beings.

Rozan, understanding the need to gather more on-ground primary data started a project in Tharparkar and Mirpurkhas district to generate knowledge on construction of masculinity and its manifestations in the form of violence. Specifically, this study was designed to:

- Better understand the construct, expression and manifestations of masculinities at the grassroots level in local communities of Mirpurkhas and Tharparkar in Sindh.
- Add value to the existing work of Rozan which includes engaging communities and service providers (such as Baanhn Beli, a local partner NGO) and educating them on different forms of violence and its effects on the well-being of not just women but also men, children, their families and communities as a whole.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Rozan selected two districts from the province of Sindh to conduct this study: Tharparkar and Mirpurkhas. The two areas were chosen because Rozan has been working with Baanhn Beli - a local NGO based in these districts. Rozan's initial interaction involved building capacity of Baanhn Beli staff on masculinity and violence against women. However, since Rozan did not have any prior experience of working in these districts, in order to better understand the local context of the area, it was decided to conduct a small study to explore shades of masculinities here.

1. Why Work with Hindu Community?

Within these two districts, Baanhn Beli's interventions have primarily involved working with the Hindu communities. Since Rozan has done extensive work on similar issues with Muslim communities (Understanding Masculinities, Rozan, 2010). This offered an opportunity to work with and understand the construct and manifestation of masculinities, gender power dynamics and violence against women amongst a different religious group, the Hindus. Snowball sampling technique was used to identify the respondents. At first, Baanhn Beli staff identified a few potential respondents. Later, researchers identified the respondents with local support.

2. Study Location, Sample Size and Ethnicities

About Tharparkar

Geography, Culture and Ethnicities

This region is part of the great Thar Desert, which is spread over parts of India and Pakistan. Most of the Thar Desert lies in the Indian state of Rajasthan and is extended to Haryana and Gujarat. In Pakistan, this desert lies on the eastern border of Sindh Province and extends to the southeastern parts of the Punjab where it joins the Cholistan desert. District Tharparkar is one of the major parts of this desert. It is mostly deserted and consists of barren tracts of sand dunes covered with thorny shrubs. Since the district is a desert, sweet water is scarce and is available only in some areas of Nagarparkar and Chachro while, in rest of the areas, people consume brackish water.

This district has a huge Hindu community. The Scheduled Castes of Meghwar, Kohli and Bheel are the largest Hindu tribes living in this district. Muslims constitute 59.4 percent of the population, while Hindus are 40.6 percent of the total population. Major Hindu clans of this district are Brahman, Lohana, Malhi, Rajputs, Khatri, Bheel, Meghwar and Kolhi. The upper caste Hindus include Lohanas, Mistri-Suthars, Maheshwari and Thakurs.

Rabari community dwells in Nagarparkar tehsil of Tharparkar District. This community is an off-shoot of the Rajputs, but it has lower social status as compared to other Rajputs of the area. Members of this community are gypsies. The men of this community graze cattle and migrate seasonally to barrage areas (in local context 'barrage area' is land where canal water is used for cultivation).

Kolhis and Bheel men are engaged in hunting, domestication of animals and birds, labor, and agriculture based on rainfall in the monsoon season. Besides bringing water from water-sources, doing household chores and taking care of children, Kolhi and Bheel women make applique work quilts called rillies, embroider (called Heer Bharat in the local language) and stitch dresses with Gaj work. Among Scheduled Castes, Meghwars are relatively educated which has given them an upward mobility.

Demography

In Pakistan, male population exceeds that of women and it is among those countries where life expectancy for females, at birth, is less than that of males. Sex ratio in district Tharparkar is 121 male per 100 females. Though there could be other possible reasons for this difference in male to female ratio, one probable reason could be underreporting of females during surveys. Besides, a high maternal mortality rate poor health care and non-availability of basic health facilities at the district and provincial level are likely factors for this difference.

District Tharparkar, like majority of the other districts in Sindh, is rural by its characteristics as 96 percent of the population resides in rural areas. Out of the total population, 55 percent are males and 45 percent are females (USAID 2014a).

About Mirpurkhas

Geography, Culture and Ethnicities

District Mirpurkhas is an ancient city with a rich history. This region has seen the reign of different rulers. The region used to be a Buddhist settlement known as Kahoo Jo Daro. Some of the remaining Stupas (a dome-shaped structure erected as a Buddhist shrine) can still be seen an archeological site of the district. After the independence of Pakistan in 1947, because of its proximity with the Indian border, Mirpurkhas became the first city to welcome refugees from India to Pakistan. It acted as a primary railway junction for the first trains to come across Rajasthan to the Sindh province.

In 1990, Mirpurkhas was carved out of district Tharparkar and was given the status of a district. This district is bounded by district Umerkot on the east, district Sanghar on the north, district Tando Allahyar on the west, district Badin on the south-west and district Tharparkar & Badin on the south. The land structure of this district comprises plain fertile lands suitable for agriculture. Due to a well-organized canal system, water is available for the whole district, resulting in grasslands and irrigated crop lands.

