

Exploring the Lived Experiences of Female Domestic Workers in Islamabad, Pakistan: A Phenomenological Study



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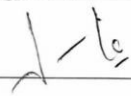
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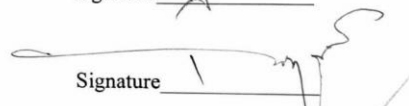
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

SDGs Sustainable Development Goals

ILO International Labour Organization

UN United Nations

UNICEF United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

WB World Bank

WHO World Health Organization

FGE Fund for Gender Equality

ABSTRACT

Based on the constructivist epistemological standpoint and qualitative research design, the present study explores the lived experiences of housemaids regarding their workplace in Islamabad. The population of this study comprised household domestic workers working in Islamabad. For this study, purposive and snowball sampling techniques have been used to select respondents for in-depth interviews. This study was conducted utilizing the phenomenological approach as a methodological framework. Nancy Fraser's Theory of Social Justice in her Framework of Perspectival Dualism is used to understand obstacles in the lived experiences of female domestic workers. Interviews have been used as a data collection tool. The in-depth interviews and field observations enabled the principal researcher to draw new themes and inferences. Data for this study was collected till the saturation point. Hence, twenty interviews were conducted with the domestic workers. The data was analyzed by employing a thematic analysis technique. The findings were concluded based on the themes and sub-themes derived from the data collected through thematic analysis. The results revealed the emergence of violence in several forms: sexual violence, physical violence, psychological violence, and economic violence. The findings indicate that economic violence emerged as the most prevalent form of violence observed through data analysis. Lack of familial and peer support, government's inefficiency, the control of employers through manipulation, conditional care, and limited agency, economic strain, the embedded social stigma that domestic workers discern as a crucial

element, their growing aversion towards their profession, and maladaptive survival mechanisms surfaced as major obstacles. Implementation of the current legislation and curation of a separate policy for live-out domestic workers that surmises a fixed wage rate is a necessary measure that needs to be adopted at the earliest. Additionally, a robust inspection mechanism with regular monitoring must be introduced for the protection of the domestic workers along with public awareness programs are some policy recommendations that the sitting government should consider without delay.

Keywords: domestic worker, violence, maids, Islamabad, workplace, domestic labour.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Outline of Domestic Workers

Domestic workers are people who provide personal and household care to their employers. Their tasks usually include cooking, cleaning, dusting, and caring for children (Javaid, 2022). Hence, given the nature of their work, they are often placed in precarious positions which adds to their vulnerability. This is seconded by Flahaux and Vezzoli (2017) as well as Cheng (2015) who state that domestic workers are habitually considered part of a minority group because of their marginalized status and the systematic exclusion they experience in labour rights, social protection, and legal spheres.

According to the International Labour Organization's Domestic Workers Convention 2011 (No. 189), domestic workers are individuals tasked to perform household tasks and services within private homes, encompassing duties such as cleaning, cooking, and caregiving (ILO, 2011). Globally, it has been estimated that approximately 67.1 million domestic workers are working worldwide (ILO, 2015, p. 9). Although there is a lack of updated statistics regarding Pakistan, it has been estimated that there are 8.5 million domestic workers engaged in the occupation of domestic work out of which the majority are women and children (Gulzar & Hassan, 2022). In Pakistan most domestic helpers commonly known as housemaids are female, accounting for 86.3 percent compared to male domestic helpers who represent 24.3 percent of the total (ILO, 2023).

The 2019 coronavirus pandemic further revealed and aggravated deep structural inequalities in which the capacity of domestic workers to perform their jobs and generate

income was significantly diminished, reflecting the broader economic disruptions caused by the crisis. (Ghida Ismail & Ogando, 2023). This reflects the need to investigate the plight of female domestic workers both economically and socially. Given the importance of Islamabad, no research has solely focused on the lived experiences of female domestic workers via socio-economic aspect to identify the challenges they face at their workplace. Hence, there is a crucial need to fill the gap so that further action is taken in the form of revised and better policies for the well-being of domestic workers. Moreover, since most domestic workers are women, they are more prone to vulnerable conditions at their workplace therefore, studies that aim to investigate the experiences of female domestic workers at their workplace are the need of the hour so stringent action can be taken for their welfare and protection. Additionally, domestic work is rendered 'invisible' due to its hidden nature because it takes place in private households, making it less intervened by the government and even less explored (England, 2017). Hence, for the present study domestic workers especially females have been targeted.

To bring about strict change, there must be enough information about it. Hence, there needs to be stronger data collection on domestic work's shadowed yet widespread nature. According to the United Nations Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) 2017-2018 Annual Report there is a pressing need for quantitative and qualitative research to unveil the numeric data and situations of domestic workers since the discussion on this topic and limited data is a hindrance to curating fruitful policies on this problem (UN Women, 2018). Therefore, firstly, this study is being conducted to fill the above-mentioned gap proposed by the UN to help advance action-oriented policies and mechanisms for the empowerment, security, and overall quality of life of housemaids to strive in an environment where they

can flourish. Secondly, this research aims to highlight the severity of the issue so that it may serve as an awareness in the hope that it will pave the way for the well-being of domestic workers and imply the need for immediate action.

The present study has endeavored to explore the real-life direct experiences of female domestic workers regarding their workplace in Islamabad, Pakistan. Furthermore, the study presents specific, proactive, and goal-directed policy recommendations that directly address core issues based on the findings of the collected data to propose effective solutions.

1.2 Problem Statement

The rapid urbanisation in the cities and increased demand for domestic workers compels women from marginalised communities to migrate to urban centers in search of employment (Kabeer, 2008). In Pakistan, Lahore and Islamabad as urban centers have the highest percentage of female domestic workers employed in different households (Laraib, 2016). Given the marginalised and vulnerable status of these women, they tend to face discrimination and unfavourable working conditions in the households they are employed at. This is seconded by Saima Farooq, a domestic worker who narrated her colleague, working in Lahore was beaten by her employer for accidentally spilling milk (Asrar, 2021). Islamabad exemplifies a different manifestation of cruelty in the case of Maria, a female domestic worker who was sexually abused and physically assaulted by her employer whilst working (Chaudhry, 2019). This hints that the plight of female domestic workers could be more widespread and severe than previously acknowledged, prompting a deeper examination of the systemic issues affecting this vulnerable group.

Naqvi (2022) denotes Islamabad, the capital of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan as another 'urban bourgeoisie' (p.102) where it serves both as a well-established city and a center for businessmen, merchants, and other wealthy people. Hence, the influx of female domestic workers in search of work in these elite households in Islamabad is a well-prevalent and common trend. Amirali (2024) in her study to investigate the perception of female domestic workers as political subjects in the capital city of Pakistan, Islamabad highlights that most female domestic workers employed in Islamabad are rural migrants. Using grounded theory, she also concludes that female domestic workers as political participants, are subjected to underrepresentation and exclusion from community decision-making, shedding light on the cruelty and discrimination they endure both at home and outside in Islamabad. The conclusion of her study hints at the need to further explore the underreported challenges that female domestic workers encounter. Hence, the unexplored territory of the lived encounters of female domestic workers calls for further probing in the form of comprehensive research which is the need of the hour.

In academic literature, few studies have been conducted on domestic workers in Islamabad, since the subject is still nascent. The studies that focus on female domestic workers in the vicinity of Islamabad are concentrated in a specific niche. For instance, Khan (2020) highlighted the plight of child domestic workers working in Golra Sharif. Butt and Zubair (2022) emphasized exploring the antenatal health problems that pregnant domestic workers face in Islamabad. Gillani and Waqar (2018) specifically focused on the sexual harassment of female domestic workers and their coping strategies in Rawalpindi and Islamabad using a quantitative methodology. Mahmood and Mushtaq (2023) explicitly investigated the psychological issues of female domestic workers. However, presently, no

research particularly highlights the first-person experiences of female domestic workers at their workplace in Islamabad. Therefore, a significant gap remains in the investigation of female domestic workers' lived experiences at their workplaces, particularly when examined through the lens of phenomenology as a methodology in Islamabad. This gap continues to limit a comprehensive understanding of their challenges and realities.

Internationally, Thakkar (2023) recently published a study highlighting women's suffering through lived experiences at their workplace in Delhi, the capital city of India. However, in Islamabad, there is a considerable gap in investigating this phenomenon among female domestic workers in the capital city of Pakistan. The lack of qualitative data when it comes to exploring the situation of domestic workers based on their subjective experiences still needs to be explored. Hence, the present research aims to fulfil this substantial gap.

The present research is focused on exploring the issues of female domestic workers through lived experiences. Lived experience is a valuable concept used to explore and gauge information regarding a specific topic of what the said individual has seen as unfolding within the context of social and material interactions in the first person with focus on the deeply affected physical events and their subjective perception of those experiences (Dieumegard et al., 2021). There is currently no such study that phenomenologically investigates the real-life experiences of female domestic workers at their workplace in Islamabad.

Hence, this study explores the lived experiences of female domestic workers regarding their workplace which is the need of the hour in Pakistan to equip better policies

and solutions that will diminish their suffering and aim to gain a better understanding of their subjective situations which will help curate stringent measures for a better working environment.

1.3 Significance of Study

Exploring the lived experiences of female domestic workers is vital for uncovering the daily challenges and obstacles they face in their work environments, providing deeper insights into the complexities of their working conditions and the barriers they encounter. The present research has aimed to explore the subjective experiences of domestic workers working in the capital city of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Islamabad regarding their workplace. Hence, due to the diversity in location identified as a substantial gap, the significance of the present research is divided into two aspects i.e. geographical significance and methodological significance.

1.3.1 Geographical Significance

The study area of the research is Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. The reason for this geographical location lies in the notable importance of it. As mentioned in section 1.2, Islamabad has one of the highest numbers of female domestic workers employed. There has reportedly been a huge trend of internal migration to Islamabad (given its recognition as the capital) owing to better civic amenities, more job opportunities, and better income sources (Jamal et al., 2011). This is why most female domestic workers who come to Islamabad are rural migrants (Amirali, 2024). Moreover, as mentioned in section 1.2, Islamabad has one of the highest numbers of female domestic workers employed. Therefore, since Islamabad serves as a crucial landmark for domestic workers, the study area has been chosen to undertake the present research. Most importantly, no research has

been undertaken regarding the subjective experiences of female domestic workers in Islamabad.

1.3.2 Methodological Significance

Conceptually, the primary focus of this research lies in its methodology i.e. phenomenological research design to extract lived experiences of female domestic workers. Phenomenological research methodology is an excellent tool used in cases of gender and which deals with human behavior i.e., a phenomenon that appears in consciousness and based on what people say because of how people interpret experiences they go through (Greening, 2019). Hence, this research has uncovered the subjective responses of domestic workers regarding their experiences of obstacles they encounter in their daily lives. Moreover, this will also help in curating policies, practices, and tailored interventions that are grounded in realities rather than based on assumptions.

In conclusion, the research exploring the phenomenological perspectives of the lived experiences of female domestic workers is pivotal since it will add to the empirical gap and enable a better understanding of the associated factors that contribute to their abuse and pose an obstacle to a safe working environment. The research aims to provide a foundation for the government, think tanks, and similar organizations to develop effective solutions and take immediate action which is difficult to identify owing to the nature of the workplace of domestic workers (given the enclosed spaces of private households which make it difficult for detection of violence as mentioned in section 1.1).

1.4 Research Aims

The present study has sought to comprehensively explore and understand the in-depth and subjective experiences of female domestic workers with respect to their working conditions and employment environment in Islamabad, aiming to shed light on their daily realities and challenges within the context of their employment.

1.5 Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to explore the first-hand embodied experiences of female domestic workers at their workplace in Islamabad, Pakistan. This includes aspects such as what kind of experiences they encounter and how they view them. The research focuses on the subjective experiences of domestic workers at their workplace in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Hence, the research question is:

1. How are the lived experiences of female domestic workers concerning their work environments in Islamabad?

1.6 Conceptual Framework

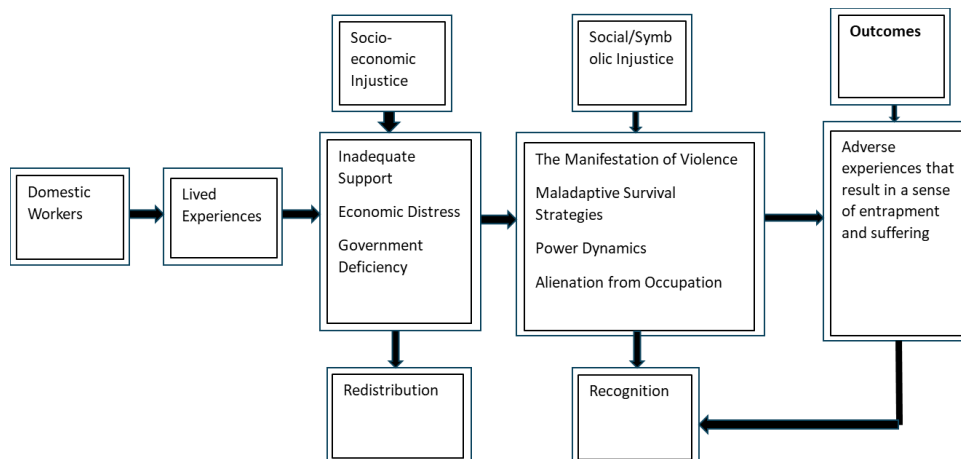


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author's own construct based on Nancy Fraser's Theory of Social Justice

1.7 Research Strengths and Limitations

1.7.1 Research Strengths

The current research has targeted domestic workers working in Islamabad to explore their lived experiences in their workplace. One key strength of the research lies in its methodology. Given that the research is exploratory and aims to understand the lived experiences through respondents' experiences gathered via interviews, phenomenological research methodology has been adopted for this purpose. Moreover, since the study aimed to capture the subjective experiences of respondents, non-structured interviews were chosen to allow for an open-ended exploration of their varied perspectives, without being confined to a specific questionnaire. Hence, the study envisions that the findings can help improve the working conditions of domestic workers engaged in domestic work in Islamabad.

The study serves as a guideline to aid development workers, policymakers, and government officials working to improve and introduce new policies, amend previous guidelines, and strive to delineate better working conditions, inclusion of numerous facilities, and incentives for domestic workers. This study aims to initiate the influx of further studies in this arena and serves as an alarm to the government to intervene on behalf of domestic workers.

1.7.2 Research Limitations

For the present study, the sample size of the research is small i.e. 20. Therefore, since the research is qualitative and given that the sample size is small, the results cannot be generalised. Consequently, while the study provides valuable insights into the specific experiences of the participants, the results may not be broadly applicable to larger populations or different contexts.

1.8 Linkage with SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a blueprint that serves as a global commitment to addressing the most pressing challenges of today through a unified framework to foster economic growth and social inclusion to ensure a more equitable and sustainable future for every human being. This research aligns with a specific Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), intending to contribute meaningfully to advancing the SDG mission to improve the lives of every human being on this planet.

