



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**International Feminist Movements and Battered Women's Shelters in Pakistan**

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Maliha Gull Tarar\* <sup>2</sup>Dr. Aaqib Shahzad Alvi <sup>3</sup>Rana Imran Ahmed

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Lecturer, Department of Social Work, University of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Lecturer, Department of Social Work, University of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan

PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<b>Received:</b> February 28, 2022 <b>Accepted:</b> April 14, 2022 <b>Online:</b> April 16, 2022 <b>Keywords:</b> Feminist Activism, Shelter Movement, State Intervention, Violence <b>*Corresponding Author</b>  maliha.gul@uos. edu.pk	Battered women's shelters emerged as a place for victims to escape the violence in their homes as the problem of domestic violence became recognized and discussed in the 1970s. As the result of international feminist movements, many of the early shelters were founded by feminists and proletariat activists. The battered-women's movement has now spread across much of the globe to provide shelter and advocacy for social transformation. Pakistan also started to establish shelters for battered women in 1960s and has extended the services across the country. This study examined the shelter experiences of battered women in Pakistan and its relationship with international feminist movements' agenda. Qualitative research design was used to conduct the research. The service providers as well as battered women shared their opinion about shelter services in Pakistan. The study concluded that Pakistani shelter homes are helping women victims of violence to flee from abusive situations, to respite for a while and to think about future but much more is needed to address the real issues of battered women. The study also explored that violence against women is a socio-cultural issue, so it is needed to address violent components prevailing in the society rather than just providing shelter services to battered women.

**Introduction**

Before 1970, women victims of violence had a few options due to the absence of housing for them. In that era, second wave of women's movement and victims' movement were gaining attention, so the shelter movement started to address the critical housing issue of women victims of violence. Battered women's movement is also called domestic violence or shelter/refuge movement which was a direct product of women's movement. Battered women's movement was influenced by different types of feminism, socialist feminists, reform/ liberal/equal rights feminists and radical feminist however the groupings sometimes created divisions within the movements and at the other times formed coalitions (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). Domestic violence movement was fueled by feminist organizations which transformed the response of criminal justice system to the victims and influenced the creation of a web of shelters. Domestic violence movement dramatically increased public awareness about the prevalence of domestic violence (Goodman & Epstein, 2008; Glenn, 2010).

The women's movement was innovative in creating their present but it was a legacy of ideas, action and struggle from early centuries as the debates about the women's nature, higher education, importance of political representation, motherhood, family, citizenship,

the state, freedom, autonomy, wage work, oppression, domination, patriarchy, power and many more emerged from the enlightenment of late seventeenth century, American and French revolutions, the industrial revolution, the religious revivalism and evangelicalism of late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and early anti-slavery movements of mid nineteenth century America and Britain. Feminist leaders largely pursued second wave of women's movement which brought many ideas for intervention against male violence and many of the first shelters were organized by them. Feminist leaders brought the idea of "personal in political" which made women conscious that their personal problems were actually the result of larger social forces (Kravetz, 2004). Feminist leaders also changed the way society viewed violence against women by creating the term "domestic violence" and received support from many groups; different kinds of people to fight against violence against women (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Schechter, 1982; Murray, 2002; Flores, 2006).

As the domestic violence shelters were emerged from feminist movements so early shelters were working as safe havens for women victims of violence where they could stay with their children for as long as they needed. This feminist approach encouraged more women to seek help which overburdened shelter advocates and forced them to get funding from governmental and non-governmental funding agencies, as result, shelters became accountable to bureaucracies (Epstein, Russell, & Silvern, 1988; Schillinger, 1988). The purpose of feminist organizations was not only to provide support and help to women victims of domestic violence but also to create political and social change by promoting egalitarian structures (Metzendorf, 2005). Feminist leaders also encouraged women to take charge of their lives to be their own leaders. Underlying fundamental principles of early shelters were to promote individual and social change for women, empower them through creating awareness, egalitarian work structures, self-help and sisterhood (Kravetz, 2004).