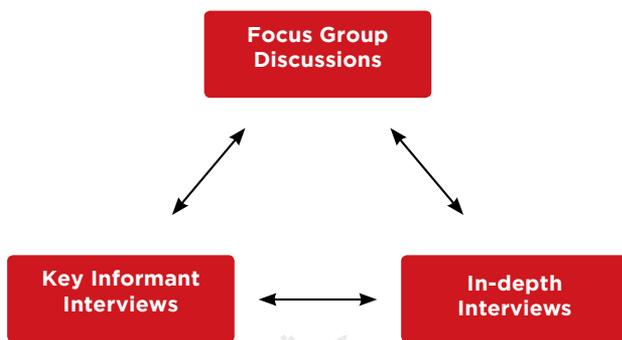
People of this district are pre-dominantly Sindhi speaking (62.5 percent), but a significant number of Urdu speaking population (25.9 percent) also reside here. Islam is the religion of the majority in this district as 80.37 percent of the population is Muslim, followed by 17.7 percent Hindus and a small minority of Christians (USAID 2014b).

Demography

The total population of the area is 1,592,981 (males 828,367 and females 764,613 females) which show that 52 percent are males and 48 percent are females

3. Data Collection Techniques

Data was collected using a triangular approach where three qualitative tools including KIIs, IDIs and FGDs were used. The sample was randomly selected with support from Baahn Beli. An Inclusion/ Exclusion criteria was provided to the organization to ensure that right sample was selected for the research. All research participants were given a briefing while taking their consent which included an overview and scope of the study.



3.1 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

KIIs provide information about the present as well as the past. Moreover, key informants help in introducing the researcher to the community and vice versa, and in identifying other possible sources of data e.g. persons of prominence for relevant information. KIIs also enable cross-checking information from other data sources, such as FGDs.

For this study, six KIIs were conducted. Three were employees of a local NGO working on gender equality; two were teachers and one had a background in agriculture, but he also had considerable experience in mobilizing locals for imparting education and creating awareness about child marriages. It was ensured that these six were not only members of the community, but also knowledgeable about their culture, had a rich vocabulary, were sensitive, expressive, willing to participate, and an undisputed person in the community.

Key Informant Interviews		
Marital Status	Mirpurkhas	Tharparkar
Married Men	1	4
Married Women	-	1

3.2 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted to understand how young men of the target areas acquire gender related norms and notions about masculinity while growing up. For this purpose, 15 participants were first chosen by Baahn Beli. After interviewing first four participants,

snowball technique was used to identify potential interviewees.

It was important that respondents for IDIs were out-going and willing to talk; informed about youth and youth activities in the community; and less inclined to stereotypes and prejudice. Some of the broad areas that were discussed included socialization, childhood experiences and messages, peers/colleagues, patriarchy/gender, hierarchies and power relations among men, relations between men and women, expressions of masculinity, sexuality, violence, and ethnicity.

In-depth Interviews		
Marital Status	Mirpurkhas	Tharparkar
Married Men	8	-
Married Women	1	-
Unmarried Men	-	4
Unmarried Women	-	2

3.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

In qualitative data collection, it is important to get data from different individuals and through different tools, for the purpose of triangulation. Focus Group Discussions were conducted for this purpose. A total of four FGDs were conducted with 33 participants. While arranging groups for FGDs, it was ensured that the groups were homogeneous, that is age difference within and between the groups as not too big, same marital status, e.g. either all married or all unmarried, there were no close relatives, and male and females were kept in separate groups. The designated places for the FGDs

were neutral and comfortable. Two researchers were involved in the process, a moderator and note taker.

Like in the KIIs and the IDIs, the thematic areas of discussion included questions around the relations between men and women (what are the qualities in a man that women generally appreciate, why? what type of women do men generally like and why? who can be a man's best friend, a man or a woman?; who are more trustworthy, men or women? and what is the definition of an obedient and a dis-obedient woman? Issues of sexuality such as the relationship between physical strength and sexual prowess; a man's expression of sexual prowess; virginity, puberty, and the basis of sexual and other relationships with other men and women; roles of men and women; eve teasing; violence against women in intimate relationships; and how caste and religious affiliation affect relationships.

Focus Group Discussions*			
Mirpurkhas		Tharparkar	
Married Men	Married Women	Young Men	Young Women
8	11	7	7

*Inclusion/ Exclusion Criteria for FGD Participants

1. Married participants had to be married for at least 2 years.
2. The upper age limit for married participants was 40.
3. The upper age limit for un-married participants was 30.

4. Had to be natives of Mirpurkhas or Tharp District.

4. Local Partner

The study was carried out in collaboration with Baahn Beli which is a local organization working across Sindh, particularly in Tharparkar and Mirpurkhas districts. It 'aims to strengthen existing community-based organizations which enable equitable participation by all members of the community, especially girls and women in activities that promote better health, education, access to basic services and other such relevant processes with the aim of enhancing knowledge, capacity and productivity.' The organization supported Rozan in identifying potential respondents at the initial level; and also helped in conducting interviews in the local language.

5. Ethical Considerations

Prior to the field interviews, questionnaires were pre-tested. Based on the findings, it was decided that a male researcher would conduct interviews with males, and a female researcher would conduct interviews with females. This was decided in order to respect local culture and customs.