Concerning this research, SDG 5 Gender Equality rightly fits to address the obstacles that female domestic workers face at their workplace as part of their lived experiences. Two important targets with respect to SDG-5 form the inclusion of the present study. They are targets 5.4 and 5.2 respectively. Küfeoğlu (2022) denotes that SDG 5 target 5.4 states “value unpaid care work and promote shared domestic responsibilities” and target 5.2 states “to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation” (p. 279). With respect to the first target, firstly, the subject area of the research has focused on exploring the experiences of female domestic workers solely hence, the need to

recognize their efforts on a larger scale through infrastructure, public services, or social protection programs is necessary. Secondly, one of the key themes identified in this research is the perpetual violence that the female domestic workers have faced for which target 5.2 vouches for immediate action. Given that the research focuses on highlighting concepts such as violence, domestic labour, and unpaid work, it directly aligns with the agenda of SDG 5, which aims to address these critical issues. This has been seconded by Filho et al. (2022) who elaborates that SDG-5 emphasizes on issues of discrimination against women, their struggle of rights and the constant violence that they face which pose an obstacle to their well-being. Moreover, SDG-5 has voiced its strong view on focusing on the plight of women since it uses the word ‘against all women’. In this aspect, the present research has solely focused on women as part of its demographic criteria.

In conclusion, this research not only highlights the necessity of addressing the obstacles in the lived experiences, especially for the community of domestic workers who are already vulnerable but also reinforces the critical objectives of SDG 5, exhibiting its adherence to advancing the plight of women and working towards their empowerment.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following chapter provides an overview of the research subject, offering a focused examination of domestic workers. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section explains the concept of domestic workers in detail, highlighting the historical context, and current trends. The second section details the important aspects of domestic workers' experiences by highlighting studies worldwide in relation to the findings drawn in this research. The third section highlights the need to address the gap, and the fourth section outlines the theoretical framework of the research.

2.1 Domestic Workers: A Detailed Overview

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the history of domestic work, exploring its evolution, the demographics of those who have traditionally occupied these roles, and its deep-rooted association with the female gender.

2.1.1 Definition of Domestic Workers

Domestic workers occupy a distinct position in the informal sector with a perceptible disposition embedded along the complicated reign of domestic labor, socioeconomic dynamics, and vulnerability. This day-to-day profession is sprawled across the globe in every household that can afford it. It is even defined in official textbooks; however, there is a need for acknowledgment in written and action-oriented analysis. This research aims to fill the gap found on this topic by depicting practical analysis.

Various organizations like Human Rights Watch and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have been at the centrifuge of fighting to provide domestic workers their basic rights. Legally, at the ILO Convention (No. 189) Article 1 of the ILO (2011) domestic work is defined as:

“(a) the term “domestic work” means work performed in or for a household or households; (b) the term “domestic worker” means any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship; and (c) a person who performs domestic work only occasionally or sporadically and not on an occupational basis is not a domestic worker (ILO, 2011, p.1).”

The ILO Convention No. 189 remains a steadfast advocate for domestic workers facing harsh treatment in their workplaces and continues to provide active support for all domestic workers employed globally.

There are two important types of domestic workers around the world. The first is live-out workers who are defined as those workers who only work in multiple residential houses and then go back to their houses after the day's work. On the other hand, live-in workers are those who live with their employers full-time (Ju et al., 2023; Malhotra & Ling, 2020). For this research, live-out workers were targeted because their broad experiences in multiple houses would help in the subjective analysis of the research since the research is phenomenological and aims to grasp the subjective experiences of female domestic workers.

2.1.2 The Female Gender and Domestic Work

Two critical concerns related to domestic workers must be addressed in this study. Firstly, domestic workers are predominantly women, and as such, definitions of domestic workers often reflect this gendered aspect. Consequently, the definitions typically emphasize the significant representation of women in this sector. As Montoya-Robledo et al. (2022) in their study to explore the growing exposure of air pollution against domestic workers in Bogota's public transportation system define domestic work as a circle of those women who pave way for the middle- and high-income families to work and enjoy at the expense of maintaining their houses and the things that they want to do. In another study to explore the health disorders with related abuse in India, (Kakar et al., 2013) elaborate that domestic workers are females who are assigned to perform domestic household chores. Although both men and women engage in this occupation; the profession is highly feminized. In the categorization of men, acts like gardeners and drivers are considered skillful but in terms of women acts like cooking and cleaning are deemed vice versa and combine a total of more than 80% of women and girls involved in this occupation (Ghosh, 2021). This has only reinforced the perception that it is "women's work" (Yeoh & Huang, 2012, p. 451). This is because the perception of devaluation of care work and the trend of skills required for domestic work is seen as something inherent in every woman, the result of which is often manifested in the form of poor wages (Neetha & Palriwala, 2011). This is why the study primarily focuses on women as its niche of respondents.

Secondly, the workplaces of domestic workers are not public spaces. They are primarily private households within which they are mostly employed. Their matters are pushed under the *chadar chardeewari* notion which alludes that it is a private matter

between four walls and hence should be dealt with in that way which has also added to the under-reporting of abuse which results in unchecked violence (Zulfiqar, 2021, p. 159).

2.1.3 History of Domestic Workers

Throughout the history of domestic work, the relationship between the labor struggle and slavery is parallel. There are two main aspects to this. Firstly, women in olden times migrated with their families from less developed to more developed cities in search of a better livelihood. Secondly, during colonialisation, domestic workers were forced to work in their countries by the colonisers or were hauled to other countries either as slaves or in the form of bonded labor (Hoerder et al., 2015). Over the years, countries like Greece, India, France, and the Acadian Empire enslaved people from third-world countries and forced them to work under precarious conditions. In countries like France and England, aristocrats would always employ domestic workers since it was given that families from elite classes should always have help in place at all times, especially during the Victorian Era. Surprisingly, during the advent of industrialization the labor force in these countries domestic workforce increased contradictory to the World War which had marked the end of domestic work in most developed countries (Sarti, 2014; Yeoh & Huang, 2012).

For third-world countries, colonialism has gotten the better of them, and still to this day, the effects refuse to wear off. In Africa's case, colonialism, and apartheid are most responsible for the enslavement of black people as domestic servants in white men's homes. Unfortunately, this exploitation of maintaining coloniser customs still perpetuates in South Africa to this day which has subjected the majority of the women in Africa to find

temporary solace in domestic work under harsh working conditions (Dawood & Khan, 2022).

In terms of Pakistan and India, in Asia, Rollins (1985) highlights that in India's hierarchical system in the sub-continent, domestic workers belonged to the lowest strata which is why not only in the 1800s but even in the Mughal Era women were forced into handling household affairs of the elite class in the form of maids. In contrast, some sought the tag of concubines which could only add little to their respect on the condition that they gave birth to sons.

Hence, even after India and Pakistan were separated the cultural beliefs of the Mughal Empire combined with the inception of the British Raj failed to change the perspective of domestic workers. Moreover, subjectively, domestic workers volunteer to work because they need to feed their families.

2.1.4 Domestic Workers in Islamabad, Pakistan

As mentioned above, the culture of domestic workers in the sub-continent has been implanted for a long. Even when the royal system perished and after the British Raj when the sub-continent was divided into India and Pakistan respectively, the legacy of owning domestic workers remained the same. Today, in Pakistan households that can afford to hire domestic help do so.

Islamabad, known for being peaceful, clean, and organised is the capital city of Pakistan and the apex of all government affairs national or international. Harper (2010) writes that to build the newly developed city a good ratio of human capital was required.

For this purpose, many people from Punjab and nearby areas were brought to build the capital. Later, this became the home for the informal class who mainly worked in lowly jobs for the rich. Like that time, today the informal class of people are spread out over Islamabad and used for the same purpose i.e. to hire cheap labor as drivers, domestic workers, childcare, and gardeners (Shafqat et al., 2021). Willingly, these people would come to Islamabad to improve their living standards by working menial jobs. This is seconded by Shamim et al. (2014) who when interviewed domestic workers to understand why they moved to Islamabad came to the definite conclusion that due to low wages/poverty, lack of personal security, and discrimination in their hometown, they moved to the capital city hope of improving their standards of living.

Therefore, Islamabad, as a capital city, experiences a significant concentration of domestic workers, making it an ideal location for conducting study on the varied lived experiences of female domestic workers.

2.2 Critical Issues of Domestic Workers

A range of issues have been reported with respect to female domestic workers at their workplace. Commonly found issues extracted from global and regional studies in line with the present research are highlighted as part of this extensive literature.

2.2.1 Violence and its Types

Violence against women is a widespread and deeply rooted issue that affects individuals across all societies. It manifests in various forms and has profound impacts on the well-being, dignity, and rights of those affected. Hence, addressing this issue requires

a multi-faceted approach that tackles the underlying societal factors to promote well-being for those communities that are in dire need of it. Violence against women, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) is defined as

“The injury of women as a result of any form of physical, sexual and psychological intervention to her corporal integrity for the sole reason that she is a female and the arbitrary limitation of her freedoms in her community or private life by use of pressure (Koçoğlu, 2019, p. 64).”

Hence, violence against women is a profound and systemic violation of human rights that transcends borders and cultures, inflicting lasting physical, emotional, and psychological scars. It perpetuates cycles of trauma, undermines women's autonomy and dignity, and poses a significant barrier to achieving gender equality and justice worldwide. According to UNICEF, violence against women is a global epidemic that inflicts physical, psychological, sexual, and economic harm on women, leading to a multitude of health issues, including chronic physical ailments, mental health disorders, and sexual health diseases (Islahi & Ahmad, 2015). For a solution to this problem, legally, in 1978, the United States Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted to protect women's rights action is lacking on this part. Krantz (2002).

Violence is an umbrella term that encompasses a broad range of different types of violence that women may undergo. An individual does not need to experience all forms of violence to be considered a victim of violence; rather, being subjected to any single type of violence is sufficient to classify someone as a victim.

There is not a single kind of violence that can be said to be associated with housemaids. The range, type, and nature of violence differ depending on the situation. It is essential to keep in mind, as mentioned above, that the profession of domestic labor is a highly feminized one. Hence, the occurrence of violence against women is habitual within this sphere. The most common types of violence concerning this study are discussed below:

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is a pervasive issue that affects individuals across all walks of life, cutting across age, gender, and socioeconomic status. It includes a range of acts that violate a person's autonomy and dignity, often leading to profound and long-lasting physical, emotional, and psychological consequences. It is one of the most widespread forms of violence affecting women worldwide. It is defined as

“Any sexual act, attempts to obtain a sexual act or acts to traffic for sexual purposes, directed against a person using coercion, harassment or advances made by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work (Dartnall & Jewkes, 2013, p. 4)”

It is considered one of the most severe forms of violence because it can affect women's health in the form of psychological issues like anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders and physical problems like high blood pressure and even suicide and at least 7% of women have faced non-intimate partner violence (Nandini et al., 2022). Hence, the prevalence of sexual violence is another kind of violence that the respondents extensively reported. In a study conducted in Eastern Ethiopia, it was found that out of the 75 FDWs,

54 (72.0%) of domestic workers experienced sexual harassment at least once while they were working for their employers in their households (Andualem, 2014). In Pakistan, Manzoor et al. (2016) conducted a study to assess the extent of sexual violence that domestic workers faced in areas like Bahadurabad, Malir, Gulistan-e-eJohar, and Gulshan-e-Iqbal, etc in the city of Karachi yielded shocking results. By using convenience and purposive non-probability sampling techniques to collect responses from a hundred respondents for their quantitative analysis. their study concluded that 54 percent of respondents reported that they had been sexually harassed by their owners. The prevasiveness of sexual violence against domestic workers is an alarming and pervasive issue, underscoring a serious and troubling trend that affects many individuals in this vulnerable occupation.

Physical Violence

Physical violence is a severe and often visible form of abuse that involves the use of force to inflict harm or exert control over another individual. It encompasses a range of behaviors, from hitting and beating to more subtle forms of physical intimidation and coercion. Physical violence often results in physical injury, psychological trauma, and a profound sense of fear and helplessness. In proper literature, physical violence is defined as “the exercise of physical force to inflict injury on, or cause damage to, person or property (Bufacchi, 2005, p. 195)”. Using physical force to inflict physical harm that leaves indication of the harm occurred is considered as physical violence. Moreover, physical harm is not limited to one-time occurrence. It can occur time and again unless action is taken upon it. Moreover, physical violence is not limited to property damage. It can be charged against a person, a building or any other entity that can be violated by means and

use of physical force. Physical violence by means of use of force is enacted usually in circumstances to control or inflict harm to another entity in order to establish one's power over that entity.

Physical violence often leaves evidence in the form of visible bodily injuries. It is the most common type of violence found all over the globe. Adane et al. (2023) in their cross-sectional study analyzed the experiences of violence and other associated factors in Kombolcha Town in Ethiopia. Using a regression model, 215 domestic workers were included via a simple random sampling technique. The results showed that 33.49 percent of housemaids were victims of physical violence as compared to 21.4 percent who were sexually abused. Another study by Azanaw et al. (2020) conducted among female housemaids in Northwest Ethiopia concluded that a high level of physical violence was observed among domestic workers i.e. 37.1 percent by their female employers.

Psychological Violence

Psychological violence, often referred to as emotional or mental abuse, is a form of aggression that inflicts deep, lasting harm on an individual's mental and emotional well-being. Unlike physical violence, its wounds are invisible, yet it can be just as damaging, if not more so. This type of violence includes behaviors such as manipulation, verbal assault, intimidation, and persistent criticism, all designed to control, demean, or isolate the victim. The effects of psychological violence can erode a person's self-worth and sense of reality, making it a critical issue that requires serious attention and intervention. Psychological violence is the use of both non-verbal and verbal discourse with the intention to mentally harm or emotionally blackmail an individual in order to exert control on the said person

(Neppi et al., 2017). This type of violence is the most difficult to identify since psychological scars do not leave physical marks. Within psychological violence, verbal abuse continues to be a pervasive issue in many settings. It uses words to demean, belittle, or control another person. It can include insults, threats, constant criticism, and other forms of verbal manipulation that erode a person's self-esteem and sense of security. In literature, it is defined as “the use of words that are personally insulting such as generally abusive spoken obscenities and foul language or indicating a lack of respect for the dignity and worth of an individual (Guay et al., 2014, p. 572)”. In a cross-sectional study conducted in Northwest Ethiopia to investigate the potential presence of psychological violence, it was found that among the 688 female domestic workers who participated in the study, about 387(56.3%) of the domestic workers faced psychological violence at least once in their lifetime (Azanaw et al., 2019).