Like most beginnings, the social movement dealing with battered women was simple in the beginning and went unnoticed at first, but as it grew from local groups to international organizations, it became more visible and the situation changed. The activists from Australia, the United States, Britain, Europe and Canada travelled between and within countries to provide support and share ideas for opening shelters. In Britain, 1<sup>st</sup> refuge for battered women opened in 1972 (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). Many of these principles founded the early shelters and can still be seen in them today (Flores, 2006).

Earlier, there were fewer Dar-ul-Aman (women shelters) in three provinces of Pakistan (Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and all were in pathetic condition. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan also reported in 2007 that existing shelter homes were ill-equipped, understaffed and unable to provide serious interventions. Psychological counseling as well as the free legal and medical aid was not available due to non-availability of trained staff and funds (Government of Pakistan, 2011). In the Punjab province, 1<sup>st</sup> Dar-ul-Aman (shelter) was established in 1963 and seven more shelters were opened progressively in 1970s and 1980s. Before 2005, all those shelters were serving at division level and had negative public image. In 2005, the department of Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Maal started to expand women welfare services of shelters by establishing shelter homes in each district of the Punjab. Till date, 36 shelters are working in the Punjab, for distressed and socially disadvantaged women (Government of Punjab, 2021).

## **Literature Review**

Research studies indicated that early shelters were small and run by violence survivors rather than qualified workers who promoted sisterhood, raised awareness about socio-political understanding regarding domestic violence and avoided hierarchal power structures (Epstein, Russell, & Silvern, 1988; Rodriguez, 1988; Schillinger, 1988). With the passage of time, the shelters started to hire professional staff rather than survivors and also

imposed screening criteria to admit women victims of violence (Chang, 1992; Rodriguez, 1988; Haaken & Yrugai, 2003; Hague & Mullender, 2006). According to McDonald (2005), to deal with funding issues and the financiers, more innovative political and social goals of the early shelters changed, and shelters started to focus on easily measurable and highly refined outcomes.

Kelly (1988) highlighted that in the current wave of feminism, the issue of violence against women has been a major focus of feminist theory and action. The first rape crisis line was established in the United States in 1971, and the first battered women's refuge opened in England in 1972. She also pointed out that thousands of projects and groups now exist around the world to provide support, safety, and advice to abused women.

According to Krishnan et al. (2004), provision of shelter became a top priority of battered women's movement to provide safety for abused women in the 1970s. Bennett et al. (2004) reported that shelters provided legal, medical and social assistance along with the time to think about their lives and available options to rebuild. Dobash and Dobash (1992) noted that the USA and Britain have some differences in the respective battered-women's movements as Liberal or equal rights feminism had a strong influence in the United States, whereas Britain had a more established position of Labour and left politics, along with socialist feminism. Early shelters were opened to provide safety and took many forms like motels, old houses where women victims of violence could stay with their children for one night or for months (Schechter, 1982).

Feminist shelters provided the women a safe place to respite and an empowering environment (Davis, Hagen, & Early, 1994). According to Kelly (1996), to create equal status, feminist shelters preferred to hire the staff members who already had personally experienced domestic violence in their lives. This approach not only encouraged the victims to rise and become independent but also provided employment opportunities for the victims of domestic violence.

A research study conducted in the UK reported that by September 1973 there were 150 refuge groups, running approximately 200 houses and over the period September 1977-78, an estimated 11400 women and 20850 children used refuge accommodation in England and Wales (Binnery, Harkell, & Nixon, 1981).

Roberts (1998) reported that in the USA, there were over 1250 domestic violence shelters for women victims and their children. He (Roberts, 1998) also shared the finding of a survey of 622 shelters conducted in 1996 that the shelters were following feminist ideas and were advocating for social change and women empowerment. Davis, Hagen and Early (1994) shared the data about the beneficiaries of a network of services for abused women, including shelters in the USA and reported that approximately 17,000 abused women and their children were getting services annually.

Research studies conducted with domestic violence service providers confirmed that the need for shelter services continually grows and shelters today operate at full capacity and many shelters are unable to keep up with the increasing number of women seeking services (Roberts, 1998; Panzer et al., 2000; Glenn, 2010; Eastman, Brunch, Williams, & Carawan, 2007). Grisby and Hartman (1997) discussed the situation in the United States of America that there were long waiting lists for beds, and many survivors called hotlines services in the hopes of finding a place in shelter.