Prior to each interview, a Consent Form was shared with the respondents. In case where respondents were unable to read, the Form was read aloud by the researcher. Afterwards, two copies were signed. One copy was given to the respondent and one remained with the researcher.

The Form contained information that the participants would not receive any direct benefit for their participation; however, there may be some long-term benefits for the communities living in Mirpurkhas and Tharparkar. Furthermore, it was also shared that since this was a voluntary process, they were free to not answer any question or to withdraw from the interview whenever they wanted.

A technical review committee was formed to review the research design and questionnaires to ensure the safety, security and participant's confidentiality.

Audio recorders were used with participant's consent to record the interviews. However, all voice recordings are stored in a secure password protected device with access only to the research team. All audio records were deleted once the recordings were transcribed. All participants are given different names to protect their identity.

Respondents were also given telephone numbers of the authorities with whom they could register their complaints in case of any issue with the study or interviewee. Moreover, keeping in mind the sensitive nature of the issues discussed, it was expected that some respondents may become psychologically disturbed. For this, they were given numbers of Rozan's Helpline for assistance.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

1. Construction of Masculinity: Paving Path to Violence

1.1 Birth Rituals

For most parents, birth of a child is a time of celebration when families and communities come together to honor and welcome the new born. Rituals and ceremonies that mark a child's birth and survival are common worldwide, for example, male circumcision and baptism. But there are many others that are less visible. They provide an immediate sense of connection as well as inclusion of the child into the clan, tribe or community. Although babies are not aware, these rituals are important for them as well. Along with being the first introduction to who they are, they also serve as guideposts as they grow and develop their own sense of identity, sometimes good and at times, especially in a patriarchal culture, not so good.

In Mirpurkhas and Tharparkar, there is a marked difference in the birth rituals of a boy and a girl. When baby boy is born, familial celebrations begin with loud announcements.

A metal plate is hanged to announce the birth of a baby boy, regardless of the time of day or night. On the other hand, there is no such broadcast at the birth of a girl. People may come to know after days that a girl was born in their neighborhood.

- Respondent from Tharparkar

A series of rituals are performed on the birth of a boy. An important one is the *Chatti* Ceremony performed when the baby is six days old. This ceremony is primarily performed by the women and takes place late at night. Traditionally, the mother of the newborn lights a *diya* (lamp). This lamp along with a red pen and paper are placed on a wooden plank for the Hindu goddess of destiny to write the future of the newborn.

Hinduism is one of the oldest religions with many variations in traditions, ceremonies and beliefs. Another important ceremony is *Namkaran* or *Namakarana Sanskar* (naming ceremony). Often held on the 11th day after birth (can also extend till 40th day), it is the first *samskara*, or sacrament, in Hindu's life, and a ceremony to name and bless the child. Although the ceremony is common, there are differences in how it is performed. The people involved are the parents of the newborn, the paternal and maternal grandparents and few close relatives and friends.

Celebrations on the birth of a boy continue for forty days during which the parents give alms and distribute sweets. Relatives and neighbors visit the 'lucky parents' and congratulate them. A female respondent reported that when the first daughter is born, her birth is celebrated with the same joy as that of a boy, but when a second daughter is born, people start taunting and the father is asked by

his family and friends to marry again. However, we found that in the Meghwar community, the situation is slightly different. A Meghwar woman might have to face such taunts and threat of second marriage of her husband, after the birth of fourth or fifth daughter.

Construction of masculinity starts with such rites of passage, marking the initiation of a lifelong process, joy and happiness on the birth of a baby boy and sadness and solemnity on birth of a girl child. A superior hierarchy is initiated. These ceremonies have intricate gendered overtones. For example, mantras (blessings) are chanted when naming the baby boy, but not during the naming of baby girl. Even the names of a girl and boy child are decided from a gendered lens. A boy's name should consist of two or four letters, while a girl's should consist of an odd number of letters that is 3, 5 or 7 because letters in odd numbers predominate in *Shakti* (energy), while those in even numbers are *Shiv* (predominant, powerful).

1.2 Early Childhood – Laying Foundation of a ‘Real Man’

‘Being a boy I had a distinct position in family’ and ‘boys are given preferential treatment as compared to girls’ were statements heard from most in-depth interviewees. All the respondents, regardless of age and sex, reported that generally at the community level, a difference did exist in the treatment of girls and boys. However, the respondents from urban settings and

from Meghwar community reported that the situation has changed in their families. For example, Meghwar families, educate their girls and men are more inclined towards education and secure government jobs so that their community can earn more respect in the areas and there is economic and social mobility in this community.

1.3 Preferential Treatment (Food, Health, Education)

Out of 15 respondents of IDIs, 11 said that boys are given a superior position as compared to girls. They get more attention and liberties. Only 3 respondents were of the view that there is no significant difference. Of the three respondents, two were from Meghwar community. A 35-year old married man shared, ‘difference is like day and night. The brother is given more importance because he would be staying in the same house, but the sister has to leave the house one day.’ Another respondent from the same community said:

If the father brings anything (for his children), the son or sons have the first right to it. Everything is given to boys first. I have experienced this personally since I was given more importance as compared to my sister.