Although often overlooked or minimized, verbal abuse can have profound and lasting impacts on an individual's mental and emotional well-being, leading to anxiety, depression, and a diminished sense of self-worth. In this aspect, Sales and Santana (2003) conducted a study to check if problems of racial (verbal abuse) and job discrimination against housemaids would cause mental health symptoms in Brazil. They extracted data based on a random sampling of 470 families who lived in a poor area in Salvador through questionnaires with women between the ages of 14 and 69. From the total 335 women that participated they then used a Questionnaire for Psychiatric Morbidity among Adults (QMPA) and extracted only relevant data related to depression and anxiety (QMPA-SAD) was used. They concluded in their study that sadness/tiredness, poor concentration, palpitations, and aggressive behavior were found in housemaids. They further proposed

that changes in the Brazilian labor legislation may help reduce the social discrimination that they face which in turn will help with the symptoms. Another study conducted on the assessment of psychological violence using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders among 250 domestic workers in Islamabad concluded that 52.8% of female domestic workers were diagnosed with major depressive disorder, 53.2% with generalized anxiety disorder, 51.2% female domestic workers had experienced verbal abuse, and 55.2% had experienced emotional abuse (Husain et al., 2022).

In conclusion, psychological violence causes deep emotional wounds that can lead to serious health consequences including chronic anxiety, depression, and other stress-related disorders. The impact on a person's mental well-being can be long-lasting, affecting their overall quality of life. Addressing this form of abuse is crucial for not only restoring mental health but also preventing physical health issues.

Economic Violence

Economic violence is a pervasive and often overlooked form of abuse that involves the deliberate manipulation or restriction of an individual's financial resources to exert control and inflict harm. This type of violence can manifest in various ways, including withholding wages, sabotaging financial opportunities, or restricting access to economic assets. Economic Violence is the most undermined form of violence, in comparison with other forms. In simple words, it is said to occur when the abuser has control over the victim's monetary or other economic resources.

The term economic violence emerged in the late 1980s and refers to the arbitrary control of an individual's ability to access and use financial resources thereby threatening

economic security and fostering financial independence on the individual in order to manipulate and limit the individual's financial autonomy (Alkan et al., 2021). In other words, economic violence is a means of withholding money, paying less or not at all, and other forms that prevent economic independence on the part of women (Kerr, 2022). The phenomenon of economic violence within violence is not a new one. In India's Sangrur district of Punjab Dar (2014) investigated economic violence in terms of underpaying. He interviewed 160 female domestic workers and drew results using a chi-square test. According to his findings, there was a huge variation between different age groups of females in terms of monthly earnings and no consistency in pay. The lowest that the female domestic workers earned was Rs. 200 and the highest was Rs. 1500. The average earnings were estimated to be Rs. 842 which falls under the category of under-paid since the minimum fixed wage for unskilled labor in the Punjab district should be Rs. 2525. Domestic workers lacked the bargaining power to ask for a fair wage because of their lack of adequate social standing and powerlessness. In countries with scant resources like Pakistan, there is a lack of data available on economic violence (Pasha, 2022). Due to an inefficient lack of both qualitative and quantitative data, studies that target solely economic violence among domestic workers are not readily available.

In conclusion, economic violence represents a significant barrier to financial independence and well-being, often wielded to control and manipulate individuals. It involves the deliberate restriction or exploitation of economic resources, which can severely impact an individual's ability to achieve self-sufficiency and personal autonomy.

2.2.2 Economic Adversity

Poverty is critical for perpetuating and sustaining the reason for domestic workers' livelihood. For domestic workers, this economic hardship becomes both a driving force and a means of compulsion, as they are often left with no choice but to engage in work due to their lack of marketable skills. The absence of education and training opportunities forces them into low-paying, unstable jobs where they are highly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. This is because domestic labour is not considered a skilled profession but rather it is a means of employment for poor, the illiterate, functionally illiterate women and they are forced to submerge themselves in occupation without substantial rights and benefits (S.J, 2019). This relentless cycle of poverty and violence not only traps these workers in their current circumstances but also limits their ability to break free, reinforcing the systemic inequalities that fuel violence. This is evident from a study conducted by Nyaura and Ngugi (2019) who interviewed 82 female domestic workers using simple random sampling to investigate the economic plight faced by domestic workers in selected estates of Eastlands in Nairobi, County of Kenya. Their study concluded housemaids faced extremely low remuneration even with full-time work and due to a lack of education skills and or other technical skills they are unable to switch to a more profitable and respectful profession. Therefore, due to the necessity to earn money they are forced to work as domestic workers.

Intergenerational poverty is another crucial element that sustains the trend of female domestic labour. The main problem in this aspect is that when girls reach the age of puberty, they are forced to prioritise forced to work in numerous houses as child labour and hence must give up on schooling which could potentially break the cycle of

intergenerational poverty in the long run (Bird, 2010). Due to fear of putting food on the plate, parents often resort to the short-term solution of putting them to work to earn money which then propels the continuation of this cycle for future generations. Second, the problem of inadequate wages further dampens the prospects of domestic workers getting out of poverty. This is because female domestic workers either earn less than the minimum wage prescribed or do not earn at all hence, they are underpaid (Bick, 2017). Arooba Shahazad, the Secretary General of the Domestic Worker Union in Pakistan emphasizes that low wage that the domestic workers earn is not enough to cover the school fees of their children which contributing highly to the possibility that their children and further generations after that will be working as domestic workers. (Mehmood, 2023).

2.2.3 Social Exclusion

The domestic work industry is profoundly ethnocentric, gendered, and racialized (Sternberg, 2019). This is because of societal perceptions that devalue domestic work as inferior and “unrecognized labor” which makes them devoid of legal protection and contributes to their receiving the lowest compensation despite their essential facilitation to the functioning of households and economies (Butt & Khan, 2019). Due to the nature of their work, considered unskilled, they often face a complex web of social discrimination that perpetuates their marginalization and mistreatment. The profession of domestic work is considered as considered as 'dirty, menial, and degrading,' a perception that contributes to the invisibility and undervaluing of those who perform it" (D'Souza, 2010). Since the profession is not considered decent but is termed dirty or unskilled and inferior compared to formal professions, housemaids have communicated that they have been marginalized because of their work. This can sometimes show up in a picture of employers not allowing

them to use the bathrooms in the house but rather sending them off to the washroom located in an isolated place in the house, or not even letting them use the same utensils that the employers themselves eat with (Astagini & Sarwono, 2021). Such attitudes not only undermine the dignity and rights of domestic workers but also contribute to a culture of impunity for employers who exploit or abuse their employees. The vulnerability that domestic workers face is heightened by their poverty and marginalization, which in turn become factors that significantly contribute to their exploitation and abuse in the workplace (Raghuram, 2001).

Ultimately, the pervasive cultural perception of social inferiority that is assigned to domestic workers grants employers a distinct power advantage. This entrenched social hierarchy not only diminishes the perceived value of domestic workers but also emboldens employers to exploit and abuse them to maintain dominance and control. The reinforcement of this status quo through cultural norms and societal attitudes perpetuates a cycle of marginalization, allowing employers to exercise undue power and authority over domestic workers without fear of accountability or repercussion. Addressing this cultural stigma is essential in reshaping societal views and promoting fair treatment and respect for those in the domestic workforce.

2.2.4 Power Dynamics

Power dynamics play a crucial role in the abuse and exploitation of domestic workers. The inherent power imbalance between employers and the domestic labourers often results in significant vulnerabilities for the latter. Power or the degree of difference in inequality is often a common way to characterize relationships in supervisor-

subordinate, usually due to cultural norms. Generally, anywhere around the world where people who work in the informal sector or are accustomed to working menial jobs, the presence of power imbalance is present. This dynamic is widespread especially where labor is undervalued and workers are not given importance (towards their profession and as a human) or their due share of rights, reinforcing cycles of inequality. This is seconded by a crucial study conducted in the city of Punjab in India where interviews with various female domestic workers concluded that the inability of domestic workers to say no to their employers for not working on public holidays was not possible given the control they had over them along with not being compensated for their work and the overt force of not being able to report the violence they face due to the undue control their employers had over them; they were forced to oblige (Rani & Saluja, 2018). The imbalance of power is also enacted in the form of unequal distribution of resources which further escalates the abuse of power for example in the form of a lack of adherence to minimum wage or stems from the difference in the socioeconomic standing of employers and domestic workers (Masterson & Hoobler, 2019). Moreover, the hierarchy and power differences along with the social stigma they face become the cause of their abuse at the hands of their employers (Thakkar, 2023). As a result, the social exclusion (described in section 2.2.3) gives employers subject control over domestic workers which results in their presumed right to inflict violence. Power gives employers substantial control over crucial aspects of domestic workers' lives, including their employment conditions, living arrangements, and financial stability. This unequal distribution of power allows employers to exert undue influence and, in many cases, engage in abusive practices with minimal fear of repercussions.

In summary, the entrenched power dynamics between employers and domestic workers significantly contribute to the systemic abuse and exploitation of this vulnerable group. These practices are rooted in the inequality they face in their profession and hence factors like being underpaid and abuse are the result of the control that their employers exert over them. Moreover, since domestic workers do not have adequate protection in society due to the nature of their informal work, this only exacerbates their conditions. Their helplessness paves way for the employers to exert control over essential aspects of domestic workers' lives and tends to facilitate an environment where abusive practices are more likely to occur.

2.3 Research Gap

The involvement of women domestic workers as part of the informal workforce is not a new phenomenon. Female domestic workers have long played a part in the maintenance of houses and as a means of living. Despite their inclusion in the non-formal arena, they encounter various obstacles that they bear in a routine. However, the occurrence of abuse against maids is well-acknowledged yet lacks the comprehensive documentation needed in the scholarly literature (Murty, 2009). As Nazir (2011) rightly points out in her study on housemaids in Faisalabad, Pakistan the constant under-reporting and the certitude of national statistics to not register domestic workers in a separate category but underline them under the pretext of “community, social and personal service activities” and hence given the varying definitions of this niche is why there is a lack of data on this topic. Nevertheless, few researchers have worked in this area, specifically in Islamabad. Such as Hanif et al. (2022) investigated how domestic workers have been a means of psychological stressors for their employers. In another study Butt and Zubair (2022) examined the

problems that pregnant domestic workers face in Islamabad using a constructivist epistemological approach through grounded theory. Likewise, Gilani and Waqar (2018) have explored the nuisance of sexual harassment, and the coping strategies used by domestic workers in the slum areas of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

The present study is different from the aforementioned studies that have been carried out so far in Islamabad because it explores the first-person encounters of female domestic workers regarding their workplace. The present research provides valuable insights for developers, social workers, and policymakers, highlighting the most pressing issues of live-out female domestic workers based on their lived experiences at their workplace that demand immediate action. It also emphasizes the need for enhanced workplace conditions through effective legislation and strategic measures tailored to the needs of workers in the targeted area.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Nancy Fraser's Framework of Perspectival Dualism in the Theory of Social Justice

Nancy Fraser's theory of justice significantly contributes to the broader landscape of social theorists. Her theory offers a critical perspective in highlighting the additional forms of injustice that profoundly impact sustaining the present inequality of marginalised classes. Moreover, her theory helps understand the various nuances of injustice that act as barriers to the well-being of the vulnerable classes of society.

The backdrop of Fraser's theory of social justice lies in the Marxist theory. Fraser (2017) elucidates that in today's capitalist society from a Marxist ideological perspective,

the working class are those people who must sell their labour on the pretext of arrangements that give the proletariat the authority to hoard surplus output for its private benefit. Within this aspect, Fraser (1997) claims two facets in this position. Firstly, the problem of a small class benefitting off the labour of most of the lower class lies in its distribution. Since the resources available are only limited to the upper class, they are not distributed to the poor class. Fraser poses that re-distribution is necessary in this aspect where resources are evenly distributed to all the classes of society equally. This she claims is the solution for the socio-economic injustice. Secondly, parallel to this aspect, using the notion of the political theorist, Charles Taylor, she claims that cultural/symbolic injustice is the failure of recognition which as despotism tends to constrain a person to devalued existence that leads to 'crippling self-hatred' (Fraser, 1997, p. 14) but should be considered as a vital human need. The solution for poses for this problem is recognition. As mentioned, Fraser employs Marxist ideology to classify the various types of injustices that stem from economic inequalities identified by Karl Marx. Her analysis, based on modern society, has aimed to expand the foundation of Marxism of that time to include broader dimensions of oppression found today.

From a comprehensive perspective, Fraser's theory of social justice differentiates between two main aspects of injustice. Fraser (1997) describes the first injustice as socio-economic injustice which is deeply entrenched in the political-economic structure of that society. Fraser considers socio-economic injustice to be illustrated in the form of exploitation; where the fruits of one's efforts are claimed by others for their advantage, economic marginalization; where people are confined to poorly paid work out of necessity or being withheld from lucrative and revenue-generating labour, and lastly deprivation;

which refers to the denial of viable living conditions. The second kind of injustice, cultural/symbolic injustice is ingrained in the social norms of presentation, discourse, and the interpretation of it. Cultural/symbolic injustice can be further bisected into non-recognition; which represents the dominant representation, interaction, and interpretative practices of a culture of that respective individual and disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions) by others (Fraser 1997, p. 14). In the framework of perspectival dualism, Fraser presents two solutions for the two respective injustices she derives. According to Fraser, the remedy for the socio-economic injustice is a need for an economic restructuring of the system, termed by her as re-distribution. Fraser identifies that for cultural or symbolic injustice, the need for recognition is a solution is necessary because this requires a cultural or symbolic change (Chigateri, 2007).

With respect to the present study, Fraser proposes that these two concepts can be used to assess the challenges of a vulnerable group of people or community who belong to the poor classes of society and do not benefit much from themselves but rather benefit the rich classes per Marxist belief system. Within this aspect, domestic service, as a form of commodified social-reproductive labor, is a crucial background condition for capitalism's existence (Amirali, 2024). Therefore, the present research recognises domestic workers as the target community who are marginalised given the nature of their profession with the aim of serving the rich classes of society. Based on the findings of the present research on the lived experiences of female domestic workers in their workplaces in Islamabad, it is deduced that, according to Fraser's theory of social justice, the issues that female domestic workers face are twofold. the demonstration of inadequate support, economic distress, and

government deficiency as themes in the form of results constitute the first type of social injustice (according to Fraser); socioeconomic injustice. All these problems are part of the same problem i.e. the lack of economic stability and the failure of the government to address this issue. Domestic work is considered informal hence female workers are deprived of official support by the government. This again furthers the reason for the economic marginalization of female domestic workers due to their informality, it is paid poorly remuneration, and lack of technical skills and education they cannot switch to a more skilled profession hence, they are entrapped due to the nature of their work (Katara & Sharma, 2022). The solution as per Fraser's perspectival dualism is the need for redistribution of resources among the deprived classes of society. This calls for necessary government support in the form of curation and implementation of various social protection programs and other interventions (depicted in section 5.2) that will help domestic workers climb from the poverty trap. Furthermore, there is a need to fix the structural issues that will allow for the inclusion of equal pay, stringent accountability system, and better opportunities.

