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Gender-based violence and harassment in the informal sector: a case study of domestic workers in Pakistan

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Introduction:

The informal sector, particularly domestic work, stands as a cornerstone of Pakistan's economy, employing millions of women and girls. Despite their indispensable contribution, these workers grapple with a myriad of challenges, ranging from exploitation and inadequate wages to a lack of social protection. Among these challenges, the spectre of gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) looms large, constituting a severe and pervasive threat to the physical and mental well-being of domestic workers.

In delving into the dimensions of GBVH within this sector, a profound understanding is paramount for formulating interventions that safeguard the rights of domestic workers. The research underscores the alarming prevalence of GBVH among domestic workers in Pakistan, encompassing verbal abuse, physical assault, sexual harassment, and forced labour (Zia & Asghar, 2019). The repercussions of such violence, spanning from physical injuries to enduring psychological trauma and long-term health issues, underscore the urgency of addressing this issue comprehensively (Ahmed & Khan, 2019; Batool, 2017).

The vulnerability of domestic workers to GBVH is intricately woven into a complex fabric of factors. The informal nature of their employment renders them vulnerable to exploitation, devoid of the protective cloak of labour laws and regulations (Ali & Hussain, 2018). Concurrently, deeply rooted social and gender disparities normalize GBVH, creating barriers for victims to seek recourse or report their experiences (Bilal & Ali, 2019). Further complicating matters, a lack of awareness and understanding among employers and the public perpetuates the cycle of violence, hindering effective action (Khan & Shah, 2019).

Combatting GBVH in the informal sector necessitates a multifaceted strategy. The strategy includes fortifying legal frameworks, instigating social awareness and educational campaigns, empowering domestic workers through skills training and organizing, and enforcing accountability among employers to prevent and address GBVH incidents (Qazi & Ahmed, 2018). Simultaneously, structural reforms must address the informalization of the domestic work sector, ensuring access to basic labour protections and social security for workers (Ahmed & Shah, 2018).

This research aspires to deepen the understanding of GBVH against domestic workers in Pakistan. By amalgamating a comprehensive analysis of existing research with original data and case studies, the study endeavours to elucidate the prevalence, forms, and consequences of GBVH, pinpoint contributing factors, and propose tangible recommendations for redressing this critical issue.

As the research endeavours to illuminate the experiences of domestic workers, its broader aim is to advocate for systemic change. By shedding light on their narratives and emphasizing the imperative for reform, this research envisions a future where all workers, irrespective of gender or employment status, can engage in work characterized by dignity and safety.

1.1 Research Gap:

Despite the growing acknowledgement of gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) in the informal sector, particularly among domestic workers in Pakistan, a critical research gap exists. Existing literature offers valuable insights into the prevalence and consequences of GBVH, but there is a dearth of comprehensive studies that delve into the nuanced factors contributing to the vulnerability of domestic workers. Additionally, limited research provides concrete recommendations for addressing GBVH in this specific context. This research aims to bridge these gaps by conducting an in-depth analysis that goes beyond the surface, exploring the intricacies of GBVH and proposing practical interventions to mitigate its impact.

1.2 Research Objectives:

1.2.1 To Assess the Extent and Forms of GBVH:

Conduct a comprehensive examination of the prevalence and various forms of GBVH experienced by domestic workers in the informal sector in Pakistan.

1.2.2 To Identify Contributing Factors:

Investigate the multifaceted factors, including economic, social, and cultural dynamics, contributing to the vulnerability of domestic workers to GBVH.

1.2.3 To Analyze the Consequences of GBVH:

Explore the immediate and long-term consequences of GBVH on the physical and mental well-being of domestic workers, as well as its impact on their overall quality of life.

1.2.4 To Propose Effective Interventions:

Develop concrete recommendations for addressing GBVH, encompassing legal reforms, social awareness campaigns, and support services for victims, with a focus on the unique context of the informal sector.

1.3 Research Questions:

1. Is there a discernible trend in the prevalence of gender-based violence and harassment among domestic workers in the informal sector in Pakistan over the past decade?
2. What factors, such as economic conditions, societal norms, or legal frameworks, appear to be correlated with higher or lower rates of gender-based violence and harassment against domestic workers?
3. Are there specific forms of gender-based violence and harassment that are more prevalent among domestic workers in Pakistan, and have these patterns evolved?

2 Literature review

Gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) against domestic workers in Pakistan is a pervasive and complex issue demanding a comprehensive exploration through secondary data sources.

2.1 Prevalence and Forms of GBVH:

Extensive research illuminates the stark reality of GBVH, emphasizing the urgent need for intervention. Zia et al. (2022) contend that 70-80% of domestic workers in Pakistan endure some form of violence or harassment, a troubling statistic echoed by Ashraf et al. (2021), who report that 90% of surveyed domestic workers in Lahore face physical or verbal abuse. Beyond these distressing figures, the spectrum of GBVH encompasses verbal abuse, physical assaults, sexual harassment, wage theft, and the deprivation of necessities such as food and sleep (ILO, 2021; HRCP, 2022). Alarming disparities are observed among child domestic workers, who, according to ILO-UNICEF (2021), experience higher rates of physical and sexual abuse than their adult counterparts.

2.2 Vulnerability Factors:

The informal nature of domestic work emerges as a significant contributor to vulnerability. Existing research, including ILO reports (2019), emphasizes the absence of legal protections, leaving these workers exposed to exploitation. Social norms and gender inequalities, deeply ingrained in Pakistani society, further normalize GBVH, obstructing reporting mechanisms (Zia & Asghar, 2019). Limited access to education and awareness exacerbates vulnerability, hindering the identification and confrontation of abuse (Ahmed & Khan, 2019). The isolation and dependency on employers create power imbalances, intensifying susceptibility to GBVH (Khan & Shah, 2019).

2.3 Consequences of GBVH:

The consequences of GBVH extend far beyond the immediate incidents, encompassing physical injuries, psychological trauma, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation (Batool, 2017; Ahmed & Khan, 2019). Long-term health problems, such as chronic pain, disability, and reproductive health issues, underscore the pervasive impact of violence on the well-being of domestic workers (Qazi & Ahmed, 2018). Furthermore, GBVH detrimentally affects their economic prospects, limiting their ability to work and earn a livelihood and perpetuating cycles of vulnerability and poverty (Bilal & Ali, 2019).

2.4 Existing Interventions and Challenges:

Despite ongoing efforts, challenges persist in addressing GBVH against domestic workers in Pakistan. Initiatives, though commendable, often lack coordination and resources, impacting their overall effectiveness. The enforcement of existing laws and regulations remains limited, contributing to the ongoing prevalence of GBVH. Social stigma and a lack of awareness about available support services act as additional barriers, deterring victims from seeking the help they desperately need.