-Male respondent, IDI

Evidence in this study has proven that girls are given less food and healthcare than boys both in quality and quantity, and therefore are undernourished compared to male children. When food

is prepared in the house, it is served to boys (men) first and then given to the girls (women). Certain foods like desi ghee (oil extracted from butter) are given to men as 'they need more energy and power.'

I observed this not only in my neighborhood but also at my own house.

-Male IDI respondent

Bus hamary yahaan larki ko kum he samjha jata hay (Girls are just considered less whether it's about education or something else

- Female FGD respondent

This kind of treatment starts a vicious cycle of superiority complex among boys. On the other hand, neglect and inferior treatment of girls lead to serious problem of health, wellbeing and emotional stability etc. If and under nourished or malnourished woman gives birth to female child, the survival chances of the new born are already jeopardized. On the other hand, **men grow up believing that preferential treatment is not a favor but their basic right and women have been created to serve them.** However, one male respondent from Tharparkar did say that there was:

No difference in the dietary patterns. Whatever food is available is shared among family members alike.

A young male respondent from Mirpurkhas reported that women cannot eat meat as they cannot digest

it. This point was further explored in the interviews with Key Informants and other respondents from Tharparkar revealed that because women generally housebound and because of religious believe do not prefer to cook meat while men can have meat (barbeque) in the market place.

Our study has shown that in general, girls are expected to help at home, either with household work like washing and cooking or with taking care of younger siblings. Since girls spend more time performing domestic duties, this just perpetuates the myth that girl's education is a waste of time and money both for her and her family since her primary job is to look after the house, get married, have children and raise them. When children are raised with such beliefs, they are bound to consider themselves as inferior or superior sex later in life.

The birth of a male child is viewed as an economical uplift because he is expected to not only protect and contribute towards family household expenses, but also produce offspring and pass on the family name. This expectation gives higher position to man as compared to a woman at family level. At the same time, these expectations put pressure on men to be fertile, energetic and emotionally well placed. If a man fails to produce offspring, he is ridiculed, taunted and his 'manliness' is challenged.

A female child is treated as a guest who has to leave her parent's and move to her

real house after marriage. During a FGD with women, the respondents shared 'if we spend money on our son's schooling, he will help us in our future.' If a girl child asks to go to school, she is told, 'we will send you to your in-laws' house (after marriage) so it useless investing in you.'

Roles, responsibilities and expectations are, therefore, set and engrained from a very early age. A boy is responsible for earning money and giving it to his sister, daughter, wife and mother. The daughter, wife and mother are responsible for serving and respecting him, which includes 'providing him hot meals on time and keeping his clothes ironed.'

1.4 Games and Chores

This study found a big difference in the time a female child and a male child spends on various activities such as domestic work and social/resting time. Girls spend more time on domestic work than the male child and therefore, has lesser hours for social activity/resting. Boys are also encouraged to play games and socialize with people to improve their masculine traits. Till the age of 8-10 years, boys and girls play games together however, later both genders are segregated. **Boys are also discouraged to play games which are traditionally associated with girls and it is seen as degrading to play or act in a softer manner.** While girls are told to 'lay the table' or 'cut vegetables', or 'sew', the boys are given outdoor tasks. The division of these seemingly trivial

tasks forces an inchoate awareness of invidious normative gender stereotypes on children from a dangerously impressionable age. The study's respondents shared that:

Football is a hard game and only boys can play it, girls cannot play football. A man should play hard games only.

Girls play bata in Tharparkar, when we used to play it, we were told that it's a girls' game, why are YOU playing this game?

It was found that in the study areas, pakran pakrai, Atti Dakkar, Lakoti, champarh, Bata and Dari are considered 'girlish' and for girls while football, cricket, kabadi, bike racing and volley ball are played by the boys. Even within these games, there is segregation of 'real boys' games and 'soft boys' games. **Hard games include football and kabadi which require more physical strength. On the other hand, cricket is considered a game for boys with lesser physical power.**

It is this early gender socialization that lays the foundations for stereotypes in gender roles. Such parental and societal expectations from boys and girls, their selection of gender-specific toys/games, and/or giving gender-based chores force children to face norms that define 'masculine' and 'feminine' from an early age.

1.5 Inculcating Avoidance to Femininity

In the rural areas of Pakistan, especially those in interior Sindh where this study was conducted, construction of masculinity also lies in the avoidance of femininity or 'womanness'. It is this which makes particular forms of masculinity not an incidental effect of the normal day to day affairs but a vital precondition of them. We found that not only do boys receive preferential treatment, but are also taught not to 'behave like a girl' and avoid activities which are 'girlish' or 'girly'.

The discussion about the kind of games children indulged in is one example. Boys who continued to play 'girlish games' after crossing the ten-year mark were taunted and asked to avoid such games. Likewise, boys were asked not to do household chores considered to be a girl's responsibility:

I used to live in a hostel in the city. I came home and started sweeping my room. My mother came to me and got angry. She immediately called my sister and scolded her for not cleaning my room.