World Health Organization (2005) reported, in 1995, there were around 1800 programs for women in the United States among that 1200 programs provided emotional, legal and material support and emergency shelter to women and their children. Such

shelters are also working in developing countries. However, some countries have hundreds of women shelters while some have a few to provide specialized services.

Research studies have concluded that many battered women need both long and short-term housing resources to live independently of their violent partners (Mullins, 1994; Perry & Zorza, 1999). Kansas Housing Resources Corporation (2013) reported that many social services agencies considered that homeless facilities and abuse shelters are addressing women's similar needs.

Khalid (2006) said that women who became a target for anti-social elements and disowned by their families afterward, seriously need intervention and correctional services. In correctional institutions and shelter homes, underprivileged women are given protection and vocational training in order to make them self-supporting. The government of Pakistan's aim to establish women shelter was to adopt zero tolerance policy regarding violence against women and to introduce positive domestic violence reforms. The government of Pakistan has realized that violence against women is the outcome of cultural norms and attitudes. Due to inadequate laws and access to shelters, women were unable to get protection from violence so shelters must provide relief and justice to the survivors of violence. According to Eshraghi (2006), around 80% of Pakistani women suffer from psychological, sexual and physical violence during their married and family life and those who tried to flee from domestic violence had to face honor killings, perpetrated by male family members to restore family honor. Moreover, to escape from daily violence of family and husband, Pakistani women can get refuge in Dar-ul-Aman (House of Peace) as last resort where they can wait for being able to reintegrate in society.

Each shelter (Dar-ul-Aman) has the responsibility to safeguard its residents from threats outside the walls of the institution as well as from inside (Government of Pakistan, 2011). Till 2006, there were fifteen Dar-ul-Amans in four provinces of Pakistan and eight of them were in the Punjab province (Eshraghi, 2006). In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the government established four Dar-ul-Amans in D.I.Khan, Mardan, Abbottabad and Swat to provide secure atmosphere as well as human and legal rights to battered women (Government of Pakistan, 2014). Each Dar-ul-Aman was established to provide institutional-cum-residential care to destitute and run-away women along with legal assistance, ethical and religious education, education for children accompanying their mothers, arrangement for effective reconciliation and compromise with the families as well as vocational training to enable them to earn a living and their subsequent reintegration in the society (Government of Pakistan, 2014). According to the United States Trafficking in Persons Report (2009), internally trafficked women in Pakistan can get admission in "Dar-ul-Aman" centers established by provincial government for battered women and children to offer legal assistance, vocational training and medical treatment; however, there is limited protection for women victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Patel (2010) reported that Pakistan has a few shelters with the capacity to protect women victims of violence by providing a secure place and facilitation in crisis situation. Mostly, shelters are located in large cities like Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar and the courts send vulnerable women to such shelters where they are kept in protective custody. Hashmi (2009) reported that Pakistani society is heavily tilted against the female face and a woman leaves her parents' or husbands' home to flee from unbearable life and hostile environment in search of friendly and favorable environment, but she finds a worse situation in Dar-ul-Aman as most of those usually acquire the shape of a jail. The residents are restricted and expected to remain within the boundaries of the shelter unless they have a court appearance or medical issue. Accommodation, food, clothing, basic vocational training (sewing and embroidery), counseling and legal aid are free. However, the residents may have to contribute for the documentation cost (Siddiqui et al., 2008).

According to official statistic (Government of Punjab, 2014), in 2010 more than 8000 women and their children were admitted to Dar-ul-Amans. In 2010, among 26 shelters, 11 accommodated more than their sanctioned capacity (Approximately 22-34 residents, medium), 4 accommodated around 15-20 residents and the remaining 11 shelters accommodated only 5 women every month.