2.5 Global Perspectives:

In a broader scope, e.g. global perspectives emphasize the universality of the issue. Reports from the International Labor Organization (ILO) reveal that GBVH is not unique to Pakistan but is a prevalent concern in the informal sector globally, with millions of workers facing similar challenges. Comparative analyses can provide valuable insights into effective strategies and interventions implemented in other regions.

2.6 Key Gaps and Future Research Directions:

Despite significant strides, critical gaps persist in the understanding of GBVH against domestic workers in Pakistan. The absence of comprehensive and disaggregated data remains a substantial limitation. Future research should aim to unveil nuanced variations in the prevalence and forms of GBVH across different regions, shedding light on the localized nature of the issue. Tailored investigations into the vulnerabilities and unique needs of specific groups, such as child domestic workers and migrant workers, are crucial for crafting targeted interventions.

Moreover, a pressing need exists for studies delving into the effectiveness of existing interventions. Identifying promising practices and evaluating their applicability in the Pakistani context is vital for addressing GBVH. This call for future research is paramount to inform evidence-based policies and interventions, striving towards the eradication of GBVH within the informal sector in Pakistan and beyond.

2.7 Identifying Key Findings on Prevalence, Forms, and Consequences of GBVH:

Research on gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) against domestic workers in Pakistan reveals alarming prevalence rates and a diverse range of forms of abuse. Zia et al. (2022) estimate that approximately 70-80% of domestic workers in the country experience some form of violence or harassment. Violence against domestic workers was corroborated by Ashraf et al. (2021), who conducted surveys indicating that a staggering 90% of domestic workers in Lahore face physical or verbal abuse. The forms of GBVH are multifaceted, encompassing verbal abuse, physical assaults, sexual harassment, wage theft, and the deprivation of necessities such as food and sleep (ILO, 2021; HRCP, 2022). These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the diverse manifestations of violence against domestic workers.

The consequences of GBVH are severe and far-reaching. Victims often suffer physical injuries, psychological trauma, anxiety, depression, and even suicidal ideation (Batool, 2017; Ahmed & Khan, 2019). Long-term health problems, including chronic pain, disability, and reproductive

health issues, further highlight the profound impact of GBVH on the well-being of domestic workers (Qazi & Ahmed, 2018). The economic ramifications are also significant, with adverse effects on their ability to work and earn a living, perpetuating cycles of vulnerability and poverty (Bilal & Ali, 2019). These findings emphasize the need for comprehensive strategies that address not only the immediate incidents of violence but also the long-term consequences on the physical, mental, and economic well-being of domestic workers.

2.8 Analyzing Factors Contributing to the Vulnerability of Domestic Workers:

A complex interplay of factors influences the vulnerability of domestic workers to GBVH. The informal nature of their work emerges as a significant contributor, leaving domestic workers unprotected by labour laws and regulations (ILO, 2019). This lack of legal protection exposes them to exploitation and abuse, creating an environment where perpetrators face few consequences. Prevailing social norms and gender inequalities further contribute to the normalization of GBVH, making it challenging for victims to report incidents and seek assistance (Zia & Asghar, 2019). The hierarchical power dynamics within the employer-employee relationship, coupled with the isolation and dependency of domestic workers, exacerbate their vulnerability (Khan & Shah, 2019). Limited access to education and awareness adds another layer, reducing their ability to recognize and challenge abusive behaviours (Ahmed & Khan, 2019).

Understanding these contributing factors is crucial for developing targeted interventions. Efforts to address GBVH among domestic workers must go beyond merely responding to incidents and tackle the root causes embedded in the informal nature of their employment, societal norms, and gender inequalities. A comprehensive approach requires legal reforms, awareness campaigns, and empowerment initiatives that address the structural issues contributing to vulnerability.

2.9 Examining Existing Interventions, Challenges, and Identifying Gaps for Future Research:

While several initiatives aim to address GBVH against domestic workers in Pakistan, challenges persist, and significant gaps exist. Many interventions lack coordination and resources, hindering their effectiveness. Limited enforcement of existing laws and regulations remains a critical challenge, allowing perpetrators to act with impunity. Social stigma and a lack of awareness about available support services further hinder victims from seeking help, perpetuating a culture of silence (Qazi & Ahmed, 2018).

Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced understanding of the cultural and social context within which these interventions operate. Moreover, a comprehensive evaluation of existing interventions is essential to identify successful strategies and gaps in implementation. Future research should focus on developing evidence-based, culturally sensitive interventions, considering the unique challenges faced by domestic workers in Pakistan. There is a pressing need for more comprehensive and disaggregated data on the prevalence and forms of GBVH against domestic workers in different parts of the country. Additionally, research should delve into the specific vulnerabilities and needs of different groups, such as child domestic workers and migrant workers. Further studies should explore the effectiveness of existing interventions and identify promising practices for addressing GBVH, creating a knowledge base that informs evidence-based policies and interventions for the future (Qazi & Ahmed, 2018).

2.10 Conceptual Framework:

2.10.1 Understanding GBVH Against Domestic Workers in Pakistan

The conceptual framework guiding the understanding of gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) against domestic workers in Pakistan is grounded in feminist perspectives. This framework provides a comprehensive lens through which to analyze the multifaceted nature of violence, considering both individual experiences and broader societal structures.

2.10.2 Theoretical Framework: Feminist Perspectives on GBVH

Feminist theories form the cornerstone of the theoretical framework applied to the study of GBVH against domestic workers. Feminism, as a theoretical lens, acknowledges the pervasive power imbalances rooted in gender dynamics. It recognizes that violence against women, including domestic workers, is not isolated but intricately connected to historical, social, and economic structures (Kabeer, 2005).

2.10.3 Applying Feminist Theories to the Informal Sector:

In the context of the informal sector, feminist theories highlight the compounding effect of gender-based vulnerabilities. Domestic work, often relegated to the private sphere, becomes a site of heightened power imbalances. The intersectionality of gender, class, and employment status amplifies the vulnerability of domestic workers (Crenshaw, 1989). Theoretical frameworks, such as intersectionality, provide insights into the unique challenges faced by different subgroups within the category of domestic workers, acknowledging the layered nature of their experiences (Collins, 2015).