- Unmarried man, ID1

When I was 7-8 years old, I had henna/mehendi¹ on my hands. When my father saw it, he said, "Boys do not have this. Go and clean it up"

- Unmarried man, ID1

¹ Mehndi or henna is a paste that is created from the powdered leaf of the henna plant and is made into designs applied on the hands, feet and sometimes hair of men and women.

Again as mentioned before, one of the reasons for boys' greater avoidance of 'feminine' activities is that most adults respond more negatively to boys who choose activities typical of girls than vice versa. Fathers and peers play a particularly active role in instilling male behaviors in their sons and enforcing the avoidance of feminine behaviors. However, as can be seen from some of the comments shared earlier, even mothers have a hand in indoctrinating such value systems.

1.6 Mobility

Men grow up believing it is their birth right to be served by women and they use violence and abuse as a tool to ensure subordination from women. When a girl reaches 8-10 years of age, she is told to stay inside the home.

However, in rural settings of Tharparkar, the situation is slightly different. Kohli and Bheel women go out to collect fuel wood and water. Rabari women also have more freedom of movement since despite living in Goths (villages), they go to the main market to buy groceries and other necessities of life.

2. Manifestation of Masculinity

This chapter is divided into two segments: 1) Characteristics of a 'Real Man' and 2) Manifestation.

2.1 Characteristics of a 'Real Man'

2.1.1 Appearance

Most research participants shared a common view that facial hair is the major

indicator of masculinity. Moustache is perceived as a key identification of a man. Having moustache also indicates that now the boy has turned into a man – means he has grown up sexually.

“Keeping a moustache is a sign of masculinity. If a boy does not have a moustache then he is called LOOSI (useless) or he is told that he looks like a girl. There is a saying “Much bina mard kehrda” (A man without moustache is not a man.)”

unmarried man, IDI

2.1.2 Sexual Potency & Fertility

A real man is able to control his wife through sexual prowess. He is the one who has enormous sexual power and stamina to satisfy his wife’s desires. These were the types of responses received from the respondents. All men during IDIs shared the pressure that a man had to face regarding sexual performance. Young respondents (unmarried) shared that among peers a man is considered sexually potent and a real man if he can have sex two to three times in one hour.

Similarly, it was shared by the male respondents that a man who is sexually impotent is not considered a real man. A married man who cannot produce a baby is said “badnaseeb (unlucky) and manhoos (cursed)”. This finding was different from that of Rozan’s earlier research that was conducted at Rehmatabad, Rawalpindi where the infertile man was bashed by the peers but was not considered unlucky. In

Tharparkar, general community avoids an impotent man considering him a bad omen and ‘unlucky’.

There was no obvious difference in this with respect to castes, rather all men were described as desiring physical and carnal prowess and understood it as an important element of masculinity.

2.1.3 Physical Strength

Real men are supposed to be muscular. A man who is physically weaker is considered a lesser man. It is perceived that only men can do hard jobs.

Some distinction was seen between the strength of a man and a woman. Men were considered stronger and it was found through interviews that it was generally believed that certain tasks (which require more strength) can only be done by man.

“Only man can climb mountains”

“Only man can do hard labor (mazdoori)”

It was hard for the men to accept that there are tasks they may not be able to perform. On asking, “Is there any task that men cannot do?” 70% of male respondents said that this was not true. 30% said that women can also perform multiple tasks. This is given by Nature. Men cannot multi-task. Women can lift 3-4 vessels (Matkas) on their head but men cannot do that. Similarly, men cannot embroider (*bharat bharna*).

When talking about tasks which could not be done by men; they found it

difficult to talk about any weakness. One respondent who shared that men cannot lift 3-4 pitchers on their head said in his very next sentence that women cannot lift pitchers in their two hands at the same time. It's men's specialty to lift two pitchers (one in each hand) at the same time. Similarly, the man who shared that men cannot embroider hurriedly commented that it was due to unavailability of time, not because men's inability to embroider.

2.1.4 Having good social contacts gives a man power

Besides, sexual potency and physical strength enjoying good social circle was seen as a source of strength for a man. All male respondents of IDIs (except two men from Thakur community), said that having a good group of men standing by their side was a sign of a 'real' man. One possible reason could be that since these respondents do not enjoy influential position in the society. So they needed to have a group of people around so that in case of any difficulty at social level, group power could be used to protect oneself. On the other hand, this characteristic was not reported in the interviews with Thakur community who's an influential group at local level of Nagarparkar (a tehsil of Tharparkar).

Three male respondents who belonged to rural areas of Tharparkar said that a man who has good contacts with local influential people and has links with

police is considered a real man. Some participants also quoted that having weapons and money makes a man powerful.

On the other hand, respondents from Meghwar community settled in urban areas of Islamkot (a tehsil of Tharparkar) and Mithi (district headquarter of Tharparkar) considered education and ability to speak publically as core characteristics of a real man. One of the respondents quoted, "I was impressed by the speeches of Rasool Bux Palejo. His arguments have strength and make sense" - (IDI, unmarried man from Mithi).

2.2 Womens' Definition of a 'Real Man'

For women a real man was the one who respects women, who supports women of his family and helps in household chores. During FGD with married women it was shared by the participants that it is not necessary that a man is educated and earning well, but it is important that he treats his family well.