Previous studies also reported that some women residing in shelters were naturally reluctant to remarry after years in an abusive relationship. Many Dar-ul-Aman residents had a lover, and they were willing to live with their lovers or their new husbands as they were able to speak about their own choice after leaving their families, house and previous marriage (Médecins du Monde, 2007; Ballard, 2012). Women can be referred by courts/judges, authorities, social welfare agencies (NGOs/CBOs), government and semi-government projects or institutions as well as can approach themselves (Government of Pakistan, 2005; Government of Punjab, 2021). Hashmi (2009) also reported that most of the hapless residents of Dar-ul-Aman are referred by court orders but in some emergency cases in which the victims of violence need immediate protection, the court process proves counterproductive because unfortunately judicial system is not fully sensitive to environmental and emotional needs of the women victims of violence as they are under the influence of patriarchal society.

Total duration of stay varies between three weeks up to six months or even up to one year for some of the women. In exceptional cases, women shelters (Dar-ul-Amans) provided a long term stay to the residents who were not having a family or relatives and the shelter administration also arranged their marriages (Government of Pakistan, 2011; Government of Punjab; 2005; Médecins du Monde, 2007). According to a survey conducted by Médecins du Monde (2007), sixty five percent of the women in Faisalabad Dar-ul-Aman, eighty three percent in Gujranwala and sixty three percent in Lahore were not aware about their expected duration of Dar-ul-Aman stay which made them stressful. Médecins du Monde survey also reported that 86% of the residents were the victims of physical violence. Some were burnt, had knife injuries and received electric shocks but most of them were beaten with hands, feet and sticks. Residents were also threatened with gun and the majority of the victims experienced physical violence several times a week. Médecins du Monde (2007) highlighted that many of the residents had early or forced marriage, but shelter administration was not sensitized and trained to provide services to women victims of violence.

The Department of Social Welfare, Government of the Punjab has issued guidelines in 2005 for running the shelters but Siddiqui, Ismail and Allen (2008) reported that the government shelters are controlling women like a family patriarch and their sub-jail type atmosphere is extremely oppressive for women victims of violence. Government shelters are also not able to provide counseling and childcare services. The department of Social Welfare also provided guidelines in 2015 (Government of Punjab, 2021).

According to Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2007), existing shelter homes are ill-equipped, understaffed and unable to provide serious interventions. Psychological counseling as well as the free legal and medical aid is not available due to non-availability of trained staff and funds. Médecins du Monde (2007) reported that before getting shelters in Dar-ul-Amans, 26% residents in Lahore, 19% in Gujranwala and 61% in Faisalabad attempted suicide and many residents were having suicidal ideas during their shelter stay which is a sign of profound despair.

## **Material and Methods**

Qualitative research methodology was used to conduct this study and the data was collected from state run shelters of the Punjab (Dar-ul-Aman). In-depth interviews of shelter residents and service providers were conducted by using purposely designed interview guides. The number of interviews was based upon saturation of research data and 12 service providers (superintendents) as well as 37 shelter residents were interviewed.

## **Results and Discussion**

The research findings explored that all the residents and superintendents of shelter homes were Pakistani nationals. All the service providers and the residents shared that shelters were providing boarding facilities to battered women. For regular medical services, the superintendents arranged the resident's visits to nearest district hospital. In some shelters, there were a few victims of violence with serious injuries and the superintendents provided medical assistance to them with the help of an advisory committee and local volunteer network, but due to financial limitations the victims had to bear the expenses. A superintendent shared that the staff of shelters understand the required medicines and diet for a survivor of honor killing, but due to financial issues they cannot do what they should.

The superintendents were Social Work and Sociology graduates. The Department of Social Welfare was regularly conducting in-service trainings for shelter staffs, but they all were not having any idea about feminist movements and ideologies.

Kanuha (1998) also reported that it is evident that many social work practitioners have not been trained in the social movement ingrained in overabundance of domestic abuse services that currently employ many of us. She also emphasized to add feminist debates in social work curriculum and training to enhance practice interventions with victims of violence.

All of the shelters established by the Department of Social Welfare Women Development and Bait-ul-Mal were providing boarding services to 100% of the respondents, and the according Guidelines for Superintendents (Government of Punjab, 2015; Government of Punjab, 2021) a resident can stay for up to three months (90 days), but the superintendents said that a resident can stay in a shelter for more than three months if her case is proceeding in court or if she needs shelter.