The manifestation of violence, maladaptive survival strategies, power dynamics, and alienation from the occupation are core results that fit the category of socio/symbolic injustice. This aspect of injustice is embedded in the culture of the treatment of domestic workers. The view of domestic work as a menial, undervalued, and unrecognized profession stems from cultural beliefs that regard such work as an innate characteristic of women (Altman & Humberd, 2023). Hence, this cultural notion has strengthened the informal notion of this work since it is not considered a skilled profession. Therefore, the disrespect, occasional overt and covert violence, and oppression faced by domestic workers

are rooted in cultural norms that perpetuate their subjugation and dictate their treatment. Likewise, female domestic workers cannot leave their workplace due to the fear of poverty and if they try to resist then they are forced to bear more blunts of violence, alluring to the failed maladaptive strategies. Another critical aspect within this is the indication of alienation of the occupation. According to Marxism alienation and oppression go hand in hand. That is, alienated labour prevents one from actualising their human freedom. In Marxist context this refers to the conception of the “estrangement of man from man,” i.e. the condition in which people view and treat one another as “other” (Murphy, 2019, p. 8). Adding Fraser’s view of what she claims is the disrespect that the isolated classes feel when they sell their labour to the small percentage of the rich for their benefit (Fraser, 1997). In this case, the domestic workers reported that given the label of their profession as a menial and unimportant task, their employers behave with them in a similar fashion. More so, they often exert control to force work out of them, adding to the combined feelings of misery, helplessness and destitution that they feel. Therefore, domestic workers report second the notion of Marxism, alluding to the fact that while both they and their employers are humans, still they are treated as the “other” of which the difference in classes is the contributing factor given the wealthy classes do not not consider the poor as equal but rather a means of exploitation. The theme of alienation of occupation reveals that domestic workers often despise their profession due to the mistreatment they endure, ultimately leading to self-hatred. This corroborates the socio/symbolic injustice that Fraser pointed out as one of the by-products of capitalism. For this type of injustice, as mentioned above, Fraser recommends the need for recognition. This depicts the need for a cultural change where the need for a change in thinking is required towards female domestic workers’

profession so that it may be considered a proper job without being tainted as menial and dirty. This can be initiated by not considering female domestic workers as people to look down upon but rather as part of an industry that does proper work and deserves respect and dignity. Hence, there needs to be a change in the thought process of how female domestic workers are viewed culturally.

It is important to note here that Fraser claims that while logically there are distinctions between the said injustices yet, substantively, they are deeply intertwined, resulting in ‘a vicious circle of cultural and economic subordination’ (Chigateri, 2007, p. 6). This concept of the intersection of both types of injustice is substantiated by the informality of the profession of female domestic workers since the culture considers the domestic profession to be mediocre, lowly, and disgusting which only escalates their oppression and subjection in their daily life and vouches that since they are economically they are trapped in poverty they are reiterated in the form of poor wages which ultimately reinvests in government’s notion to exclude them from social protection programs due to the informal nature of their work (Astagini & Sarwono, 2021).

In conclusion, from the Marxist perspective the injustice by means of class exploitation, which in this case refers to the female domestic workers is a clear example of the socio/symbolic injustice (as depicted from the results of the study) and the socio-economic injustice they face as depicted by Fraser’s theory of social justice. Therefore, there is an apt need for the implementation of both the redistribution and recognition to better the lives of the female domestic workers in Islamabad, Pakistan.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an in-depth explanation of the methods utilized for data extraction and analysis. It also outlines the rationale behind the selection of the specific methodology employed in this research. It is divided into seven sections. The first section elaborates on the study area and the reason behind choosing it. The second section highlights the methodological approach. The third section explains the sampling technique. The fourth and fifth sections highlight the process of data collection and data analysis. The sixth section sheds light on the ethical approval and challenges faced by the researcher in the field. The last section elaborates on the position of the researcher.

3.1 Study Area

The purpose of the present study is to explore the lived experiences of female domestic workers in the capital city of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Islamabad. Since Islamabad is home to one of the highest numbers of female domestic workers as depicted in section 1.2 and no research has been conducted in Islamabad on the present study therefore, the location of the city i.e. Islamabad is purposive. Hence, as depicted in the title, the present study is conducted in Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan. Planned by C.A Doxiadis, a Greek architect completed in 1960, Islamabad is comprised of 84 sectors named by different alphabet letters, each sector is further divided into different 5 sub-sectors, four residential and one commercial (Markaz), which is encircled by roadways trail systems within and around the sector (Jalil, 2022). The sectors in which the research took place were G-9, F-7, and F-11. Within these sectors, the targeted sub-sectors were G-9/3, F-7/4 and F-11/3. Where some potential respondents were hesitant to give interviews when

the researcher went into the field to get responses, interviewees who had a small bond formal, and distant bond with other potential respondents would be more willing to converse hence, snowball sampling was used.

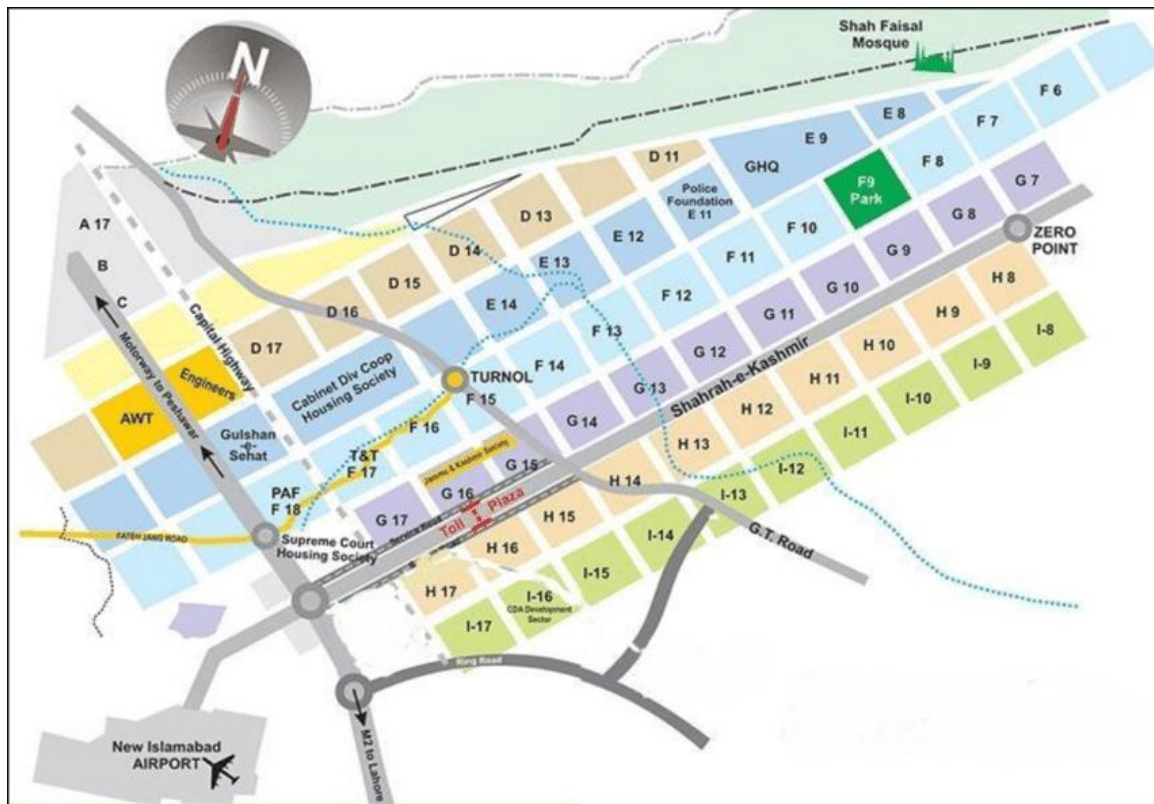


Figure 3.1: Sectoral Map of Islamabad

Source: Din et al (2019)

3.2 Methodological Approach

The present research uses female domestic workers to explore their lived experiences of female domestic workers at their workplace. Since the research emphasizes extracting subjective experiences, for this purpose, the research design is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is a systematic yet subjective approach, that focuses on highlighting issues or phenomena from the perspectives of those being studied to

understand how individuals interpret and make sense of their experiences, thereby providing a deeper understanding of their social realities and the meanings they attach to them. Hence, through in-depth analysis, it aims to provide a detailed understanding of human behavior, emotions, attitudes, and experiences (Mohajan, 2018; Pathak et al., 2013). Within qualitative research, phenomenological research design is employed. A phenomenological research design is a study that attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives, and understanding of a particular phenomenon (Pathak, 2017). Since the research explores the varied experiences of domestic workers regarding a specific phenomenon i.e. lived experiences of female domestic workers at their workplace, this research design is optimal.

3.3 Procedure of Data Collection

3.3.1 Sampling Technique and Sampling Size

The present study employed a multi-stage sampling technique, which allowed for a more structured and systematic selection process, ensuring an accurate representation of the targeted population. Since the purpose of the study is to explore the lived experiences among a specific group of people i.e. female domestic workers working in residential houses hence, purposive sampling technique was used. The basic notion of purposive sampling is that given the purpose and target of the study, a particular faction of people may hold different and important views about the ideas and issues in question and therefore are targeted (Campbell et al., 2020). Since, only a specific group of people i.e. domestic workers, females, 18 and above (adhering to universal criteria defining adulthood), and working and residing in Islamabad are targeted hence, purposive sampling is employed.

Secondly, respondents were identified through referrals, therefore, snowball sampling was also employed. This also guided the selection of the sectors based on where the respondents worked. Therefore, in this way, the sectors were based on snowball sampling.

Since the research is qualitative and uses purposive and snowball sampling, the sample size is small. As “saturation is used in qualitative research as a criterion for discontinuing data collection and/or analysis (Saunders et al., 2017, p. 1894)” hence, in the present study, the fieldwork continued till the point of saturation was attained. Therefore, the collection of data stopped after 20 interviews when there was no new information detected and analogous responses were detected.

3.3.2 Unstructured Interviews

The study aimed to explore the subjective experiences of respondents. Since respondents had diverse experiences, their responses will vary. To capture these differences, questions must be tailored to each individual's unique background. Therefore, unstructured interviews were adopted to accommodate this variability. Since unstructured interviews allow instinctive formation of interview subject, this leads to a more customized, natural and honest interviewer experience, and hence allows smoother transition of dialogue and reveal profound thoughts of that individual (Chauhan, 2019). Therefore, based on the experiences of the respondents the questions were personalized to fulfill the objectives of the study of attaining subjective experiences of female domestic workers at their workplace.

3.4 Process of Data Collection

3.4.1 Transcription and Translation of Interviews

The data gathered employing unstructured interviews was translated manually. This process was very time-consuming. The language of the respondents and the interviewer were the same so there was no communication barrier. However, the language in which the respondents spoke i.e. Urdu, and the language of the research i.e. English was different. Hence, it took time. Moreover, along with translation transcription of the interviews was also conducted. This helped convey the experience of the respondent in depth, which was later used in the data analysis to further explain their responses. For example, some respondents when telling their experiences spoke with indignation at what they had gone through and their body language as in the non-verbal communication implied confidence whereas others depicted nervousness and were timid, anxious, and even depicted hesitancy when narrating their experiences. All of this helped in depicting their experiences with as much clarity as possible and hence, which led to detailed and in-depth findings.

3.5 Process of Data Analysis

3.5.1 Thematic Analysis

To analyse data extracted from the respondents in the form of unstructured in-depth interviews, the technique of thematic analysis was employed. Hence, thematic analysis served as the chosen method for analysis in this research. Thematic analysis is the ideal tool to interpret various aspects of research and identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) that cover a wide range of possible concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Since the

research deals with a wide range of subjective experiences which ultimately gives way to a range of different ideas hence, thematic analysis is the ideal tool to compact all the various ideas into various concepts and on the same basis derive themes.

3.5.2 Coding in Thematic Analysis

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) framework of thematic analysis, to interpret the themes, the process of thematic analysis includes a six-step process of coding which is described as follows

Table 3.1: Coding in Thematic Analysis

Phase	Examples of Procedure for Each Step
1. Familiarization	Transcribing data: reading and re-reading; noting down initial codes
2. Generating Initial Codes	Coding interesting features in the data in a systematic fashion across the data set, collating data relevant to each code
3. Searching for Themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each theme
4. Involved Reviewing Themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data-set; generate a thematic map
5. Defining and Naming Themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics for each theme; generation of clear names for each theme
6. Producing the Report	Final Opportunity for Analysis selecting appropriate extracts; discussion of analysis; relate back to the research question or literature; produce report

Source: Braun & Clarke (2006)

1. Familiarizing yourself with your data

Firstly, this step involves the transcription of data and then reading and re-reading the entire transcript before officially beginning to code. At this stage, the researcher was met with an additional step. Since the language in which the interviews were conducted

was Urdu, the researcher along with the transcription translated all 20 interviews into English Language. After both the translation and the transcription of all the data, the researcher then read the entire data for mistakes. After this process, the researcher re-read all the data to jot down initial ideas that popped up during the reading.

2. Generating initial codes

This step involves reading the data, generating codes, and aligning them in a structured way. Based on this notion, the entire data set is coded. In this step, the researcher used a manual method where she used color-coded sticky notes and jotted down codes with similar ideas. This is because the use of sticky notes helped visualize the relationship between different codes and themes which further gave clarity and enabled the researcher to see a clearer picture of the work (Mortensen, 2024). The researcher continued this step till all the data was analysed in this manner.

3- Searching for themes

This step involves the amalgamation of similar codes into a single heading and based on multiple entries of headings they are totaled as themes. With a different colored marker, the researcher used color-coded sticky notes that depicted similar codes to write the theme that matched those codes. Again, this process was time-consuming and required deep thinking and careful picking of words that would both represent the codes combined and clearly express the objectives of the study under question.

4- Reviewing themes

This step is based on two components i.e. Level 1 involves re-checking if the themes are matched accordingly with the codes from the third step. Level 2 involves checking if the themes and the codes are in alignment with the entire data set based on the aims of the research. For this, the researcher first went through each theme and cross-checked it with the codes relevant to that theme. After that, the researcher collectively looked over all the themes to check if they aligned with the subject matter at hand.

5- Defining and naming theme

All the above-mentioned steps are repeated in this step but for the ongoing analysis which is then collectively refined with the themes already drafted. After this, the themes are clearly defined to prepare to write. Hence, the researcher collectively finalised all the themes in this manner and checked if any changes were required.

6- Producing the report

Lastly, this step involves the final curation of the report utilising extracting and quoting examples and relating them with the works of literature and the findings. In this step, the researcher officially began to write the 'Results' part keeping all the above in mind.

Based on the steps of thematic analysis, varied themes were derived from the interviews of the respondents which then served as the findings of this research and hence are concluded as results

Table 3.2: Results Based on Thematic Analysis

Themes	Sub-Themes
The Manifestation of Violence	Prevalence of sexual violence, physical violence, psychological violence and economic violence.
Maladaptive Survival Strategies	Either stay and bear the harsh working conditions or resist in little forms.
Power Dynamics	Control of resources, powerlessness to decline, the illusion of care in the pretext to exploit.
Alienation from Occupation	Social stigma and dehumanization developed a disliking for their profession.
Inadequate Support	Absence of both familial and peer support.
Economic Distress	Poverty, inflation and material compensation for fair wage.
Government Inefficiency	Lack of accountability and social safety.