Most of the women described a real man by disapproving certain traits and practices. A real man is:

- One who does not drink alcohol, Who does not commit violence,
- One who does not harass women,
- One who does not beat his wife,
- One who does not behave rudely with anyone, and
- One who is not nosy

It was interesting to note how women viewed a 'real' man.

2.3 Masculinity – Blinding Men to Violence

Violence was also taken as a right of men in many of the accounts for what appeared to be different reasons: first, because that is the way a man resolves his disputes; second, because some limited violence was accepted by them as normal. Some men believed that men will be violent because absence of violence was viewed with suspicion or as an act of cowardice or lack of 'manliness'. Some unmarried men quoted their experiences of witnessing their father's violence against their mothers.

It was found that men were blind to certain forms of violence – not considering an aggressive act as violence. To quote a few, following acts were not identified as violence by most men, while most women identified these acts as violence:

- To have sex without consent in marital relationship
- Not to give space to women to explain her point of view or thoughts
- Occasionally beating (it includes slapping and beating with a shoe) one's wife

Conversely, it was found that most women have internalized the patriarchal norms and have accepted hegemonic masculinity to an extent where they are alright with violence against women. For example, married women shared that it

is not violence if a woman is beaten by her husband for committing a mistake. An occasional slap from the husband did not constitute violence, according to these women.

Generally, men talked about violence as though it was an external phenomenon, in the third person. While sharing incidents of violence, they used words like some men do this, certain types of men do this, bad men do this, etc. Women, on the other hand, either reported their own experiences of being victims and or as witnesses of violence. They used words like 'we women', 'I experienced', 'my husband does this', 'we face violence' and so on.

2.4 Violence as a Tool to Exert Control & Prove Masculinity

An individual man's psychological problems, sexual frustrations, unbearable life pressures or some innate urge towards aggression have often been cited as 'reasons' to explain and even justify male violence. They oversimplify a complex reality: men have been taught to relate to the world in terms of dominance and control, and they have been taught that violence is an acceptable method of maintaining control, resolving conflicts, and expressing anger. In this study, we found that a woman may be subjected to violence due to any or no particular reason at all; and that some men also resort to violence to ensure that they suppress their women and demonstrate their power over them:

Some men beat their wives to express their masculinity.

-Married Man, IDI

Others resort to violent behavior when a woman fails to complete her 'required tasks':

She is beaten and becomes a victim of violence because of slight delays in preparing food or completing any task.

Unmarried Man, IDI

In response to a question about the 'definition of an obedient woman', all male respondents talked about married women. Moreover, every single male respondent defined obedience of a woman in terms of her submission to the in-laws.

Usay susral ki choti choti baton ka bura nahe manana chahiye. Sab ki khidmat karni chahiye, susral me apny mekay ki tarefain nhe karni chahiye. (She should not react negatively to her in laws minor comments. She should take care of all her in-laws, and not praise her parents while living with them.)

-Married Men, FGD

For men, it was acceptable to be lenient with his siblings and to support them in daily household chores but once a girl is married, all the household responsibility (including looking after the in-laws) falls on the shoulders of the newlywed. In general, the community and the family, in particular, expect and demand men to be the controlling partner in their marital

relationship.

The study revealed that physical, sexual, and psychological violence on female members of family was most visible in marital relationships. Incidents of physical violence against women were found to be more common among Bheels and Kohlis as compared to Rabaris and Meghwars. This finding corresponds to the fact that Kohlis and Bheels manifest more traits of hegemonic masculinity especially aggression and control.

2.5 Nexus between Ethnicity, Masculinity and Violence

Ethnicity and locale appeared to be a determining factor in defining a real man. Kolhis, who reside mainly in rural areas and have lowest level of education with highest poverty rate, viewed wealth, weapons and connection with powerful people as signs of power. On the other hand, Meghwar who live (mostly) in urban areas and are educated as compared to Kolhis and Bheels, consider education and knowledge and power to speak on social issues and impress audience by arguments as characteristics of a real man.

Definition and prevalence of violence also varied among different castes. An educated, settled in urban area, Meghwar acknowledged more forms of violence as compared to Bheel living in suburbs of Mirpurkhas and Kohli living in far-flung areas of Thar.

Meghwar settled in relatively developed areas (with basic infrastructure like

roads, electricity, schools) reported responsibility on women of fetching water from wells located far from residential place, as violence. On the other hand, for a Kohli living in the desert, fetching water was a regular part of a woman's job. She has to do this despite her personal conditions, and harsh weather.

“Woman is asked to fetch water even if she is pregnant”.

(Unmarried Man, IDI)”

Men from Kohli community do not consider slapping or abusing women as committing violence. This was reflected in the quoted practices.

“Agar waqt par kam nahin kary ge to mochny to khai gi” (she will be beaten if she does not complete her tasks on time)

- Married Man, IDI

Among Thakurs of Tharparkar, there is a tradition of taking teenage daughters to India for wedlock because the Hindu religion does not allow marriage between individuals who share the same bloodline. When a boy or a girl reaches his/her teens, a suitable partner belonging to their own caste who does not share similar bloodline is looked for in different villages. However, if a suitable match is not found then they travel to India to get them married off. In such cases, girls cannot visit their parents after marriage. Moreover, the visit to India may not succeed every time since visas are only

given for a few months or weeks. In this case, Thakurs leave their daughters with relatives or acquaintances in India along with money. The relatives are advised to find a suitable match. It was reported that many of these relatives or acquaintances misappropriate the money and abandon the girls who, ultimately, end up in brothels in India.