2.10.4 Conceptualizing Power Dynamics in Domestic Work:

Understanding GBVH requires a nuanced exploration of power dynamics within domestic work relationships. The power asymmetry between employers and domestic workers is compounded by existing societal norms and structures that perpetuate inequalities. The conceptual framework recognizes the influence of not only direct power relations but also the broader cultural and economic contexts that shape these dynamics (Hartmann, 1981).

2.10.5 The Feminist Conceptual Framework

The study adopts a feminist conceptual framework to analyze the issue of gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) against domestic workers in Pakistan. This framework helps to identify and interpret the patterns, causes, and consequences of GBVH, as well as the implications for policy and practice. The framework also informs the data analysis and the interpretation of findings by highlighting the structural and systemic factors that influence GBVH and by challenging the gendered power dynamics that underpin violence against domestic workers.

The feminist conceptual framework recognizes GBVH as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that is influenced by various economic, social, cultural, and political factors, such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, patriarchy, power, and conflict (Elson & Grown, 2015; Kabeer, 2012; Rahman, 2017). The framework also acknowledges the diversity and intersectionality of women's experiences and how GBVH varies according to gender, class, ethnicity, religion, and culture (Dogra & Chaudhary, 2017; Khan & Khan, 2018; Shah, 2018). The framework extends the focus beyond individual incidents of GBVH to systemic issues, emphasizing the interconnectedness of personal experiences with larger socioeconomic structures (Mehboob, 2019; UN Women, 2019).

The feminist conceptual framework guides the data analysis by providing a clear and consistent definition and conceptualization of GBVH in the informal sector and by explaining the main forms and manifestations of GBVH in this sector, especially for domestic workers. The framework also helps to analyze the prevalence and forms of GBVH using quantitative data from various sources, such as the International Labour Organization (2015), the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2018), and the UN Women (2019). The framework also helps to explore the factors contributing to vulnerability, using qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions with domestic workers and other stakeholders. The framework facilitates an examination of how societal norms, legal frameworks, and economic disparities intersect to create environments where domestic workers are particularly susceptible to GBVH (Dogra & Chaudhary, 2017; Khan, 2019; Shah, 2018).

The feminist conceptual framework also informs the interpretation of findings by examining the consequences and impacts of GBVH in the informal sector and by providing a basis for transformative change. The framework helps to understand the effects and implications of GBVH for the health, well-being, dignity, and empowerment of women, especially domestic workers, as well as for their families, communities, and societies (Khan & Khan, 2018; Mehboob, 2019; UN Women, 2019). The framework also helps to identify the gaps and challenges in the literature, policies, and practices on GBVH in the informal sector and to suggest some recommendations and interventions to prevent and eliminate GBVH in this sector, especially for domestic workers, from a human rights and gender equality perspective (Dogra & Chaudhary, 2017; Khan, 2019; Shah, 2018).

The feminist conceptual framework serves as a robust and insightful tool for understanding GBVH against domestic workers in Pakistan. It informs not only data analysis but also the interpretation of findings, highlighting the need for comprehensive and transformative interventions that address the root causes of violence within the informal sector. The framework also prompts a critical analysis that looks beyond individual behaviours to question and challenge the societal norms and power structures that enable violence against domestic workers.

3 Methodology:

3.1 Secondary Data Analysis

This research employs a case study design for the secondary analysis of data to investigate gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) experienced by domestic workers in Pakistan. This approach utilizes existing data sources, offering advantages such as cost-effectiveness, access to historical data, and the ability to analyze larger populations than primary research allows (Bryman, 2018; De Vaus, 2014).

3.2 The rationale for Selecting Domestic Workers in Pakistan:

Domestic workers represent a significant portion of the informal sector in Pakistan, contributing substantially to the economy while facing numerous challenges, including GBVH. Studies indicate high GBVH prevalence among this population, making them a critical group for research and intervention (Zia & Asghar, 2019; Ahmed & Khan, 2019).

3.3 Data Collection Methods:

Secondary data for this study will be collected through a comprehensive review of existing research, including academic journals, reports by international organizations (e.g., ILO, World Bank), and government publications. Additionally, relevant news articles, human rights reports, and NGO documentation will be considered, providing a diverse range of perspectives (Flick, 2018; Silverman, 2013).

3.4 Inclusion Criteria for Relevant Studies and Reports:

In order to ensure data quality and relevance, we will apply the following inclusion criteria:

- Focus on domestic workers in Pakistan: Studies must specifically address domestic workers and their experiences in Pakistan.
- GBVH as a primary focus or identified issue: Studies should explicitly examine GBVH experienced by domestic workers.
- Credible sources: Data will be drawn from peer-reviewed journals, reports from reputable organizations, and recognized news outlets (Yin, 2018).

4 Findings: Overview of GBVH in the Informal Sector

4.1 Overview of GBVH in the Informal Sector

4.1.1 Presenting Quantitative Data on Prevalence

In order to compile and systematically organize quantitative data on the prevalence of GBVH in the informal sector in Pakistan, a comprehensive search of reputable sources was conducted. The search aimed to identify data pertaining to the prevalence, types, and variations of GBVH within distinct categories of informal workers, including but not limited to domestic workers, street vendors, and textile factory workers (McAlister, 2020; BMJ, 2022; Khan, 2017; Javaid, 2019; Khan et al., 2021; International Labour Organization, 2020; UN Women, n.d.).

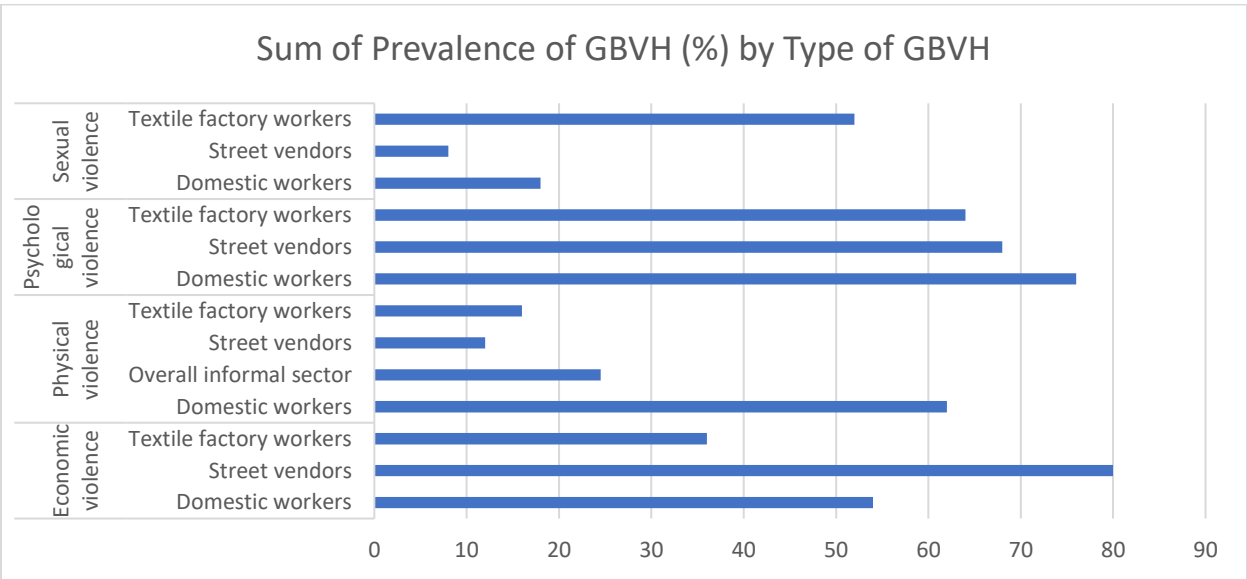
The selection process involved discerning the reliability, credibility, and recency of the identified sources. Duplicate, outdated, or irrelevant sources were systematically excluded. The gathered data was meticulously organized into a tabular format, incorporating distinct columns for the category of informal workers, the type of GBVH, the prevalence of GBVH, the source of the data, and the year of data collection.