Source: Author's own construct

In conclusion, using thematic analysis the subjective experiences of the respondents were divided into the form of codes and the into various themes. This helped to analyse the findings and discussion based on the results to fill in the methodological gap.

3.6 Deliberation on Ethics

3.6.1 Ethical Approval

Although the nature of the topic is not sensitive yet for precaution ethical approval from the respective institution (where the research was undertaken) was sought. The Ethical Clearance Certificate was issued through the School of Ethics Committee located in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities (S3H), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, Pakistan. This procedure took place before starting the fieldwork.

3.6.2 Informed Consent

Before the beginning of every interview, the informed consent of the respondents was sought. This included detailing the purpose, duration, methods, potential risks, and benefits of the research and why interviews were needed for that purpose. Respondents were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Respondents were given time to ask any questions that might have regarding the subject matter of the research and or the interview. It is important to note that the respondents were illiterate and hence verbal consent was adopted.

The researcher did not force or subjugate the participants to reveal information that they did not want to reveal. However, participants were encouraged to express their

experiences without any fear of judgment or reluctance. For this reason, the researcher strived to create a safe environment of empathy and cooperation. The researcher also strived to adjust her physical demeanor to fit in with the targeted population.

3.6.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Anonymity was discussed before taking the interviews. As per the insistence of the respondents, the identities of the respondents including their names, the areas they belonged to, and the sectors they worked in were kept anonymous. In terms of confidentiality, the researcher assured the participants that the data collected would be kept discreet and would only be used for research purposes. The mode of data collection was in-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted at the beginning of the day, which was usually around 8:00am, while some were conducted after the respondents got off from work. The researcher has also strived her best to ensure that the data collected is not biased or distorted.

3.6.4 Challenges during the Field Work

The researcher came across multiple scenarios when collecting data from the field. At the onset, the places to conduct interviews varied at the beginning of the data collection. Initially, the interviews were conducted in the respective houses of the housemaids. A few were conducted in the employers' residences. Most interviews, however, were conducted in public spaces including parks and pedestrian footpaths along streets. There were several reasons for shifting the place of interviews. The interviews were called off in the housemaids' houses for several reasons. Firstly, conducting interviews in the domestic workers' houses became unsafe. This was because their houses were located in suburbs

where men were found to be drinking, staring up and down at a new intruder even when the researcher did her best to style her physical appearance to blend in with the community. Hence, the researcher felt unsafe and feared for her safety due to which the location was changed. Secondly, the few interviews that the researcher did in the respective houses of the housemaids were marked by certain disturbances. For example, in one case, men were always present in the house if not in the same area they would be roaming in and out trying to keep an avid eye on what was happening which made the researcher feel unsafe again. Secondly, the researcher noted that the female housemaids would not feel relaxed in opening up. Hence, the constant prying of men towards the female members of their house and the female researcher hindered the extraction of data regarding the subjective experiences of the female housemaids. In the case of the employers' households, the employers arranged a separate room for the interviews to ensure confidentiality, as requested by the interviewer. This reduced the possibility of potential bias however the interviewer still felt that albeit the respondents spoke about the other workplaces they were employed but in the employer's residence where the interview was taking place they were a bit hesitant even though they did speak about it yet the interviewer felt the restlessness in their constant twisting of hands and their hesitancy when speaking. In most interviews, nearby public places like parks and sidewalks of streets were used to conduct them. Locations like these made the interviewees more comfortable and less hesitant to describe their experiences. As a sign of respect, the interviewer would dress simply without any jewellery or other ornaments which could make the respondent feel insecure. Also, the interviewee and the interviewer mostly sat on the ground in the park to converse.

Concerning the location and physical structure between the houses of domestic workers and their employers' significant disparities were observed. Firstly, the housemaids' living areas were located in less developed areas which were marked by stinking odor, uneven streets, garbage and litter lying everywhere with mosquitoes surrounding them and uncovered sewage and the main entrance was only a small door that led directly into the houses rather than proper gates. The location of their employers' houses was marked by clean and wide streets, furnished lawns, well-designed and decorated front gates, and steep entrances carved into mosaic designs, with embedded security cameras installed on the front gates in some residences. The lodging of the housemaids were not fully-fledged houses but rather small quarters where 5-10 people lived in a very cramped space with no extra floors, unlike their employers' houses which were spacious with 2-3 floors. Inside, there were a few bulbs and old rotten sofas to sit on or one or two chairs in some other houses. The interior itself felt very dark due to the lack of lights. In some quarters the partitions to other rooms were marked by doors but in others, they were denoted by a cloth or an old curtain. In comparison to the interior of their employers, huge chandeliers and sparkling tiles were noted in the drawing rooms in addition to lavish curtains and gold ornaments that hung from the ceiling. In those quarters where interviews took place in rooms of the employers' residences, the tables and chairs were not only well-furnished but were marked by intricate designs, and sofas were laden with gold embroidery.

In appearance, the housemaids would wear a simple *shalwar kameez*¹ with a mismatched sweater or a *chador*² that would always cover their hair and sometimes even half their faces. A significant difference noted in the demeanor of the housemaids was that they would mostly sit with their shoulders slumped against the wall whereas, the employers would always sit or stand with their shoulders raised where the employers were dressed in clean *shalwar kameez* and also noted wearing gold earrings and bracelets. The housemaids barely wore any jewelry or other ornaments. Only a few housemaids wore small studs but nothing fancier or more than that.

Before the start of the interview, it is important to note that with every interviewee around half an hour to 45 minutes were spent to ensure their safety and confidentiality This also included time for the respondents to ask any questions that they had before the interview could take place. Casual conversations (also used in data analysis for better understanding) took place before the interview to alleviate feelings of awkwardness and to curate a safe environment conducive to honest responses.

When it came to the question of the depiction of the experiences of violence they faced, the interviewer had to probe many times. Only a few respondents expressed vocal demonstration at the thought of sharing their abusive experiences. For the respondents to open up, the interviewer would use the strategy of visiting the respondent twice. In the first instance, when the interviewer would meet up with the respondents it would be for the sole

¹ According to Cambridge Dictionary, Salwar Kameez is a type of suit, worn especially by Asian women, with loose trousers and a long shirt (Salwar kameez, n.d)

² In the Cambridge Dictionary, Chdor is defined as a large, usually black cloth worn by some Muslim women to cover their heads and bodies (Chador, n.d)

purpose of explaining the research and demonstrating how it could improve their position at the workplace through government intervention. Furthermore, the interview would use this opportunity to get to know the respondents, build trust via rapport building, and answer the questions they had. The researcher did not push the respondents for an interview but rather casually in between conversations explained the idea to them so that it does not overwhelm them. In the second meeting, the interviewer took the interviews. There was still hesitancy for which in between there were very long pauses of 10 -15 minutes during which the researcher remained neutral so as not to undermine their feelings and remained patient by giving them time to find their ground and speak when they felt comfortable to do so which helped the respondents.

In the beginning, some interviewees who were excited about the interview became nervous when the interviewer described the questions (especially regarding abuse) that would be asked. However, other respondents described their experiences and problems with stern indignation with the hope that the government intervention would initiate change for the future of their profession as domestic workers.

In terms of verbal communication, only a few respondents spoke eloquently. Many respondents articulated solemnly with short sentences and took time to think about the response. When it came to non-verbal communication, for most of the interviews it seemed that influenced by cultural context they were prone to say, *'Everything is okay'* and *'I'm happy'* and *'There is no problem'* although the respondents' facial expressions depicted disdain and misery. Hence, with all interviews further scrutiny was required for many it seemed was a time-taking process. For example, when asked to elaborate on the phrase *'I'm happy'* the domestic workers would have no response hence it contributed to long

pauses to think about the question that prompted them to testify that they were victims of many problems.

Some interviewees expressed downright fear and worry when asked for an interview. There were two reasons for this. In the first category were interviewees who feared the interview would be aired live on television. Hence, when probed they answered that for personal reasons, they considered their face to be shown on a television screen a breach of their privacy because they were not comfortable with it. In the second category were those interviewees who feared that their family members especially males and their near relatives and neighbors would be infuriated if they appeared on television. As a result, the interviewer faced this query in most of the interviews which also contributed to the fact that it was not feasible for the interviews to be recorded. In interviews where the interviewees permitted the interview to be recorded, they also requested midway, that the interview be taken without a recorder. Even when the interviewer explained that the recorder could not depict the face of the respondent, nor would the recording be made public, they still showed distrust towards it lamenting that they were illiterate and did not understand much about it. Another common observation noted across all interviewees was their shared despondency regarding the challenges and unfavorable conditions they encountered while working as domestic workers. Nonetheless, from both interviewees, a substantial body of information was gathered that impacted the development of this research problem into comprehensible research.

It should be mentioned that some people, when approached to partake in the research, refused. When asked, they did not offer any definite response and would only say

'No, I cannot give.' The researcher respected their choice, hence, did not push further. In assumption, this could be due to the sensitivity of the topic.

In conclusion, the collection of data was not entirely smooth since the researcher faced numerous challenges in the field however, through perseverance, the researcher overcame the hurdles and was able to gain valuable data.

3.6.5 Information of the Respondents

In total, twenty in-depth interviews were collected. The said criteria for the respondents was that they were female, above the age of 18 years, employed as domestic workers, they should be working and living in Islamabad, and should be live-out workers hence purposive sampling was employed. Most of the interviews conducted with the respondents were early mornings around 8:00 - 8:30 am since most domestic workers would head to their workplaces at this time. Many were also approached when they were heading towards work whereas for referrals a set time was set. A representation of the domestic workers' demographics is given in the table below:

Table 3.3: Demographic Overview of the Respondents

DEMOGRAPHIC TABLE	
No of Respondents	1-20
Age	Above 18 years of age
Background	All the female domestic workers had migrated to Islamabad

Source: Author's own construct

As mentioned, all respondents were briefed on the research before the interview. Furthermore, the promise of confidentiality and anonymity was fully upheld to ensure that participants felt comfortable and secure in sharing their experiences openly and honestly. This approach was crucial in fostering a trusting environment, which allowed the respondents to provide candid insights without fear of repercussions or exposure, thereby enhancing the overall integrity and validity of the research findings.

3.7 Position of the Researcher

The position of the researcher was partly an insider due to the same language shared between them i.e. Urdu. However, for the majority, the position of the researcher was an outsider since the researcher did not share the same community i.e. of domestic workers, nor the same educational status or age. Hence, for the most part, the researcher was an outsider in the community of the respondents.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The lived experiences of domestic workers regarding their workplace delineated core themes that varied across subjective experiences. It must be mentioned that the results varied based on the different experiences of respondents. Moreover, based on the results, the findings regarding the embodied experiences of female domestic workers concerning their workplace have revealed a range of nuanced and varied outcomes. These experiences reflect a complex tapestry of personal accounts, illustrating that the impact is multifaceted and can differ significantly across different contexts and individuals. The data collected underscores how these women's unique circumstances, backgrounds, and interactions with their employers contribute to a diverse spectrum of experiences, highlighting the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the manifestation of issues that affect this group.

Note: The names of the participants have been altered to maintain their confidentiality.

4.1 The Manifestation of Violence

Participants expressed that they had faced violence in various forms and instances at their workplace (in their respective employers' houses). The type of abuse that the female domestic workers suffered varied based on their subjective experiences. This finding aligns with the results made by Tunio et al. (2020) in their study of conducting focus group discussions (FGDs) with female domestic workers in Hyderabad, Sindh where they observed that they faced physical violence (in the form of harassment), economic violence (employers would not pay them for the extra work) and psychological violence in the form

of insult when they asked for a leave. Moreover, they also reported that the abuse they faced was not a one-time occurrence but rather was a consistent part of the workplace where they were employed. The occurrence of the most frequent types of violence are listed below:

4.1.1 Non-Physical Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is a critical issue that affects individuals across various communities, often leaving deep emotional and psychological wounds. It encompasses a range of behaviors, from harassment to assault, and is rooted in power imbalances and societal norms that perpetuate inequality. Sexual violence is denoted as means of harassment or abuse made by another person regardless of the location of occurrence (Dartnall & Jewkes, 2013). With regards to the present study, participants reported that non-physical contact within sexual harassment was identified. Respondents reported that it was not a one-time occurrence. Time and again their employers would sexually judge them.

In this case, at their workplaces, namely, the private homes of their employers have faced harassment in the form of stalking and body shaming. Body shaming adds to sexual violence, particularly when it is used to demean or sexualize individuals based on their physical appearance (Williams & García, 2020). Regarding her experiences, one domestic worker Kashmala said:

[...] when I am working my employer would come and hurl comments about my body. Especially, if it would be a matter of clothes that the employer would like to give away, I often hear ‘What is the point of giving you this

dress? It will not look good on you since you have nothing to show from the front. I mean, you are flat.’ I just bear it because I need the money otherwise where will I get the money from?

Another form of sexual violence found among domestic workers was stalking. Marjan narrates that she often found instances at work where she would catch her employer staring at her. His constant stalking has caused immense fear and anxiety, leaving her feeling unsafe. In her words:

I do not feel safe at all. I am always anxious [...] It is okay when this one male member is not at home. The reason is numerous times I have found the young man in the house caught staring at me when I am working. The look in his eyes - I just do not like it. The scary part is I only know about the instances when I caught him looking. I do not know how many times he did this behind my back when I was focused on work. This is why I am trying to find work somewhere else.

Note: The respondent refused to elaborate on the gender of the employer and the relationship of the young man with the employer.

One of the profound facts of stalking is the increased sense of fear that it instills in its victims. This assertion is also seconded by Storey et al. (2023) who deduce that “stalking is a crime that causes victims to experience fear for their safety or the safety of others (p. 11570)”

An important aspect to highlight is that the perpetrators of violence against female domestic workers are not limited to a single gender; both men and women can and do engage in such abusive behaviors. This complexity is evident in cases like that of Kashmala, who endured sexual harassment at the hands of a female employer, while Marjan faced similar abuse from a male member of the family in whose residence she is employed as her workplace. These instances clearly demonstrate that harassment and violence in domestic work settings cannot be exclusively attributed to one gender. This indicates that the threat of harassment and violence faced by female domestic workers is pervasive and can come from any individual in a position of power, regardless of gender.

Hence, non-consensual forms of sexual harassment which made domestic workers fearful for their safety at the workplace were noted as frequent occurrences. These incidents not only created an environment of constant anxiety and distress but also severely impacted the workers' mental and physical well-being, often leaving them with no choice but to endure for the sake of earning money.

4.1.2 Physical Violence

Physical violence is a pervasive form of abuse that involves the use of force to cause harm or injury to another person. It involves acts like hitting, slapping, or pushing, often used to exert control or instill fear in the victim. Participants reported that their employers physically abused them. Regarding this, they reported being kicked, beaten, and slapped by their employers. All the physical assaults extracted through the respondents are in line with the definition of physical violence (as quoted in Section 2.2.2) which is:

“The use of force against women of any age and in any circumstance, which can manifest itself through blows, kicks, pinches, bites, throwing of objects, pushes, slaps, spankings, stab wounds, scratches, hits on the head, injuries, burns, fractures, abdominal injuries and any other act against their physical integrity, producing marks on their body or not (Casique & Furegato, 2006, p. 953).”