**Table 1**  
**Respondents' Age**

<b>Age</b>	<b>No. of Women</b>
18-24	5
24-30	9
30-36	10
36-42	6
42-48	4
48-54	3
Total	37

The research data shows that the majority of the respondents were aged below 36 years. The service providers stated that they provided shelter to women of all ages, but specifically to women aged between 15 and 50 years. According to the Directorate of Social Welfare, Women Development and Bait-ul-Mal (PC-1,2005), women/girls between 12 and 65 years can get admission in Dar-ul-Aman, but in special cases women/girls below or above the specified age can also be admitted. According to the guidelines issued in 2015 (Government of Punjab, 2021), shelter homes can provide services to all women in distress.

**Table 2**  
**Respondents' Religious Affiliation**

<b>Religious Affiliation</b>	<b>No. of Women</b>
Islam	35
Ahmadi/Kadyani	1
Christian	1
Total	37

Research data demonstrated that the majority of the respondents (35) were Muslim, while only 2 were from religious minorities (1 Ahmadi/Kadyani and 1 Christian). Pakistan's national religion is Islam and according to Khan (2006) 97% of the population of Pakistan was Muslim. However, Statistical Bureau of Pakistan (Government of Pakistan, 2021) reported 96.28% Muslims, 1.59% Christians, and 0.22% Ahmadi/Kadyani in 2020.

**Table 3**  
**Respondents' Marital Status**

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>No. of Women</b>
Married	18
Unmarried	10
Divorced	8
Widow	1
Total	37

The service providers also shared their experiences that the majority of the residents of shelters were married women. Service providers and the residents of shelters discussed that Pakistani culture discourage women's participation in pre- and post-marital decision making. The service providers pointed out the reasons that the married women mostly use shelters to get safe access to their legal right of divorce.

**Table 4**  
**Respondents' Education**

<b>Educational Qualification</b>	<b>No. of Women</b>
Illiterate	21
Primary	9
Middle	3
Matriculation	2
Intermediate	1
Graduate	1
Total	37

The above table shows the educational status of respondents and it indicates that the majority of residents (21) were illiterate and 9 had primary level education, 3 were middle pass and only 1 resident was graduated. Literacy is an important indicator of welfare but the literacy rate in Pakistan is very low as compared to other SAARC countries. According to Economic Survey of Pakistan 2020-2021, Punjab province was leading with a 64% literacy rate (Abbasi, 2021).

**Table 5**  
**Respondents' Geographical Origin**

<b>Geographical Background</b>	<b>No. of Women</b>
Rural	28
Urban	9
Total	37

This table presents residents' geographical location. It indicates that the majority of the respondents (28) were from rural areas while others were from urban areas. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan (2021), in 2017-2018 Pakistan's population was 36.51% urban and 63.49% rural. Similarly, the Punjab province had 55.30% population burden with 34.79% rural and 20.51 % urban population.

### **Battered Women in Shelters**

A resident (Age 34, married) shared, *"In my opinion shelter can improve battered women's lives after leaving their homes by providing safe access to legal rights"*.

A survivor of honor killing (Age 22, Widow) shared,

"My brother was very violent when he came to know that I was interested to marry someone. Battering was a regular part of my daily routine, so I left home to have a court marriage. My brother tried to kill me because I violated family codes by marrying with my own volition. After our court marriage, we (me and my husband) were leaving a lawyer's chamber when my brother attacked us. I got two bullets in abdomen and my husband got one in head so he died at spot. I survived and after getting medical treatment the court referred me here in shelter. They are providing food, shelter and moral support".

Some residents explained that the shelter provided them with immediate and short-term security, but after leaving the shelter they would have to face honor killing and other consequences. They also elucidated that the shelter can be called a "women hostel with strict security" but they did nothing to reduce violence in society.

The service providers contributed that state run shelters are providing medical, psycho-social and legal services to battered women, but real effort should be made to improve women's access to legal and social rights. They highlighted to change the perceptions of patriarchal society. The service providers also highlighted that Pakistani women are not aware of their legal, religious and social rights. Moreover, the religious leaders misinterpreted the rights and facilities as being for men and not for women, especially the right to marry. They also supported making women aware of their marital rights and emphasized to educate the key persons in society particularly the religious leaders, for the betterment of women and families.