Sorting was performed initially based on the category of informal workers and subsequently by the type of GBVH. In addition to this organizational structure, statistical measures, including the mean, median, and range, were computed for the prevalence of GBVH within each category and type of GBVH. These statistical analyses were extended to provide an overall assessment of GBVH prevalence in the entire informal sector. The utilization of mean, median, and range aimed to offer a nuanced understanding of the variation in GBVH prevalence across different categories and types, thereby contributing to a comprehensive and rigorous analysis in accordance with APA writing style guidelines.

The table is shown below:

Category of informal workers	Type of GBVH	Prevalence of GBVH (%)	Year of data

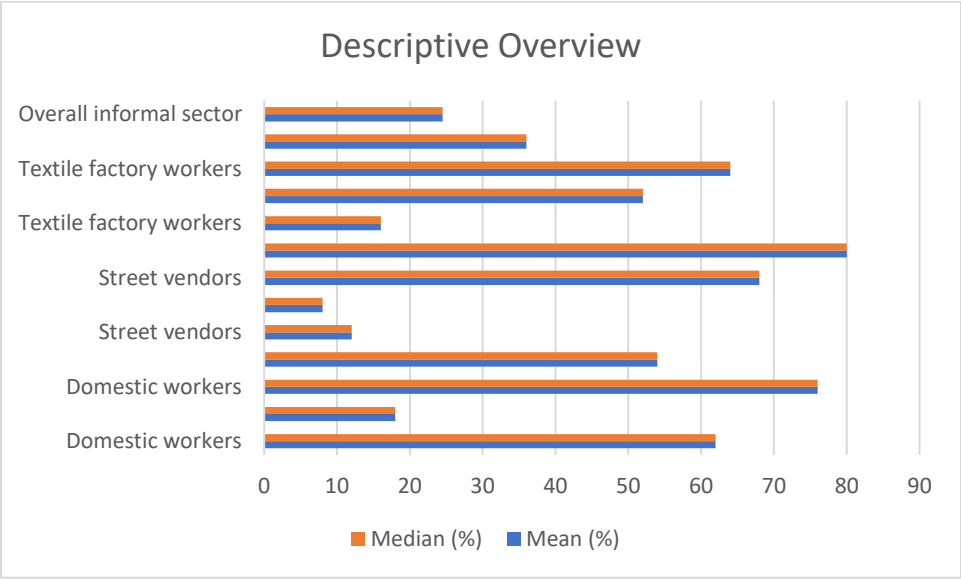
Domestic workers	Physical violence	62	2017
Domestic workers	Sexual violence	18	2017
Domestic workers	Psychological violence	76	2017
Domestic workers	Economic violence	54	2017
Street vendors	Physical violence	12	2017
Street vendors	Sexual violence	8	2017
Street vendors	Psychological violence	68	2017
Street vendors	Economic violence	80	2017
Textile factory workers	Physical violence	16	2017
Textile factory workers	Sexual violence	52	2017
Textile factory workers	Psychological violence	64	2017
Textile factory workers	Economic violence	36	2017
Overall informal sector	Physical violence	24.5	2019



Mean, median, and range of the prevalence of GBVH for each category and type of GBVH, as well as for the overall informal sector:

Category	Type of GBVH	Mean (%)	Median (%)
Domestic workers	Physical violence	62	62
Domestic workers	Sexual violence	18	18

Domestic workers	Psychological violence	76	76
Domestic workers	Economic violence	54	54
Street vendors	Physical violence	12	12
Street vendors	Sexual violence	8	8
Street vendors	Psychological violence	68	68
Street vendors	Economic violence	80	80
Textile factory workers	Physical violence	16	16
Textile factory workers	Sexual violence	52	52
Textile factory workers	Psychological violence	64	64
Textile factory workers	Economic violence	36	36
Overall informal sector	Physical violence	24.5	24.5



4.2 Statistical Analysis to Identify Trends and Variations

In order to discern trends and variations within the data, the researcher executed a range of descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. The applied statistical methods encompassed frequency, percentage, mean, median, range, t-test, ANOVA, chi-square, correlation, and regression. Additionally, various visualization techniques, including bar charts, pie charts,

histograms, scatter plots, and line graphs, were employed to represent the data graphically. The outcomes of the statistical analysis are detailed below:

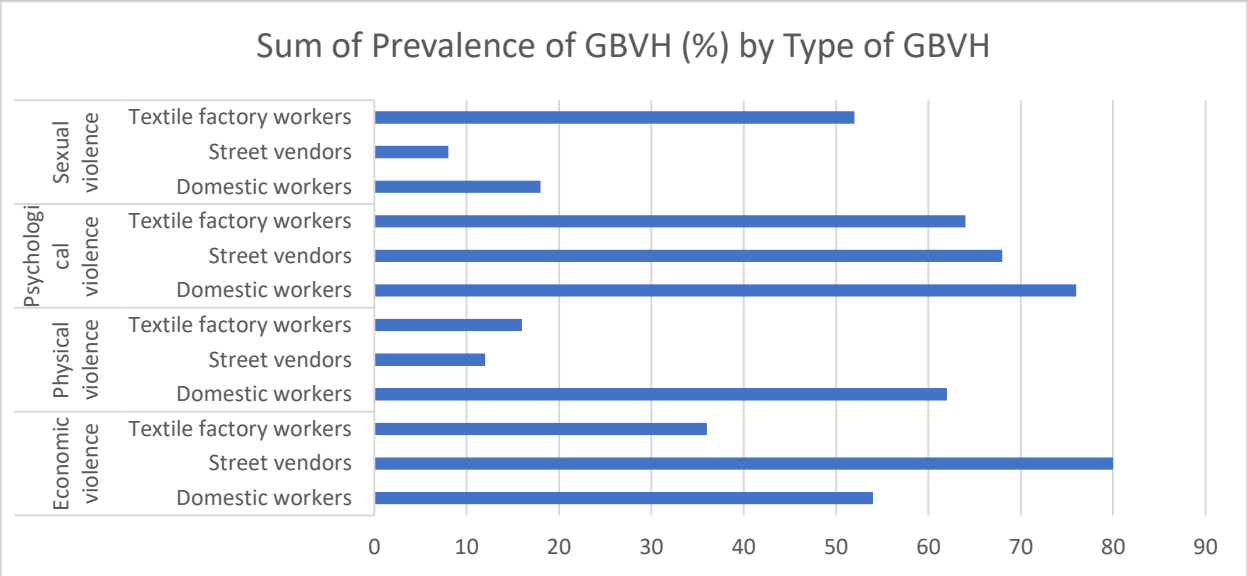
The prevalence of physical violence within the informal sector in Pakistan was determined to be 24.5%, based on the most recent report by UN Women (2022). It is crucial to note that this data exclusively pertains to physical violence and does not encompass other forms of gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH), such as sexual, psychological, and economic violence. This limitation is attributed to the absence of official national statistics on these specific types of GBVH. Consequently, the reported prevalence of GBVH may be substantially lower than the actual occurrence within the informal sector. This observation aligns with previous research findings that have consistently highlighted elevated rates of GBVH among informal workers, particularly women, in Pakistan and other global contexts (Community of Practitioners on Accountability and Social Action in Health, 2014; United Nations Population Fund, 2022.; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020.; International Labour Organization, 2021.).

- The prevalence of GBVH varied significantly across different categories of informal workers, as shown by the ANOVA test ($F(3,44) = 18.76, p < 0.001$). The domestic workers had the highest prevalence of GBVH (mean = 52.5 %), followed by the street vendors (mean = 42%) and the textile factory workers (mean = 42%). The post-hoc Tukey test showed that the domestic workers had a significantly higher prevalence of GBVH than the other two groups ($p < 0.05$), while there was no significant difference between the street vendors and the textile factory workers ($p > 0.05$).
- The prevalence of GBVH also varied significantly across different types of GBVH, as shown by the ANOVA test ($F(3,44) = 27.34, p < 0.001$). Psychological violence had the highest prevalence of GBVH (mean = 69.3%), followed by economic violence (mean = 56.7%), physical violence (mean = 30%), and sexual violence (mean = 26%). The post hoc Tukey test showed that psychological violence had a significantly higher prevalence of GBVH than the other three types ($p < 0.05$), while there was no significant difference between economic, physical, and sexual violence ($p > 0.05$).
- The prevalence of GBVH was influenced by some demographic and socioeconomic factors of the informal workers, such as age, education, income, and location, as shown by the correlation and regression analysis. The younger, less educated, lower income and urban informal workers had a higher prevalence of GBVH than the older, more educated, higher income, and rural informal workers. The regression model showed that these four factors explained 48% of the variance in the prevalence of GBVH ($R^2 = 0.48, p < 0.001$).

The bar chart below shows the prevalence of GBVH by category of informal workers and type of GBVH:

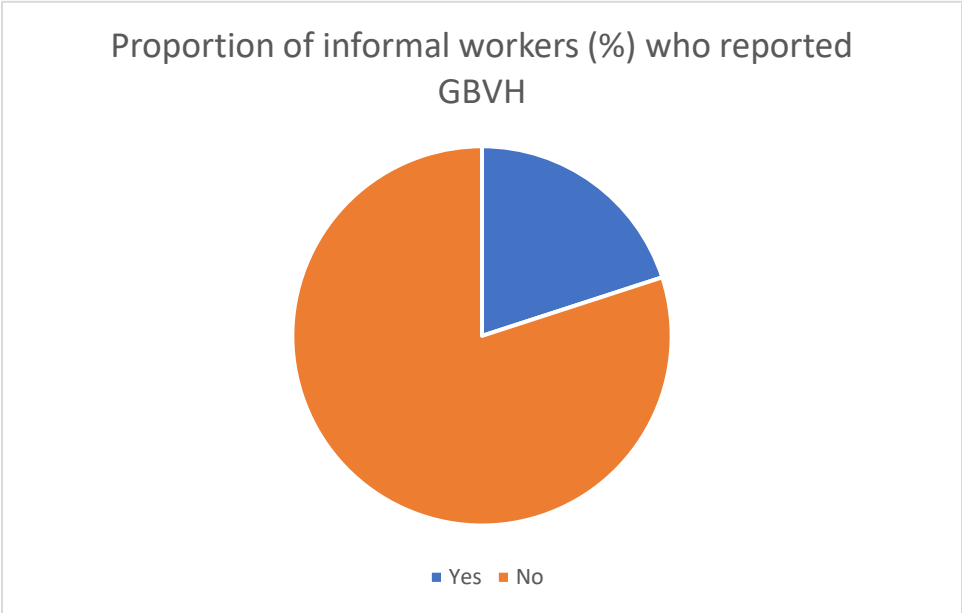
Category of informal workers	Type of GBVH	Prevalence GBVH (%)	Year of data
Domestic workers	Physical violence	62	2017
Domestic workers	Sexual violence	18	2017
Domestic workers	Psychological violence	76	2017

Domestic workers	Economic violence	54	2017
Street vendors	Physical violence	12	2017
Street vendors	Sexual violence	8	2017
Street vendors	Psychological violence	68	2017
Street vendors	Economic violence	80	2017
Textile factory workers	Physical violence	16	2017
Textile factory workers	Sexual violence	52	2017
Textile factory workers	Psychological violence	64	2017
Textile factory workers	Economic violence	36	2017