The instruments used to physically assault the domestic workers were hands or fists. All the participants who went through physical abuse mentioned that it was not a one-time happening. They reported that they were assaulted time and again. Bushra, for example, reported that her female employer would hit her via hands when she is not satisfied with the work that she does. She said:

[...] the female owner physically abuses me. She hits me constantly whilst working. She has this habit of tightening her hands into knuckles to hit me. This happens every few weeks when she feels I am not cleaning well.

In another case Esra, another female domestic worker narrates that

[...] she (daughter-in-law) assigns me to keep an eye on her daughter which I do. But the mother-in-law proceeds to kick me whenever I try to stop the young child from doing something that I think would cause her harm. Now, I have stopped taking care of the young child. But the violence has not stopped. Whenever the mother-in-law would see me, she developed this habit of reprimanding me, kicking me, and then shoving me [...]

When interviewing the participants, physical abuse was a common theme that emerged across several scenarios. In the first scenario, physical abuse occurred when the employer was dissatisfied with the domestic worker's performance, using violence as a means of reprimand and this was frequently observed. Another frequent situation involved instances where a mistake made during cleaning would lead to the worker being physically assaulted. A particularly troubling scenario, as described by Esra, stems from deep-seated animosity towards the very presence of housemaids. In her case, the mother-in-law developed a biased perception of Esra, viewing her as a constant threat to her family, particularly to her granddaughter-in-law. This distorted belief led to a cycle of physical violence, where the mother-in-law would resort to hitting Esra without any reason since the mere sight of her fueled her prejudice towards the domestic worker.

Unlike in cases of sexual violence, where perpetrators were reportedly both male and females, physical violence against domestic workers was exclusively perpetrated by female employers. Every respondent who reported experiencing physical abuse stated that their abuser was a female employer. Notably, none of the respondents identified a male employer as the perpetrator of physical violence, highlighting a distinct pattern in the dynamics of physical abuse.

Regarding the analysis of participants' responses, it became evident that physical violence is not only common but also deeply ingrained in their daily experiences. The prevalence of such violence reflects the systemic issues within their work environments, where physical aggression is often normalised. This is because physical violence is used as a primary means of demonstrating power through exerting control and maintaining

dominance (Anderson & Umberson, 2001). Hence, the prevalence of physical violence is another kind of violence that was extensively reported by the respondents.

4.1.3 Psychological Violence

Psychological violence, though often less visible than physical abuse, involves the deliberate use of verbal and emotional tactics to undermine an individual's mental and emotional well-being. This form of abuse includes behaviors such as manipulation, intimidation, constant criticism, and emotional neglect, all of which can erode a person's self-esteem and sense of security over time. Unlike physical violence, the scars of psychological violence may not be immediately apparent. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), psychological violence is “the intentional act against a person or collective force that results in physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social harm, including insults, threats, attacks, verbal abuse, and harassment (Li et al., 2018, p. 2).”

According to the analysis participants reported to have faced psychological violence at the hands of their female employers. Psychological violence is an extensive concept because it covers various forms. Within psychological violence, the forms varied among the respondents. Moral Harassment at Work (MHW) is a significant identifier of psychological violence reported. It is considered a recurrent practice of humiliation, mockery, isolation, persecution, and psychological torture (Campos et al., 2012). One prominent forms of Moral Harassment at Work (MHW) is that domestic workers expressed extreme isolation given the prohibition to keep relations like friendships around their workplace. This is an important psychological tactic used by abusers to enforce control because it tends to strip away the victim's support system and leaves them feeling alone

and helpless, so they do not know have a support system to turn to (Williamson, 2010).

Noreen narrates her experience:

I would often meet other housemaids from the residential street where I worked. They were my friends. Because they are my friends we would often talk and laugh about stuff of our own. But one day, when I went to my employer's house to work, she beat me so much and forced me to cut off any relationships that I had with my friends if I was going to work for her. She assumed that my friends and I were laughing at her, but it was not like that. But I did as she said. I did not meet with them anymore. That left me very alone. After that, it was only once when I was going to throw out trash in the dustbin outside the house that other housemaids greeted me from afar which is normal, so I greeted them back, but my employer heard me greeting them, so I got beaten again that day. Now, I no longer have friends or anyone from that street that I talk to anymore.

Within psychological violence, cognitively, constant fear is another significant form used to describe the result of the abuse that employees face at their workplace which has affected them mentally. The respondent reported that the constant sense of fear at their workplace affected them. They feared that they may be beaten or scolded at times. This tactic of instilling fear again is a method to control, isolate, and subdue the domestic worker by non-physical means (Karakurt & Silver, 2013). Domestic worker, Chanda narrated her experience as:

There came a time when I could not bear it. I was so scared that she would come from behind me at any time and beat me. Eventually, I had to quit. It was too much for me. I felt I was going crazy because I had to keep an eye out at all times. If I was employed in such a house again, I would leave because it is very scary.

Note: The trauma that the respondent experienced was so much that she was frightened of even stepping into someone's house to work for many months let alone go to work.

Another psychological form of violence observed is verbal abuse. Per the literature, verbal abuse is defined as “the use of words that are personally insulting such as generally abusive spoken obscenities and foul language or indicating a lack of respect for the dignity and worth of an individual (Guay et al., 2014, p. 572).” In this aspect, participants expressed that they had faced verbal violence in the form of anger, and accusation when working in their employers' houses. Some housemaids reported that when doing work their employers would get angry and shout at them even when they had completed all the tasks assigned to them. Others reported that their employers would scold them and hurl insults at them if they made a mistake. All the participants who were victims of verbal violence reported that they used to face this daily. In this case, Ambreen reported:

The female employer would get very angry. So, whenever she would get angry she had a habit of scolding me. That is why I said her treatment was not nice. Even though I did the work properly she was not satisfied. Excluding this, even when I would come late sometimes due to

commitments at home she would give me an earful first saying I was not serious about work and that I am careless.

A study conducted on the different forms of psychological violence among female domestic workers in Islamabad and Rawalpindi deduced that anger is a profound theme found in the victims (Mahmood & Mushtaq, 2023). One of the key findings of the present research is the noticeable variation noted in the expression of ‘anger’ as a means of abuse. Not every domestic worker said that anger was something that should be addressed strictly. Some respondents considered occasional instances of the employers’ anger as part of normal human behavior, rather than a form of abuse, especially when such occurrences were infrequent. This was supported by two respondents. Farida said:

Occasionally, if people are angry at something else in their personal lives, they will tend to ask us to do something in an angry manner, but it is okay since it is normal behavior and it also happens rarely.

Another domestic worker, Dania expressed her views:

Sometimes, what happens is that employers in general that I work for get angry because of something else or someone else, and then often they take out their anger on me like they would speak to me angrily or task tell me to do a task in anger but this is normal and is fine by me since as humans everyone gets angry.

Therefore, perceptions of anger varied among respondents. Some viewed anger as inherently negative, associating it with abusive behavior that warrants serious attention and

intervention. In contrast, others regarded anger as a natural human emotion that occurs frequently and thus does not necessarily require special consideration. This divergence highlights differing perspectives on the role of anger in the context of abuse and its impact on addressing and managing such issues.

Psychological violence was significantly noted as one of the most recurrent kinds of violence in the research. It encompasses a range of harmful behaviors that undermine an individual's mental and emotional well-being. By means of intimidation and control, it emotionally damages a human being's psyche which further leads to psychological disorders.

4.1.4 Economic Violence

Economic Violence is one of the most pervasive forms of violence undermined in comparison with other forms. In proper literature, it is defined as, “women experiencing unequal remuneration for work, are overworked and underpaid, and used for unpaid work outside the contractual agreement. (Fawole, 2008, p. 1).” One major finding of the research is that economic violence is the most significant form of violence experienced by the respondents. In this kind of violence, except for one interviewer, all the rest were victims of economic exploitation. This ranged from overworking to receiving inadequate compensation for their work. This category also included those domestic workers whose pay would be withheld on some pretext or who would get less pay than was promised. Respondents also reported being underpaid.

Upon further probing, they revealed that the trending wage for domestic workers in Islamabad is set at 4000 PKR for a single chore. According to them, anything set below is

considered too little. Although 4000 PKR is not considered much yet they use it to try to negotiate the pay till that amount because employers are not willing to pay more. This is seconded by Ghazala who says:

I am not aware of the wage rate prescribed by the Government but the trending rate for a single chore here is 4000 PKR to which not everyone complies. For example, in one house that I work in, I do dusting and cleaning. For each chore, I am paid 4000 PKR. So, in total, I earn 8000 PKR. But in the other house that I work in I get paid 2000 PKR for a single chore. Collectively, I earn around 18,000 PKR per month which is not enough.

Another respondent, Noreen said:

You cannot argue with employers. I tell you for example in a house that I clean that employer gives me 3000 PKR. The trending rate is 4000 PKR for a single chore. But in another house, when I went, that employer said I must clean, which is not a problem, but she said she would pay me 2000 PKR. Now, this house has a bigger floor to clean and would take more time as well. How can I clean in 2000 PKR? Even within chores, it depends. In another employer's house, I earn 3000 PKR for washing clothes and then 2000 PKR for ironing them. Everything is fixed by the employer. Our pay is never consistent. If you ask someone else how much they earn for cleaning, they will give you a completely different answer. There is no consistency when it comes to pay so there is nothing fixed.

Another form of economic violence that respondents reported is the deceit of payment they face. Respondents reported that they have often been deceived when trying to receive their pay from their employer. While in some cases, they never received their due payment for the work they did, in others if they did receive the payment, it was not what was negotiated before the start of work via verbal contract. Unfortunately, no legal action can be taken since contracts between domestic workers and their owners are not written contracts. In this case, domestic worker, Isha narrated her experience of not receiving her pay:

Last month I worked in a house where I cleaned both floors. Now, before starting work I and the employer talked about the pay and the work. Now everything was fixed and so I started to work. After working for three months, the owner says she no longer needs household help and will give me my payment in a few days. I didn't know she was lying at the time. When I visited her after a few days the gate of their house was locked. I asked their neighbour and they told me they had left Pakistan and moved to the United Kingdom (UK). I even asked her if they left me my due payment and they said no. Now you tell me where should I receive my payment from?

Respondents also reported having been assigned extra tasks and often with the tasks they were already assigned there was no breather in between. Also, they were not paid for the extra tasks that they did. Therefore, they were overworked. Qaisra reported:

I was paid peanuts for the work that I used to do. But when there were extra tasks that I had to do like in the case when guests showed up or the employer

requested, I did laundry even if that was not included in the already negotiated tasks, I was not paid for those.

Another domestic worker, Sajda also said,

The employer never allows me to rest. I do all the work without any breaks.

The only thing I don't do is cook. If the employer sees me take a breather for a second, she starts accusing me of slacking off and claiming that I only need to do a few hours of work because eventually I will go home and rest.

This phenomenon is not new. Due to unclear and lack of proper contractual agreements, employers take full advantage of domestic workers in the form of assigning them more work than negotiated and underpaying them (Ogbechie & Oyetunde, 2019).

Economic violence was identified as the most prevalent and frequently occurring form among female domestic workers in Islamabad, Pakistan. This form of violence was notably the most prominent among the different types of abuse reported. Within economic violence, domestic workers are reported to have faced three common forms as part of the findings i.e., they were underpaid, overworked, and were lied to about the amount of payment they would receive. Concerning economic violence, this research highlights some significant findings. First, among the various forms of violence, domestic workers are often willing to endure physical and psychological violence if not subjected to economic violence. Secondly, the case of being underpaid, unlike being completely cut off from payment or forced to do more work, is not that simple. Due to scant resources like in Pakistan, there is a lack of data available on economic violence (Pasha, 2022). There was also unfortunately no data that was able to explain the minimum and maximum wages that

live-out domestic workers were obliged to receive. However, per the findings of the present research domestic workers reported that the rate that these days was acceptable for a single chore is 4000 PKR. An accurate representation is given in the table below:

Table 4.1: Income of Respondents

Income per one chore	1000 - 3000 PKR	4000 PKR	5000 PKR
No of Domestic Workers (Based on one house)	13	5	2

Source: Author's own construct

Based on this research's findings, 13 domestic workers are paid below 4000 PKR, assuming it is the current rate of one chore. This depicts the irregularity and inconsistency of wages which are solely set by the employers. Domestic workers narrate that according to the employers, some chores are considered less taxing and hence should be paid less like laundry since it only requires the use of a machine as compared to ironing. Unfortunately, in terms of the wage rate in Islamabad, there are currently no fixed laws that detail wage per hour, wage depending on each chore, or the minimum wage for live-out workers. Currently, concerning wages, two laws are pertinent in the capital city of Islamabad. Firstly, The Islamabad Capital Territory Domestic Workers Act 2022 outlines the compulsion on how to treat domestic workers and protect their rights but, again, in terms

of wages, it refers to the Minimum Wages Ordinance 1961 (Shafeeq et al., 2022). After many amendments, especially from 2001 to 2022, the minimum wage for unskilled workers has increased 14 times. The last estimated increase occurred in July 2022 which raised the income of unskilled workers from 19,000 PKR to 25,000 PKR per month and this change has been brought forth based on the increase in the cost of living (Rahim, 2023). In terms of live-out workers, the problem is they are usually paid per chore because they work in multiple houses, and as already depicted through this study the wage differs per employer, hence, the comparison in this regard of 25,000 PKR per month is not applicable on them because collectively based on the number of houses they work in, the wage varies greatly. Based on this study, the most that one domestic worker works in is four houses and she does one chore i.e. cleaning in that house and is paid 4000 PKR. Calculating the total this will make 16,000 PKR. This means that the domestic worker is being paid 9000 PKR less if the rate of 25,000 PKR applies per month. Hence, the gap in officiating wages per hour, per chore, and per sector concerning live-out workers is still present. Moreover, the Minimum Wages Ordinance Act 1961 generally highlights unskilled workers but still lacks the clarification of specifically highlighting domestic workers (Shafeeq et al., 2022). The need for stringent action on the situation can only be highlighted from a study conducted by Parveen et al. (2019) explored partner violence and the economic exploitation of paid domestic workers (PDWs) in Sheikhpura through in-depth interviews with 11 housemaids, 9 employers, and 9 partners. They concluded that 89% of the female domestic force is economically exploited at their workplace in comparison to 78% of those exploited at home by their partners. This justifies that female domestic workers are exploited 11% more at their place of work than in their homes but were not able to signify much detail.