In the Thakur community, it was assumed that a man should prove his masculinity through sexual prowess. We were told:

Being born in a Thakur family does not mean you are a Thakur (real man) you have to prove it and one way is through sexual prowess.

- Married male respondent, IDI

2.6 Rabari Masculinity - “a Positive Deviation”

Rabari is a unique community in the context of violence against women and masculinity. The research found least cases of violence in this community. Generally, men do not beat women. In case of severe anger, men prefer to leave the premises instead of beating. Moreover, women of this community are more empowered as compared to that of Kolhis and Bheels'. Women of Rabari community contribute in the economic activities and economic decisions in the house. The decisions and deals of buying and selling goats, sheep and cows are made by the women. Similarly, grocery shopping is also done by women as they have more understanding and ability to

bargain. In response to the question 'Who is more intelligent? Men or Women?' The men of this community (to our surprise) responded that women were more intelligent as compared to men:

“Our women are so good at calculations that shopkeepers cannot beat them.”

Women of this community reported physical violence, but frequency and intensity was much lower than in other communities of the area. Respondents reported that there were zero suicide rates among Rabari women. This is indicative of a direct relationship between violence and suicide.

History of Wearing Black Dress in Rabari Community

For the last 250 years, Rabari community has been wearing black clothes to mourn the death of King Soomro, who died, while fighting King Rai of Kutch to save the honor of the Rabari women

The village of Rabari Somli was situated between two villages Aadegam and Modro which was inhabited by the Rabari tribe. Their livelihood depended mainly on livestock. There was a beautiful Rabari girl who caught the eye of King Rai of Kutch (Kutch-jo-Rai). The King told the Rabari people that he wanted to marry her. The Rabari people could not refuse right away, so they asked the King to give them six months to decide. During that time the Rabari people started planning on how to save the girl. In the ensuing six months Rabari men began sending their women to Sindh during nightfall, so that no one sees their movement and the King does not find out what is happening. The women folk of the Rabari tribe migrated to Sindh and

took refuge in Soomro, which was ruled by the Soomro clan. After six months, King Rai of Kutch came to the Rabari village in Somali with his troop to claim his to be wife but he saw that there were no women in the village. He was told that the women of the Rabari tribe had migrated to Sindh and were under the protection of Dodo Soomro.

Soomro was killed in the battle with King Rai and since then the Rabari tribe have been mourning his sacrifice for saving the honor of their women and wear black attire. This black color has become the identity of this community.

2.7 Restrictive Emotionality

The notion that men should refrain from expressing their emotions is a hallmark norm of traditional masculinity, despite growing evidence that this type of behavior can be quite harmful. In fact, restrictive emotionality is the gender norm most consistently linked to a wide variety of negative psychological outcomes such as reduced psychological resilience, elevated stress, depression, anxiety, psychological distress, anger and violence. Unfortunately, restrictive emotionality is a dysfunctional emotion regulation strategy since it indicates a tendency to suppress the expression of emotion.

In this study, men and women reported that the former verbally express emotions like sadness, joy, anger, frustration about outside matters to family members like mother and wife, but do not express fear to their spouse, fearing ridicule from her. No one shared any instance of crying, seeking physical comfort, or

any other form of expressing emotions and seeking comfort. Men did not share feelings related to honor, sexual assault, violence and rape incidents with their female family members.

2.8 Men – the Protector of ‘Honor’

In Pakistan, one of the most commonly mentioned reasons for imposing restrictions on women is ‘culture’ particularly the concepts of *ghairat* (honor). Through this study in the heart of rural Sindh, it has become clear that the concept of honor, and how it plays out in changing structures of masculinity, is critical for transforming gender relations. Most Hindu women were not allowed to go outside because of fear that the family would lose their ‘honor’ if someone touched or abused their women i.e. daughters and sisters. Men accompany women outside the home ‘to protect them,’ acting as ‘guardians’ of female members of the family, even if the guardian is a young boy of ten accompanying an older female member.

‘Burden to protect the honor of the family’ was identified as another form of violence that women (mostly unmarried) have to face.

Due to this ‘burden’, girls are married at an early age. Respondents reported four main reasons of early marriages: 1) **fear of being raped by a feudal lord or any other influential;** 2) **fear of losing family honor in case a girl gets involved with a boy before marriage;** 3) **Watta Satta²;** and 4) **unavailability of resources to invest in girls’ nourishment and upbringing.**

On the other hand, boys have the liberty to do whatever they want. The society ignores a boy’s sexual relationship, assuming that the boy will mend his ways after marriage.

In our area if a boy becomes spoiled meaning if he starts having a relationship with a girl, then he is immediately married off so that he will ‘get better’ after marriage.