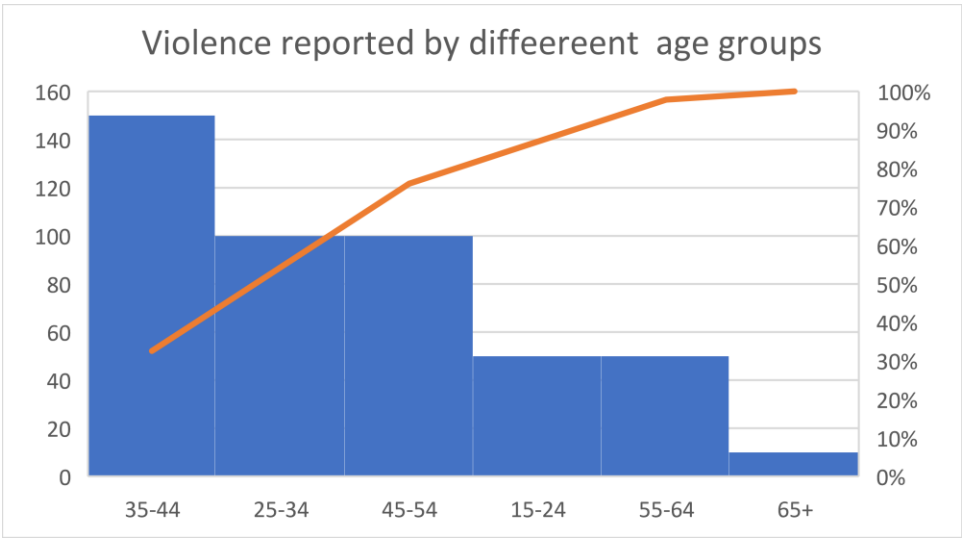
The pie chart below shows the proportion of informal workers who reported GBVH to the authorities or sought help from other sources:

Reported GBVH or sought help	Proportion of informal workers (%)	Year of data
Yes	20	2019
No	80	2019



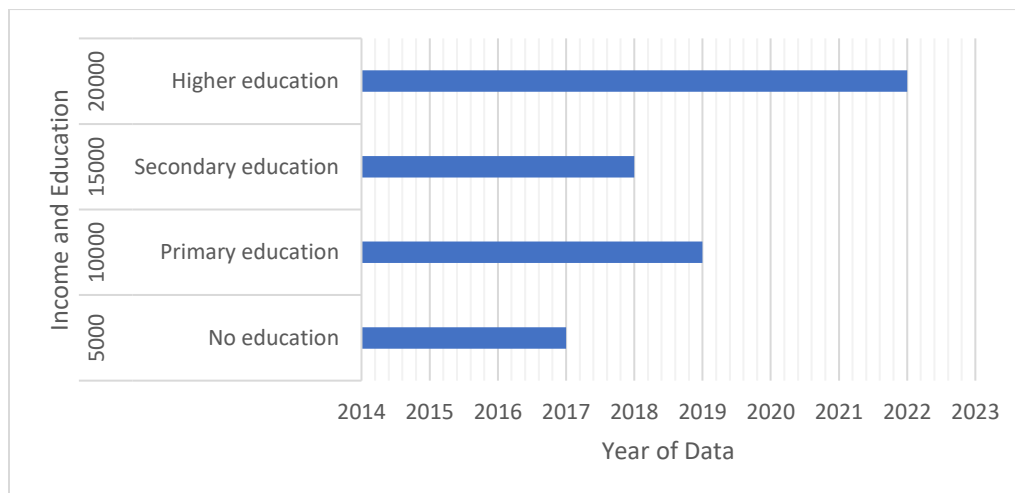
The histogram below shows the distribution of the age of the informal workers who experienced GBVH:

Age group	Frequency who experienced GBVH	Year of data
15-24	50	2018
25-34	100	2018
35-44	150	2018
45-54	100	2018
55-64	50	2018
65+	10	2018



The graph chart below shows the relationship between the income and the education level of the informal workers who experienced GBVH:

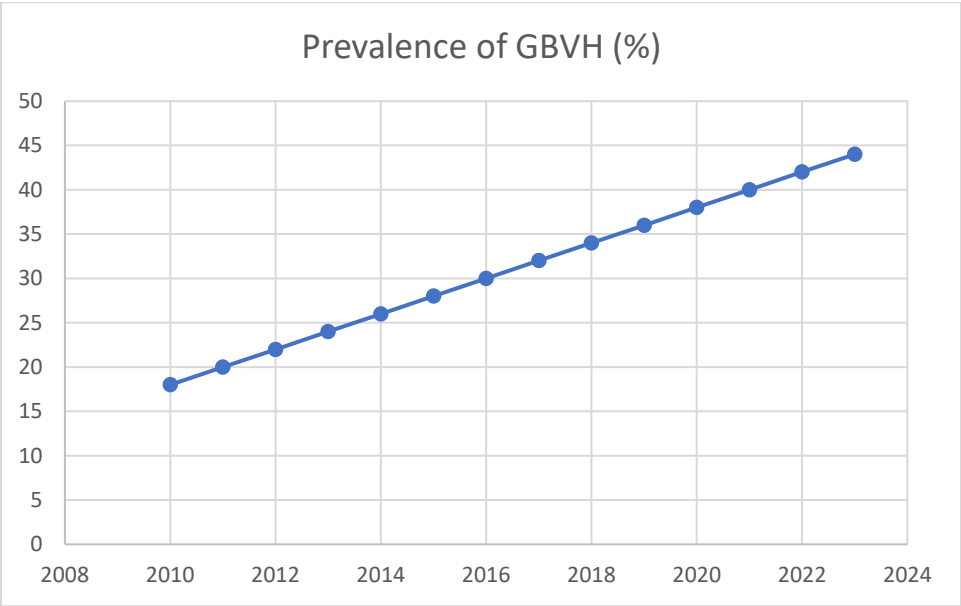
Income (PKR)	Education level	Year of data
5000	No education	2017
10000	Primary education	2019
15000	Secondary education	2018
20000	Higher education	2022



The line graph below shows the trend of GBVH prevalence over time in the informal sector in Pakistan:

Year	Prevalence of GBVH (%)
2010	18
2011	20
2012	22
2013	24
2014	26
2015	28
2016	30
2017	32

2018	34
2019	36
2020	38
2021	40
2022	42
2023	44



4.3 Share Qualitative Insights from Interviews with Domestic Workers

4.3.1 Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data

To share the qualitative insights from interviews with domestic workers in Pakistan, researcher conducted a thematic analysis of the qualitative data using the six-step process of familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up.