Hence, the need to regulate wage rates and accountability from employers is necessary now. Another problem that escalates economic violence is the factor of material compensation for fair wages. There are two aspects concerning this. Firstly, there are cases where domestic workers have been compensated through free accommodation, meals, funded education, benefits, and other incentives (Ogbechie & Oyetunde, 2019) including being paid. However, based on the findings of this research employers tend to resort to another tactic. In this, domestic workers reported that they are usually given old clothes, a bag of wheat, or fruits by their employers but are not paid at all. The employers use material compensation to pay them for their services instead of money like negotiated at the beginning of the starting work. Hence, this deceit of payment results in economic violence.

Hence, economic violence is a vicious cycle of constant traps because the main reason domestic workers leave their houses is to earn but when they are trapped in economic violence their main purpose of what they came for is not fulfilled in fact for pennies, they get coerced into working more.

4.2 Maladaptive Survival Strategies

When respondents were asked about the survival strategies they had adopted, two primary approaches emerged. The first and most prevalent strategy involved enduring the harsh treatment inflicted by their employers, driven largely by the need to earn a livelihood amidst the constraints of poverty. Many domestic workers felt compelled to tolerate abuse because leaving their positions would jeopardize their financial stability. The second strategy involved resisting the abuse in minor ways, such as through subtle defiance or small acts of resistance. However, this form of resistance often led to intensified violence

if discovered by the employer. This dynamic reflects a grim reality where domestic workers are forced to navigate a precarious balance between enduring abuse and facing even harsher repercussions for standing up against it. As reported, most of the domestic workers endured out of which Javeria said:

I want to leave but unfortunately, I cannot. This is why I came here in the first place. My parents sent me here to earn money because my family needs money back home. If I do not earn money here, then my family will starve back home. My siblings are too young to earn a living. What should I say to my parents that I am being beaten so I cannot work here? So, I just endured because this way at least I could send some money back to my parents.

Another respondent, Hamida, reported:

I could not leave. My family needed money back home. My father had died. It was only me, my mother, and my little siblings. So, I just endured her abusive language and shouting. My home conditions were tight. I could not even switch houses because then it would take too long to find work.

Endurance seemed necessary since all the respondents were financially dependent on their employers. Due to fear of poverty, bearing seemed the most appropriate response since at least the domestic workers were able to earn. Moreover, due to a lack of skill, they cannot switch to another profession.

The second common response was that respondents would find little ways to try to resist the oncoming violence by their employers. However, the acts of resistance were also met with worsened harsh conditions in the form of violence or deprivation in other ways. The respondents had no choice but to adhere to the demands of the employer and tolerate them because of their financial dependence on the employers. While these small acts of resistance represent a form of agency within a constrained environment, they also illustrate the precarious nature of domestic workers' positions and the harsh consequences they may face for standing up against mistreatment. In this case, a respondent, Saira said:

The employer refused to pay me for the month, so I did not clean the window properly. I was not being paid so why should I do it then? It was no use though. I got hit a couple days later because of it. She came to me and hit me threatening me that she would kick me out of employment, so I was forced to do the work, so I cleaned everything from the beginning.

In conclusion, the strategies adopted by domestic workers to cope with abuse reveal the profound impact of economic insecurity on their experiences. Enduring mistreatment is often seen as the only viable option due to the financial necessity of retaining their employment, despite the emotional and physical toll it takes. On the other hand, attempts at resistance, though sometimes a natural response to injustice, can exacerbate the situation, leading to more severe punishment if detected. This dichotomy underscores the desperate measures domestic workers take to survive in an environment fraught with vulnerability and exploitation.

4.3 Inadequate Social Support

Lack of adequate support significantly contributes to domestic workers' decision to endure harsh working conditions including violence. There are two types of support that domestic workers conversed about. The first one was familial support, and the second one was peer support. Respondents reported that while familial support was consistently available, as these were the individuals they returned to at the end of each day, the nature of this support often fell short of their needs. Family members, though present, frequently offered limited assistance or understanding regarding the challenges faced in their workplaces. On the other hand, peer support was notably scarce. Domestic workers often found themselves isolated from others in similar situations, with few opportunities to share experiences or seek advice. One respondent elaborated on this, explaining that despite the occasional presence of fellow workers, meaningful peer support was rare, and the lack of a robust support network exacerbated the sense of isolation. Along with estrangement, helplessness made them accept that no solution to their problems could be found, which in turn made them assent to not discuss their matters with anyone. Partly, the respondents denote that due to lack of support from the government, this only strengthened their belief in not telling anyone since the support they would ask for would be from people who have the same social standing as them and because they are not powerful nothing no change can occur until the government intervenes.

With regards to peer support, one respondent elaborates on the forced isolation she faced because of her employer (a form of psychological violence as described above) and if she does not abide by it, she will lose her job. Javeria narrates this as:

I do not have any group of friends around the area that I work in. I only have a few friends from the area I used to work in previously, but we do not meet that often. Once when I was beaten by my employer, I wanted to tell my friends, but I knew they could not help me because nobody listens to people like us, so I just did not tell them.

Furthermore, the respondents reported that their friends cannot help them due to being domestic workers, and for some, their employers do not want them to have friends while others do not have friends in the area they currently work in and so because they live far there is not much interaction. Again, the domestic worker avoids sharing with their friends believing they cannot do much for them.

In terms of familial support, there are two scenarios. One respondent narrates that when they tell their family (mostly parents) about the violence and the harsh treatment they endure they try to interfere and speak with the employer. However, the employers don't pay heed to the parents' confrontation and hence they have no choice but to live with it. In this instance, a domestic worker, Parveen narrates:

In one house where I work the female owner beat me once. I complained to my mother about it and my mother came and talked to her. But the next day, I came to work at her house she resorted to slapping me. I realized the more I complained to my mother the more violent she would become so I stopped doing that. Even if I did what use will that be? My family needs the money to survive. So, I no longer ask my mother for help and just bear it. This way at least the slaps are less.

In the second instance, respondents report that when their family complains about the violence, they are not able to do anything because their justification for it is that the need to survive outweighs the violence. As Laiba has said:

At first, I did not say anything, but the beating got too much. I did not want to go to work anymore so I went home and told my parents. They said it was not such a big problem and I should just bear it since they needed the money to put food on the table for the whole family. So, I just tolerated it. I did not have any other option.

As depicted from the above narrations of various respondents, in both cases of familial support, the continuum of violence only supplements the already present form of violence that the domestic workers are victims of. In case of lack of family support the domestic worker has already given up and come to terms with the increasing likelihood of bearing violence. However, even in the case of whatever little familial support that the family of the domestic worker can provide it has been proven futile. Regardless of the violence, enduring the harsh conditions of work was given due to the same reason as tolerating violence. Because there is little that the parents can do except a confrontation.

4.4 Power Dynamics

The hierarchical relationship between employers and domestic workers is an ever-dominating arena that has always taken the forefront. The oppression in this hierarchy against the respondents by utilizing power and control has been detected in the research. Oppression signifies the unjust malignant exercise of power by a social group over another social group by targeting that group's race or gender that results in the form of denial of

rights and social prestige and which occurs through practices and norms that sustain such a cycle of cruelty and in turn lead to the dehumanization of the workers by stripping away their freedom and autonomy (Varman et al., 2023). Firstly, this happens in the failure of the domestic workers in the ‘ability to say no’ to their employers in any matter. In this regard, domestic worker, Tahira said:

I do not have any say in any matter. If I am doing extra work, I am not asked if I can do it, I must do it. No matter the orders from the employer, I must do it. If I do not do it the employer will hold a grudge which worsens the situation. So, I just say yes to everything.

As mentioned, the better socio-economic standing of the employers gives them the power to control the share of resources of the domestic workers. Hence, another scenario within this realm is the control of resources that the employers hold and their use of them to threaten domestic workers. Respondent Kashmala denotes:

There is no concept of saying no to the employer. People like us have no say in such matters. I just say ‘Yes’ even without thinking. I said no to an employer once because she wanted me to work overtime and she threatened to fire me. So, I learned from there to just do whatever the employers ask me to do. People like us are puppets. We just follow the orders of the employer. They are above us and have so much more power [...]

The imbalance of power allows employers to impose control and manipulate conditions to their advantage, often resulting in significant mistreatment of domestic workers. Hence,

power dynamics between domestic workers and their employers create an environment where abuse and exploitation run rampant. As a respondent, Omaima reports:

The employer gives me the money so naturally she controls everything. I made a mistake once when it came to cleaning the windowsills. It was not properly cleaned. Although I cleaned it later, the employer deducted money from my monthly payment and did not provide me with food for the month.

Another aspect observed when it comes to the problem of unequal power dynamics that surface between employers and domestic workers which cause a strain in their workplace is the illusion of care. The facade of care often serves to hide deep-seated inequalities and suppression to exert control over domestic workers. Using the pretext of good relations, employers tend to justify the low remuneration, assign more work, and perpetuate other scenarios that prove to be harmful to the domestic workers or may not serve rightly in their interests. In this aspect, respondents note that in the disguise of pretending to care, they are often exploited. This usually occurs through emotional manipulation, appreciating their work only to add more work to their bucket to over-work them. Narrating her experience, domestic worker, Rania said:

I noticed she would appreciate my work like she would say ‘Oh! You clean everything so well!’ and then go on to add more work like ‘Maybe, you can clean this for me too since you do it so well.’ At first, it was fine since it was not that much but gradually, she asked me to clean the fans. Now, that is not in my job description so I cannot do that without being paid for it. It is not easy to clean the fans of the whole house.

Similarly, another respondent, Isha said:

I was working at an employer's place. At first, everything was fine but one day some guests came to her house and so I had to do some extra work which I did not mind since I thought it was a one-time thing. She came and appreciated that it was so nice of me to help, and I was a very good person. However, gradually she started to slip in more work she would ask me to clean one extra chair and then a few days later the whole dining area, and when I asked her to pay me extra for it, she said it was not that much so why should I be paid extra?

In other instances, respondents reported limited agency when it came to working with employers which is another form of the use of power to exert control over the resources that domestic workers have a full right to. Respondent Daria reported:

The employer demanded that I not work at another house. I asked her the reason and she said no in case she requires my services some other time outside working hours I should be present. I told her that was not in the description we negotiated but she insisted I do it or she would not hire me. So, I had to.

The problem of using power to exert control on domestic workers is a significant one. The cultural norms that marginalize domestic workers are the cause of this because culturally worldwide domestic workers belong to the lowest income group, and their profession is treated as something dirty, disgusting, and part of unrecognized labour. Because of their inferior status, it is easier for employers to control them through abuse or

harsh treatment. However, this research points to a covert tactic that is often used (which further dehumanises them). In the pretext of displaying affection at the forefront, employers would assign additional work to not pay them and would also use limited agency as part of their covert tactics to exploit them. Moreover, as a finding of this research, all employers that exerted to exploit domestic workers were females.

This theme alludes to the disguise of harsh treatment that employers hide to gain maximum exploitation through domestic workers. This form of covert behavior is used as another tactic to manipulate domestic workers.

4.5 Economic Distress

Lack of financial stability is one of the crucial problems that the respondents faced. Domestic workers set out to earn and hence due to lack of skill they mostly resort to domestic labor. Even still, they are one of the lowest-income paying groups, hence, due to lack of illiteracy and technical skills poverty seems to be the major factor that poses a threat to domestic workers Prakash et al. (2014). The feminization of poverty contributes to the prevalence of domestic work as a source of employment for many women, often under conditions of exploitation and abuse (Yeoh & Huang, 2012). In this aspect, the commonality in this theme was observed in the form of domestic workers trapped in poverty, or they would be forced to work due to the growing inflation, and if not this then in most cases they would be confined to the problem of material compensation for a fair wage. In terms of inflation, Rania said:

I was not working before. I used to stay home and look after my children but that is no longer the case. The prices of wheat and lentils have increased

so much now. Even if I can manage that somehow, I can no longer pay the electricity and gas bills. That is why I had to step out to earn. So, what if I have taken up so many houses to work in that I can barely manage? So, what if I listen to my employer hurl insults and use foul language on me? I cannot leave the house. If I do, what will become of my children?

Other than inflation, poverty is another associated factor that propels domestic workers into the cycle of violence. This is because if they decide to leave their toxic workplace, they come back to the same reason they originally started to work which was due to poverty. As Parveen narrates:

I have been working for a long time. There are very few houses that treated me nicely. Very few. I changed workplaces multiple times, but it is no use. Now, I just bear it because I cannot leave work and sit at home. We are living in poverty. If I do not work me and my family will be on the streets. Our home does not run on a single person's income. Just a while ago at my employer's household, she threatened to fire me if I did not clean properly even though I did. She then goes on to say that I am vile and have no manners. It affected me. But I need the money.

Material compensation for fair wages is another distinct issue. Respondents report that instead of the wage their employers give them bags of wheat and pulses. While this may help them, they still require the payment they deserve because it does not equal the amount of material compensation they are given. In this regard, a respondent Tehmina said:

Instead of giving me the salary for the month my employer gave me some clothes, bags of wheat and pulses, and 1000 PKR saying that is my payment for the month. She did not even ask me but gave it to me, assuming I should accept it. I understand they want to run away from giving me my monthly salary because even if you total the material things in terms of money it is still not equal to my salary. I must pay electricity bills and my children's education. I do not need the clothes. I want my due monetary compensation. I told her this, and she said I was being ungrateful and that all the things she gave me had more monetary value than my pay. But this was never the negotiation I made at the start. She was supposed to pay me in the form of money.

Most importantly, the compiling the findings of this study it has been deduced that domestic workers set out to become one due to poverty but more so get caught in economic violence due to the above-mentioned factors combined which entraps them both in economic violence and poverty rather than enable them to climb a ladder higher. Hence, this research rightly justifies the assumption that domestic workers are compelled by poverty into jobs that perpetuate poverty instead of alleviating it and stepping out from that hole of destitution (Deshingkar & Zeitlyn, 2015).

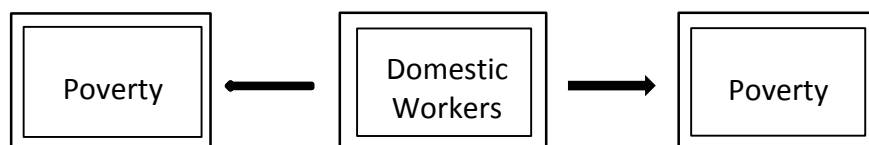


Figure 4.1: Poverty Cycle of Domestic Workers

Source: Author's own construct

Hence, the pervasive poverty affecting domestic workers remains a defining feature of their lived experiences, influencing every aspect of their work and personal lives. It further brews seeds for unequal distribution of resources in the form of unequal pay, no protection and can lead to suppression of their rights and pave way for the harsh conditions and oppression.