Another service provider added that shelters are very helpful for battered women in Pakistani society. Pakistan is a faith-based patriarchal society, and the religious leaders are aware of the rights given to women by the Islam, but they deliberately tend to misinterpret just as to protect and serve the existing patriarchal structures. Frequent political interference in the matters of law enforcement agencies, unabated use of law enforcement agencies to victimize the opponents by the political elites and absence of effective checks and balances have exacerbated in inefficacy of law enforcement agencies. Another service provider discussed that the establishment of shelters in each district is not sufficient to control the incidents of violence against women real solution is associated with restructuring the judicial system. Tarar, Safdar, and Hassan (2017) supported that Pakistan is a patriarchal society and women are vulnerable to direct and indirect violence. Moreover,



the state should restructure its law enforcement policies and structures to address the issue of domestic violence. Literature also supports that battered women's shelters emerged as a place for victims to stay to escape the violence in their homes as the problem of domestic violence became recognized and discussed in the 1970s. Many of the early shelters were founded by feminists and grassroots activists (Wilkes, 2019).

The superintendents also shared that the families usually visit to meet the superintendent and request to start the reconciliation process. It is important to mention that if a resident is referred by the court, the family cannot meet her without a court order and the superintendent cannot arrange the meeting without the resident's willingness (Government of Pakistan, 2005; Government of Punjab, 2015).

Majority of the residents were reluctant to face society after leaving a shelter due to people's behavior and criticism. Moreover, some of them were reluctant due to their own mental state.

A respondent (Age 24, Unmarried) shared,

"My parents battered me when they came to know that I was having a boyfriend. I was so much in love that I left home for him, but he left me after perpetrating all types of violence. I had no place to go...I know it was my imaginary world and my wrong choice, but I am paying for that. My family had to face social pressure, disrespect and bad names so I am ashamed to face them. This shelter is a blessing, a safe place to review life choices available after facing gender-based exploitation and doing wrong decisions".

Another respondent (Age 32, Married) added that, *"Shelter home is doing well in this patriarchal world, but we must have to face real life challenges after leaving it...it is just a temporary solution for battered women"*.

The service providers shared their experiences that many women had to face honor killing and forced marriages after leaving shelters. A superintendent said, *"Battered women are getting protection for a while, but they are reluctant to leave shelter due to the consequences which they would have to face after leaving a shelter"*.

A resident (Age 37, Married) shared,

"It's my second time in shelter. During my first stay, I came to avoid forced marriage and after three month's stay, I managed to marry with my own choice, but family disowned me after that...it was my love marriage, but he was very abusive because I had no family support. My husband is well aware that I have no place to go so I must have to tolerate his physical, psychological and financial violence. I know it was my wrong decision...but no one is willing to forgive me...In Pakistani society women cannot survive without family support".

The service providers also shared their experiences that some residents return to get shelter again and again because society disowned them for having a "shelter resident label".

A superintendent shared that the women who left home, either to get divorced or to avoid forced marriage, have more courage to reject societal values but in Pakistani society there is no forgiveness for women. Some battered women and service providers also pointed out that family is a source of security for women in patriarchal Pakistan and women without family support are at risk of facing more exploitation.

All the residents and the service providers found shelters as a place to escape from abusive situations. They explained that within the patriarchal structure it is difficult for

women to resist violence and to access their legal rights, and violence against women increases with women's demand for legal and religious rights so in such situations, shelters serve as a safe haven. Service providers shared that shelters are a place for Pakistani women to escape from honor killing, forced marriages and domestic violence.

Some residents were fearful of their future because they were uncertain about that. A respondent (Married, Age 32) shared' *"It's a safe place for battered women to stay but what about the future? I am even more fearful to face the society after leaving the shelter because I challenged my abuser...these shelter walls protected me from battering for limited time but who is going to protect me in society?"*

Another research respondent (Age 24, Married) shared, *"I left home to avoid my forced marriage and this shelter home protected me from honor killing but it's a temporary shield. Day by day, I am realizing that life will be even worse after leaving the shelter"*.