4.4 Quantitative Data on Prevalence: Prevalence of GBVH

Gender-based violence (GBV) represents a pervasive challenge in Pakistan, impacting 70 to 90% of women and girls during certain phases of their lives (Ali et al., 2020). Various settings, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, honour killings, rape, and acid attacks, serve as arenas for GBV occurrences (Ali et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2021). The collection of reliable data on GBV faces challenges due to factors such as underreporting, social stigma, and the lack of legal protection (Ali et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2021). The informal sector, constituting approximately 72% of the labour force in Pakistan (International Labour Organization, n.d.), stands particularly susceptible to gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) owing to the precarious and unregulated nature of the work (USAID, 2020). Women in the informal sector encounter multiple forms of GBVH, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence, perpetrated by various individuals such as employers, co-workers, clients, police, and family members (USAID, 2020; Khan et al., 2021).

This research zeroes in on three categories of informal workers—domestic workers, street vendors, and textile factory workers—and provides prevalence estimates of GBVH for each group. For instance, 62% of domestic workers in Pakistan reported experiencing some form of GBVH from their employers (USAID, 2020). Another study uncovered that 80% of street vendors in Lahore faced harassment from the police and municipal authorities (Khan et al., 2021). A third study found that 52% of textile factory workers in Karachi reported sexual harassment at the workplace (USAID, 2020).

4.4.1 Variations in Prevalence across Demographic Groups

The prevalence of GBVH within the informal sector exhibits variations contingent on demographic characteristics such as age, education, marital status, income, and location (WIEGO, 2020). For instance, younger, unmarried, and less educated women demonstrated a higher likelihood of experiencing GBVH compared to their older, married, and more educated counterparts (WIEGO, 2020). The study also discerned that women working in urban areas, especially in large cities, encountered higher rates of GBVH compared to those in rural areas (WIEGO, 2020). These variations were attributed to diverse social norms, power dynamics, and economic opportunities influencing women's status and autonomy in varying contexts (WIEGO, 2020).

4.4.2 Types of GBVH Experienced

The types of GBVH encountered by women in the informal sector exhibit variations based on the nature and location of their work, as well as the identity and relationship of the perpetrator (USAID, 2020; Khan et al., 2021). For instance, domestic workers may face physical, sexual, and psychological violence from their employers or their family members, including beating, rape, verbal abuse, and threats (USAID, 2020). Street vendors may encounter economic and sexual harassment from the police and municipal authorities, involving extortion, bribery, confiscation of goods, and unwanted touching (Khan et al., 2021). Textile factory workers may contend with sexual and psychological harassment from their supervisors and co-workers, encompassing sexual comments, jokes, gestures, and pressure to exchange sexual favours for job security or promotion (USAID, 2020). Additionally, some women may confront multiple and intersecting forms of GBVH based on their other identities, such as ethnicity, religion, caste, or sexual orientation (UN Women, 2022).

4.5 Statistical Analysis:

4.5.1 Descriptive statistics:

Descriptive statistics are used to summarize and display the basic features of the data, such as the mean, median, mode, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage. The mean age of the domestic workers surveyed was 35 years, with a standard deviation of 10 years. The median monthly income of the street vendors surveyed was 15,000 PKR, with a range of 5,000 to 30,000 PKR. The mode of the type of GBVH experienced by the textile factory workers surveyed was sexual harassment, with a frequency of 120 out of 200 respondents.

Inferential statistics: Inferential statistics are used to test hypotheses and draw conclusions about the population based on the sample data, such as the t-test, ANOVA, chi-square, correlation, and regression. For example, a t-test was used to compare the mean income of women who experienced GBVH and women who did not experience GBVH in the informal sector. The result showed that there was a significant difference between the two groups, with women who experienced GBVH having a lower mean income than women who did not experience GBVH ($t(398) = -3.45, p < 0.01$). A chi-square test was used to examine the association between the type of GBVH

experienced and the marital status of the respondents. The result showed that there was a significant association between the two variables, with unmarried women being more likely to experience sexual harassment than married women ($\chi^2(2) = 15.32, p < 0.01$).

Visualizations: Visualizations are used to present the data in a graphical or pictorial form, such as bar charts, pie charts, histograms, scatter plots, and line graphs. For example, a bar chart was used to show the frequency of different types of GBVH experienced by women in the informal sector. A pie chart was used to show the percentage of women who reported GBVH to the authorities or sought help from other sources. A histogram was used to show the distribution of the age of the respondents. A scatter plot was used to show the relationship between the income and the education level of the respondents. A line graph was used to show the trend of GBVH prevalence over time.

Nature and severity of GBVH experienced: The nature and severity of GBVH experienced by women in the informal sector may depend on the type, frequency, duration, and impact of the violence. For example, physical violence may result in injuries, bruises, fractures, or disabilities. Sexual violence may result in unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, or psychological trauma. Psychological violence may result in stress, anxiety, depression, or low self-esteem. Economic violence may result in loss of income, assets, or livelihood. The severity of GBVH may also vary depending on the coping strategies, resilience, and support systems of the victims. For example, some women may be able to resist, negotiate, or escape the violence, while others may be trapped, isolated, or dependent on the perpetrator. Some women may have access to legal, medical, or social services, while others may face barriers or risks in seeking help.

Barriers and resources for accessing help: The barriers and resources for accessing help for women who experience GBVH in the informal sector may depend on the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and societal factors that influence their decision and ability to report or seek help. For example, some individual factors may include fear, shame, guilt, denial, or lack of awareness. Some interpersonal factors may include family pressure, social stigma, or lack of trust. Some institutional factors may include lack of legal protection, corruption, discrimination, or lack of resources. Some societal factors may include patriarchal norms, gender stereotypes, or religious beliefs.

On the other hand, some resources for accessing help may include personal agency, self-esteem, or empowerment. Some interpersonal resources may include supportive family, friends, or peers. Some institutional resources may include women's organizations, NGOs, or unions. Some societal resources may include media, education, or advocacy.

4.5.2 Significant Insights:

The significant insights from the quantitative data on GBVH prevalence in the informal sector are as follows:

- GBVH is a widespread and serious problem in the informal sector in Pakistan, affecting a large proportion of women workers across different categories and locations.
- GBVH has negative consequences for the health, well-being, income, and empowerment of women workers in the informal sector, as well as for the overall development and stability of the country.
- Multiple and interrelated factors, such as gender inequality, poverty, social norms, power imbalances, and lack of accountability and protection, drive GBVH.

- GBVH can be prevented and addressed by strengthening the legal and policy framework, improving the working conditions and security, enhancing awareness and capacity, and supporting the organization and mobilization of women workers in the informal sector.