(Unmarried Men, FGD)

² ‘Watta Satta is a tribal custom in Pakistan of exchanging brides between two families. At the time of marriage, both families trade brides. That is, both families must have a daughter and a son and be willing to betroth them to a daughter and son of the other family. For example, in order for one to marry off his son, he must also have a daughter to marry off in return to the same family.’ (Aurat Foundation 2015).

2.9 Masculinity in Language

During IDIs and FGDs, respondents shared local proverbs and terms used to describe masculinity. These words reflect how enactment of masculinity is embedded in local culture and language.

Mard tay Faddu ni tay jaddu مرد تڦڏو ن ت جڏو (If he is a man he will fight or else he is not a man). This proverb is used to justify the violence and aggression expressed by young boys and men. If a boy fights, he is considered a real man and it's quite normal (rather mandatory) for a man to develop conflicts and fight.

Much bina mard kehra مڇ بنا مرد ڪهڙو (No moustache no manhood). This is self-explanatory sentence that describes physical appearance of a 'real man'. If a man does not have moustache, it means he is like a woman - means he is a lesser man.

Mard tay Rano مرد ت رانو (Rana was a real man). Mard tay Dodo مرد ت دودو (Dodo was a real man). These proverbs have a historical context. Dodo Soomro was the king who died fighting another king to protect and save the honor of Rabri women. Thus Dodo/Rana was considered a real man who lost his life while protecting the honor of women.

Nang ji hifazat mard ji shan aa ننگن جي حفاظت مردن جو شان آ (Protecting women is an honor for a man). This sentence is used to make men recall and remember that it is their responsibility to protect the honor of a woman. This is used in a

positive sense. But, at the same time, it burdens men as they are the upholders of moral values in the society.

Murs thi ya murs jy paray me reh مڙس ٿي يا مڙس جي پاڙي ۾ ره (Be a man or live in man's neighborhood). This is used for men who avoid conflict and fight and do not take revenge.

Majju مڇو (Henpecked husband) - a person who takes his wife's opinion in every decision and lacks strength to decide on his own.

Bailo ٻائيلو - a man who spends time at home with his wife and supporting her in household chores. This word is also used for a man who spends most of his time among family women (spending much time among family women is not appreciated)

Pandi پانڊي - a man who helps his wife in household chores and spends much time with her

Wanjheio وانجهيو - a man who does not have children. He is considered manhoos (cursed). People avoid him.

CONCLUSION

The Humqadam report amply demonstrates that the Pakistani society, whether Muslim, (as found in Rozan's work in the community of Rehmatabad in Rawalpindi) or Hindu both share identical belief that 'men are superior and women are inferior beings'.

This report focuses on different castes from the Hindu community residing in the districts of Mirpurkhas and Tharparkar in Sindh province. However, what is interesting is the variation found in the treatment of women in the communities under study; Meghwar, Rabari, Kohli, Thakur and Bheel.

The report analyzes the information gathered at two levels; how society constructs masculinity and what are their manifestations. The construction of masculinity begins from the birth of the baby boy. It begins with forty days of celebrations and sweets and food is served at special ceremonies to rejoice the occasion. On the other hand, baby girl's birth is not even announced. Thus boy's superiority is established.

The study defines a 'real man', as constructed through in-depth interviews, FGDs as a man who sports a moustache and is physically strong. He is virile, sexually potent and sires male babies. Another manifestation of manliness is having power through money, weapons and clout in the community. A man who lacks the above characteristics is not considered man enough. However, for

Meghwar's education and public speaking is also considered as characteristics of a real man.

The study also reveals who is a 'real man' for women of these communities. For them the real man is one who is caring and not violent towards his wife and treats her as equal, even if he does not earn much money.

The FGDs and in-depth interviews also make clear the fact that men have their own set of problems that need attention and solutions. The fact that they are declared the protector and master of women puts considerable pressure on their lives. A very vital and disturbing element of masculinity that was highlighted was restrictive emotionality where men are not allowed to express their emotions and are ridiculed if they do so. This leads to emotional problems that play out in violence against women. At the same time, men have to maintain their manliness and be a "real man" at all times and in places where they are not in control such as being blamed and called names for not fathering a baby boy.

However, situation varies among the four communities because of how each caste is constructed. Bheels and Kohlis are economically less prosperous and more violent towards women as compared to Meghwar and Rabari. Meghwar, being a lower caste, have used education to climb the social mobility ladder and practice gender equality. The more

positive message on masculinity comes from the Rabari, who are not educated but respect their women and as well as practice non violent behavior towards them.

On the other end of the masculinity scale is the Thakur community. They practice hegemonic masculinity where a boy is not a Thakur unless he fulfills the criteria of how a Thakur man should be. He has to prove his masculinity through sexual virility, courage and patience to face challenges, control over women, and upholding the Thakur dominance over lower castes. However, few 'deviations' were also reported.

The study also reveals that women perpetuate the culture of male superiority in the way that mothers push their daughters to pamper their sons, giving preference in food, education, play time as well as accepting son's sexual waywardness as a sign of manliness.

This study is a step forward both in terms of its concept and learning. It is important that men are taken on board in order to create an aware society that protects women from all forms violence but at the same time gives men the space to deal with their own pressures and tensions imposed by the society and culture.

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