4.6 Alienation from Occupation

Domestic workers assert that there is a direct relationship between their occupation and the way they are treated. Hence, they acknowledge it as one of the major problems they face at their workplace. They belong to the poor class and their work is undervalued. This aspect makes them powerless and vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and acute working conditions (Tewathia, 2017). Domestic workers in this study recognize this fact and acknowledge that this is the reason they are treated this way is due to the culture that promotes this as they go through violence even today. However, the treatment they receive has changed the way they think of the domestic work profession because at first, they used to think of it as a noble and honored profession but now with the behavior they receive, they no longer want to associate themselves with it. One respondent, Tehmina shares her experience as:

The field that I work in is not considered as something good. Even in the house that I work in the employer herself says to me 'This is not considered as proper work. It is just cleaning.' Our profession is not even considered a profession. You know, It's in our people. In our society, being a domestic

worker is not considered good. This is why I think because of the work we do we are not treated nicely. People think that because their profession is something bad so why should they be treated nicely then? Knowing that we are not rich and so we resort to this kind of work I think is another factor because the people we work with are always from a class above us.

A key recognition in this aspect is due to the social stigma that is associated with the nature of their work the respondents have developed a disliking towards their profession.

Domestic worker, Qaisra reports:

I was not working before but after my two kids grew up, I needed money for them. I was not learning, so all I could do was housework. In the beginning, when I started to work, I considered it was good work since I was not doing anything wrong to earn money. But over the years, the way employers behave with me I have come to dislike my profession as a domestic worker. People look down on me now because of my profession. I had never experienced this before [...] I tell you it is because of our society - everyone who works as a housemaid is frowned upon.

Another respondent, Rania who faced constant dehumanization by her employer narrates:

Things like payment and to be treated with respect are our basic right. But far from that what bothers me the most is that we are humans - humans just like you and everyone else. The employers we work for are humans as well - the same as we do. The only difference is that they have more money but still, we are humans. Then why are not treated like humans? I am not asking

for something that we do not deserve. Only humans - just treat us like humans. Work and wages come later. At least consider us humans... I... I have been given rotten food as lunch. Would you serve this food to your dogs and cats that you keep as pets? These are animals, we are humans equal to you, so should there not be more understanding between us? Do the people we work for not think if they are given something similar how they would feel? They can understand because we are humans. They can relate well. Still, we are treated in this manner.

The notion that because the profession of the domestic worker is not considered commendable by society's standards eventually intensifies the harsh behavior with which they are treated. In assuming, that employers adhere to the stigma that domestic work is a menial profession hence the workers should be treated similarly. It is important to note that often this adds to the dehumanization of these workers by being robbed of basic rights and subjected to exploitative conditions.

Hence, as part of this study's findings, the domestic work professions' identity has changed opinions in the workers. The phenomenological responses of the domestic workers reveal that when they started to work as domestic workers, they embraced their profession with pride and found great satisfaction in their roles. However, with the way that they are treated they no longer feel happy and do not want to be domestic workers but are forced to earn to survive.

4.7 Government Inefficiency

In terms of institutional accountability, government inefficiency is one of the key themes observed. One of the primary factors (observed through this research) contributing to the widespread occurrence of violence is the lack of accountability and enforcement of justice by the authorities. All the respondents expressed their disappointment and distrust in the government when it came to serving them with justice. Secondly, respondents reported that they were not provided with any form of social protection. If their employers withheld pay, there was little recourse available, as justice authorities were often unable to intervene, and the government failed to offer them any safety net to rely on. In this regards a domestic worker, Saira denotes:

I cannot expect any help from the authorities. The police will not help. For people like us, the police gladly rebuffs. I went to the police once for help riding the promise of payment that the employer made but they just told me the people I have come to complain about have a high status and that I am merely a poor person so it is for my benefit that I should go back. They even said that I should not create problems for them to switch the higher-ups so I should leave. The government should at least give us some compensation if they are not going to address the problem for us.

Another respondent, Laiba mentions the powerlessness of people like her in the society:

Baji, it's no use going there (to the police) because we don't have that much support hence it's futile. So, (entwined hands closely) if we go to complain nobody believes us. We're also not powerful so no one listens to us.

The problem of lack of government support and accountability is ever-present. Mulugeta et al., (2021) conducted a study in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia they aimed to investigate the vulnerability, lack of law enforcement, and deteriorating working conditions of housemaids utilizing a cross-sectional qualitative study. After concluding interviews with 15 female domestic workers, they concluded that they were deprived of their labor rights in the form of long hours with minimal return for compensation and the increase in this violence is due to the absence of a robust state institution or viable movement dedicated to advocating for the rights of domestic workers. In another study, Dlamini (2020) also vouches that the exclusion of domestic workers from the safety nets is only an added burden that the government needs to address. Lastly, the factor of government inefficiency is crucial to addressing the violence against housemaids. As seconded by Shaikh and Bhutto (2015) in a study they conducted in Hyderabad, where they observed that the lack of social safety nets, combined with no health insurance, and negligible accountability has added to the suffering of domestic workers both socially and economically. The utter disappointment of the domestic workers when they set out to seek help from the government authorities only results in them going back to their workplace. This failure not only highlights systemic weaknesses in policy implementation and enforcement but also perpetuates an environment where exploitation is not addressed.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This section concludes the present research in the first section. In the second section, policy implications are offered to better the working conditions of female domestic workers in Islamabad, Pakistan while the third section focuses on the scope the present research holds for further studies.

5.1 Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore the lived experiences of female domestic workers regarding their workplace in Islamabad. It is important to investigate this phenomenon because most domestic workers are female, and because they work within private households, their issues are more likely to remain hidden or go unnoticed. A phenomenological research design was used to explore the lived experiences of female domestic workers. Furthermore, to understand their issues the Theory of Social Justice was applied.

Findings brought forth central themes of violence, maladaptive survival strategy, inadequate support, power dynamics, the illusion of care, economic distress, alienation of occupation, and government deficiency. Within violence, specific findings revealed that economic violence was the most prevalent among female domestic workers. It has also been deduced that giving out material compensation instead of a fair wage, underpay and no reimbursement for additional work only escalates the economic exploitation of female domestic workers. Other types of violence observed were physical, sexual, and psychological violence. Maladaptive survival strategies only added to the suffering of the

female domestic workers since their only option is to either remain and endure the current working conditions or engage in small acts of resistance, which, if discovered, often lead to more severe violence. Overall, their only option is to remain and endure the current working conditions because they cannot leave due to fear of poverty and hence need the money to survive. Inadequate support from both familial and peer relations is another problem observed, hence there is a lack of a good support system. The exertion of power to control female domestic workers by their employers is a major issue along with their tactics that may seem friendly on the outside but are only a means of exploiting them to their advantage. The compulsion of domestic workers to work due to fear of poverty, and the social stigma of their occupation only adds to the plight at their workplace. The normalcy of their conditions and the change in how they view their profession now in a negative way compared to the positive demeanor they had when they first started working has also been deduced. Institutionally, the government's inefficiency is identified as one of the fundamental problems, significantly impeding progress and exacerbating existing issues.

The application of the Theory of Social Justice clarifies that the issue of housemaids is two-fold. The depiction of themes has brought forth that both socioeconomic injustice and cultural/symbolic injustice have been detected. The solution proposed by Fraser in her framework of perspectival dualism implies that in order to address the two-fold issue redistribution is required for socioeconomic injustice and recognition is needed for cultural/symbolic injustice hence, government intervention along with transparency and accountability is required to address the female domestic workers' problems on an institutional level along with due attention needed to regulate their pay. It is necessary to

recognize the female domestic workforce not as slow human beings with menial professions but rather as people who are working in a proper profession so that their respect along with their rights are protected and they are treated as people just like others. Both interventions are required for a fruitful improvement in the conditions of female domestic workers at their workplaces.

This research paper aims to bring attention to a critically urgent and escalating issue that requires immediate intervention. By illuminating a matter of profound distress affecting domestic workers, the paper seeks to underscore the severity and growing nature of the problems depicted in the form of themes. Through detailed analysis and evidence, it endeavors to compel government officials and policymakers to recognize the gravity of the situation and take decisive action to address and mitigate the issue. The goal is to foster a response that not only acknowledges the plight of domestic workers but also implements effective measures to alleviate their suffering and prevent further escalation.

5.2 Policy Implications

Based on the current research and present laws, some policy implications are outlined below to initiate change in the current working conditions of female domestic workers in Islamabad, Pakistan.

1. Ensure Strict Implementation of Legislation:

The Islamabad Capital Territory Domestic Workers Bill, 2022 is a comprehensive legally binding policy document that aims to protect the rights of domestic workers. The bill has focused on improving the working conditions of domestic labourers by outlining

the wage rate and working conditions along with the settlement of working hours. However, there is a lack of practical implementation of this law (Asrar, 2023). Despite the curation of legislation, the reality is different (as depicted in this research). Domestic workers are still prone to exploitation and harsh working conditions along with oppression and limited freedom. The success of any policy is dependent on the enforcement of it. Therefore, if headway is to be made for the well-being of domestic workers, rigorous measures must be taken to implement the present policy as soon as possible.

Internationally, Pakistan has still not ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 No. 189 (Nizamani, 2023). In a country, where the domestic work profession is majorly found, it is important that Pakistan recognises this act and aims to amend its policies as per standard. Moreover, this step will help formalise the profession of domestic work. This will also aid in empowering the domestic workers by granting them the same legal protection and rights as others. This will also show Pakistan's dedication and commitment to eradicating the plight of domestic workers.

Therefore, it is essential that Pakistan recognises the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 No. 189, and enforce the strict operation of the Islamabad Capital Territory Domestic Workers Bill, 2022 along with a continuous monitoring system to evaluate its effectiveness. This would include routine evaluations to ensure adherence to the bill's directives and timely identification of any issues that may arise.

2. A Need for a Policy for Live-out Domestic Workers:

While the Islamabad Capital Territory Domestic Workers Bill, 2022 actualises the well-being and protection of domestic workers in general, it fails to cater to the live-out domestic workers. The bill is more focused on improving the working conditions of live-in domestic workers. Currently, Islamabad has no law that regulates the fixed wage of live-out female domestic workers. The implementation of a law establishing fixed wages for live-out domestic workers is a critical policy measure that would address the widespread issue of wage exploitation in this sector. As depicted through the present study, live-out domestic workers are paid inconsistently and mostly below the minimum wage, trapping them in the cycle of poverty. A law mandating fixed wages would ensure that these workers receive fair compensation for their labor.

Curation of such a policy would not only provide financial security for live-out domestic workers but also reinforce the value of their work, recognizing it as essential for fair remuneration. Moreover, this will reduce the power imbalances that often exist between employers and domestic workers. By setting clear wage standards, the law would prevent employers from setting subjective wages that undervalue the work performed. Therefore, this policy would promote greater economic equality and contribute to the overall improvement of working conditions for live-out domestic workers.

Therefore, it is essential to establish a well-defined policy that will ensure a fair and standardised wage rate, free from discrimination based on the type of chore they perform or the residential areas they work in. This will help curb the present exploitation amongst domestic workers and promote equity and fairness among them.

3. Necessity of an Inspection Mechanism:

The Islamabad Capital Territory Domestic Workers Bill, 2022 aims to punish the offenders who withhold the pay of domestic workers a fine of ten thousand rupees however, there is a huge gap in the logistics of this solution. Most domestic workers, as highlighted in the present study, face threats under the guise of job security and hence are unable to complain to the authorities. Moreover, those who do file a complaint, the police, refuse to offer much help due to the influence of the rich households where these poor domestic workers are employed. Therefore, it is proposed that the government should establish a dedicated body responsible for conducting regular inspections of domestic workplaces to the said standards that the government should establish. By conducting unannounced inspections, it can help uncover and address violations that may otherwise remain hidden.

The results of these inspections should be made publicly accessible to promote transparency and accountability, thereby fostering a culture of respect and implementation of labor standards within the domestic work sector. In addition to inspection, a mechanism for reporting grievances, addressing complaints, and holding violators accountable should also be initiated. By implementing stringent penalties and ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable, the security of domestic workers can be ensured.

It is crucial to establish an effective inspection mechanism for domestic workers, ensuring they have the required revenue to lodge a complaint. Moreover, routine inspections should be conducted towards employers to guarantee the safety of the domestic workers.

4. Inculcate Awareness Among the Public and the Domestic Workers:

Firstly, there is a growing need to educate the public about the plight of domestic workers. Public awareness campaigns that highlight the importance of respecting their rights, aiming to shift societal attitudes and stigma is greatly needed. By showcasing their significant contributions to society and the economy, these campaigns can help increase their value as domestic workers. The campaigns should also focus on raising awareness about the specific challenges like unequal wages, no formal contracts, unsafe working conditions and the prevalence of violence (as depicted in the present study) faced by domestic workers.

Secondly, domestic workers should be aware of the policies and laws that have been in place for their well-being. Since most domestic workers are illiterate, they are not aware of the rights provided to them by the government. There needs to be awareness sessions specifically tailored to inform domestic workers of their statutory rights by explaining the policy document in layman's terms and in their native language, so they are fully aware of the protections available to them and how to seek help when necessary. This will also help bridge the gap between government and the domestic workers, leading to more fruitful and subjective policymaking.

Therefore, it is imperative to disseminate comprehensive awareness regarding the plight of domestic workers to the public. Additionally, necessary action must be taken to make the domestic workers aware of the laws that have been put in place for them by the government.

5. Social Security Support:

Another crucial policy implication for addressing the issues faced by domestic workers in the present study is the implementation of comprehensive social security provisions. Since poverty is the main reason why domestic workers seek such work, it is also the main reason, they cannot leave this niche of work due to low pay. Therefore, the government should establish and integrate domestic workers into a robust social security system to ensure they have access to essential benefits such as health insurance, retirement pensions, unemployment benefits, and paid sick leave. The domestic workers lack access to these basic protections, leaving them vulnerable to economic instability and indulged in poverty.

By extending social security coverage to domestic workers, the government can provide a safety net that supports their well-being and financial security, which is particularly important given the often-precarious nature of their employment. This policy strengthens the value of domestic work but also promotes fairness and equality. Furthermore, this will help build trust between the domestic workers towards the government.

Hence, it is imperative that the government must devise a well-structured, comprehensive and robust social security plan that will help secure domestic workers financially for a while especially when they are unable to continue working due to unforeseen circumstances in case of ill-health, inadequate compensation or oppression.

5.2 Scope for Further Research

There is a pressing need for detailed research on the variation in pay gaps within the domestic work sector, particularly focusing on economic violence. While the present research has highlighted the presence of economic violence against domestic workers, further investigation is essential to understand the underlying causes and extent of this issue. A comprehensive study comparing the pay gaps across different sectors and types of domestic chores in Islamabad is necessary to identify where disparities arise and why they persist. This analysis would provide valuable insights into the specific factors contributing to economic violence, such as regional variations, job roles, and employer practices, enabling targeted interventions to address these issues effectively.

Additionally, a comparative study is needed to explore the differences between housemaids who independently find employment in households and those employed through agencies, in Islamabad. Understanding the disparities between these two groups—regarding wages, working conditions, and experiences of economic violence—can shed light on the impact of employment pathways on economic outcomes. Such research would not only inform policy recommendations but also help in designing strategies to mitigate economic violence and ensure fair compensation for all domestic workers. By addressing these gaps through detailed and comparative studies, policymakers can develop more effective measures to promote equity and improve working conditions within the domestic labor sector.

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