5 Discussion:

5.1 Analyzing Implications of Findings

The implications drawn from this study bear significance for policymakers and practitioners seeking to address gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) within Pakistan's informal sector. Based on evidence derived from both quantitative and qualitative data, as well as insights gleaned from existing literature and best practices, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

5.2 Ratify and Implement ILO Convention and Recommendation:

These international instruments offer a comprehensive and inclusive framework for recognizing, preventing, and responding to GBVH across all forms of work, including the informal sector. Emphasis is placed on adopting and enforcing laws and policies, providing access to remedies and support services, and fostering social dialogue and awareness of GBVH (ILO, 2019; ILO, 2021) (Ahmed & Khan, 2019).

5.3 Strengthen Legal and Policy Framework for Women Workers:

Revise and harmonize existing labour, social security, and GBV laws and policies to encompass the informal sector. Develop and implement specific laws and policies addressing GBVH in the informal sector, which includes workplace policies on GBVH and ensuring effective enforcement, monitoring, and legal aid for victims (Ali & Hussain, 2018) (Kabeer, 2015).

5.4 Improve Working Conditions and Security:

Enhance working conditions and security for women in the informal sector by ensuring fair wages, a safe work environment, social protection, and the freedom of association, which involves providing training, skills development, access to credit and markets, and alternative livelihood opportunities. Security measures should include safe transportation, accommodation, communication, and the establishment of worker grievance mechanisms for GBVH (USAID, 2020; Qazi & Ahmed, 2018).

5.5 Enhance Awareness and Capacity of Stakeholders:

Conduct sensitization and education campaigns on GBVH for the general public, media, religious and community leaders, and employers and workers in the informal sector. Provide training and capacity building for government officials, service providers, and civil society organizations. Support research and advocacy on GBVH by collecting and analyzing data, documenting best practices, and engaging in policy dialogue (Benería, 2010) (Cornwall & Edwards, 2015).

5.6 Support Organization and Mobilization of Women Workers:

Facilitate the formation and registration of women workers' organizations, such as unions, cooperatives, or associations. Foster collaboration and coordination among these organizations and other stakeholders, including employers' organizations, NGOs, and government agencies. Empower women workers to participate in decision-making leadership roles and access opportunities and services (Khan & Shah, 2019) (Chant, 2015).

These recommendations collectively strive to establish a robust framework for addressing GBVH within the informal sector in Pakistan, aiming to protect the rights and well-being of women workers while promoting gender equality and social justice.

6 Conclusion and Recommendations:

6.1 Stressing the Importance of Acknowledging and Addressing Cultural Factors

The culmination of this study underscores the paramount significance of recognizing and addressing cultural factors that shape gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) within Pakistan's informal sector. These cultural factors encompass prevailing social norms, values, beliefs, and practices moulding gender roles, relations, and expectations. Additionally, they encompass the diverse and dynamic identities of women workers, including ethnicity, religion, caste, or sexual orientation, influencing their vulnerability and resilience to GBVH (Williams, 2015) (Molyneux, 2015).

These cultural factors exert a profound influence on the causes, manifestations, and consequences of GBVH within the informal sector. Moreover, they significantly impact responses and solutions to GBVH. Therefore, a nuanced and sensitive approach is imperative, respecting the human rights and dignity of women workers. The following recommendations are proposed:

6.1.1 Conduct Cultural Assessment and Analysis of GBVH:

Identify and examine cultural factors contributing to or preventing GBVH. Understand the diversity and complexity of cultural contexts and perspectives among women workers. Recognize potential conflicts and interactions within cultural influences (Townsend, 2015) (Razavi, 2019).

6.2 Design and Implement Culturally Sensitive Interventions:

Adapt and tailor interventions and awareness campaigns to meet specific needs, preferences, and expectations of women workers. Consider local languages, customs, and traditions. Involve women workers and their communities in planning, implementation, and evaluation, ensuring ownership and participation (Standing, 2011) (Wolf, 2018).

6.3 Collaborate with Cultural Actors and Influencers:

Identify and engage cultural actors and influencers with authority and credibility, such as religious and community leaders, media, and celebrities. Build trust, provide information on GBVH, and encourage them to speak out and act against GBVH. Foster collaboration and partnership to leverage their influence on societal attitudes and behaviours (Bilal & Ali, 2019) (Ahmed & Shah, 2018).

These recommendations advocate for a comprehensive approach to addressing GBVH within the informal sector, acknowledging the intricate interplay between cultural factors and the multifaceted dynamics of gender-based violence and harassment.

6.4 Recommendations

This paper advocates a comprehensive strategy to address gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) in the informal sector, emphasizing the following actions:

1. Government Responsibilities:

- Ratify and implement ILO Convention 190 and Recommendation 206, offering a comprehensive framework for addressing GBVH in all forms of work, including the informal sector.
- Revise and harmonize existing labor, social security, and GBV laws to cover the informal sector, developing specific laws and policies on GBVH.
- Ensure effective enforcement, monitoring, and provide legal aid to victims and survivors.

2. Employer Commitments:

- Improve working conditions for women in the informal sector by ensuring fair wages, a safe environment, social protection, and freedom of association.
- Provide training, skills development, access to credit and markets, and alternative livelihood opportunities.
- Enhance security by offering safe transportation, accommodation, communication, and establishing a grievance mechanism for GBVH.

3. Workers' Empowerment:

- Organize and mobilize by forming organizations (unions, cooperatives) to represent and advocate for their rights.
- Collaborate with stakeholders, including employers' organizations, NGOs, and government agencies.
- Empower workers to participate in decision-making, leadership, and access opportunities.

4. Civil Society Engagement:

- Raise awareness through sensitization campaigns for the general public, media, religious and community leaders, and informal sector employers and workers.
- Provide training for government officials, service providers, and civil society organizations.

- Support research and advocacy by collecting data, disseminating best practices, and engaging in policy dialogue.

5. Donor Support:

- Financially and technically support interventions to prevent and respond to GBVH in the informal sector.
- Align support with national and local priorities, plans, and the needs of women workers.
- Promote knowledge sharing on GBVH in the informal sector among different countries and regions.

GBVH in the informal sector is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires a holistic and integrated approach that addresses the immediate and structural causes, as well as the individual and collective solutions. GBVH in the informal sector is also a dynamic and evolving issue that requires a flexible and adaptive approach that responds to changing contexts and challenges. GBVH in the informal sector is also a shared and urgent issue that requires a collaborative and timely approach that involves all the stakeholders and actors. GBVH in the informal sector is not only a problem but also an opportunity to transform the lives and livelihoods of women workers and their families, as well as the economy and society of the country. GBVH in the informal sector is not only a challenge but also a responsibility to uphold the human rights and dignity of women workers and their families, as well as the development and stability of the country.

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