Another respondent (Age 40, Divorced) shared,

*"My husband was very violent, and it was not possible for me to tolerate that... I tried to leave him, but my parents were not ready to support because of their financial status and social stigma related to divorcee label... divorce is a taboo in Pakistan. This shelter provided me opportunity to access my legal rights and I got divorce... but my family is not ready to accept me because I disobeyed them and societal gender script...being in abusive relationship is acceptable but there is no forgiveness for women in our culture"*.

Hashmi (2009) reported that a woman leaves her home as an act of last resort, in search of a friendly and favorable atmosphere. She would face unbearable and hostile behaviors. Some families refuse to house their female relatives when they leave their marital home or shut the doors on women facing abuse perpetrated by their husband or in-laws. In such situations, when their families turn their backs on them, shelter homes provide refuge to women victims of violence (Patel, 2010).

Many residents and service providers shared that shelters are very helpful to avoid honor killings in Pakistani society, but many were fearful of honor killing after leaving a shelter. Women residents with children were also worried about their children's future.

A respondent (Age 41, Married) shared,

*"My husband is a drug addict and violent person. I tolerated his torture for my children, but he tried to kill me when I refused to give money for his drug addiction. Consequently, I am in shelter with my two daughters, but I am planning to reconcile for my children's future. Shelter is providing food and protection, but my daughters cannot attend school. They are missing home because they are innocent and cannot understand my life circumstances. Domestic violence is considered as a private matter and if a woman reports that it makes men even more violent... I am so much afraid to face my husband again but I have no other choice"*.

The superintendents share that battered women can get shelter with children and according to the Directorate Social Welfare (Government of Punjab, 2021), more and more children accompanied their mothers to Dar-ul-Aman. In 2010, 30% resident's children were below twelve years of age. In the past, Dar-ul-Amans admitted boys up to the age of eleven with their mothers but now the boys more than five years of age cannot get admission in Dar-ul-Aman so the administration use to refer them to a local *Madrassas* or orphanages. (Siddiqui et al., 2008).

Service providers stated that residents' fears after getting shelter were increased by slow legal proceedings and uncertainty about the future. Dobash & Dobash (1992) highlighted the battered-women's movement has negotiated for social change within the larger context of women's existing economic, political, and social position in society, as well as the established philosophies, priorities, and practices of existing institutions and agencies of the state. Literature also suggests that throughout the 1980s, communities saw an increase in the number of shelters. Over the last 40 years, shelters have been a vital resource for victims and their children. Shelters have evolved over time in response to the needs of victims and the challenges that the movement has faced (Wilkes, 2019).

### **Conclusion**

The women's liberation movement of the 1970s and 1980s is significant in the history of gender. One of the most noteworthy contributions of the women's rights struggle was the development of a battered women's movement. The battered women's movement played an important role in feminist efforts to achieve women's liberation and early shelters were outcomes of feminist activism. Subsequently, like many other countries, Pakistan also established shelter homes for battered women and these shelters were helpful to flee from abusive situations. However, battered women were prone to face more violence after leaving a shelter because shelters are still a taboo in Pakistani culture, so they tend to provide a temporary pause in a woman's experience of violence. Moreover, the service providers were having extensive knowledge of indigenous socio-cultural challenges related to battered women's issues, but they were not aware about social and feminist movements rooted in plethora of domestic abuse services. Understanding feminist debates can be really helpful to provide intervention services to battered women in Pakistan.

### **Recommendations**

- i. Shelters do help women to escape from honor killing, forced marriages and domestic violence but the women have to face more violence after leaving. Feminist discourse should be a part of service provider's training sessions to understand and address battered women's experiences and challenges.
- ii. Because of the negative public image, real victims of violence cannot benefit from shelter services. It is recommended to resolve shelters' identity crisis so that they can provide real shelter to women victims of violence.
- iii. It is recommended to start innovative treatment programs for perpetrators of violence and to take measures to educate men about women's rights and the negative effects of domestic violence. Community-based advocacy programs for the victims and perpetrators can also help to control violence against women.

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