

## **An Epidemiological study of Acid Burn Incidents in Pakistan: Causes, Consequences and Prevention Strategies**

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjpr.2013/vol11n25158>

Published June 26, 2023

**Citation:** Mujeeb M., Atiq E. and Rehman M.U,(2023), An Epidemiological study of Acid Burn Incidents in Pakistan: Causes, Consequences and Prevention Strategies, *British Journal of Psychology Research*, 11 (2), 51-59

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**ABSTRACT:** *According to Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF), there are about 200 acid attacks every year in Pakistan, and there have been more incidents reported this year than last (Ahmad, S. 2022). Murder is regarded better than throwing acid (Mihaela B. I. 2015). Unfortunately, Pakistan is becoming more and more popular for hurling acid. A woman in Lahore was recently beaten with acid after rejecting a marriage proposal (Ashraf, S. 2017). South Punjab, a region known for its agriculture and as the "cotton belt," is where more than half of all acid-related crimes occur. This region has historically been plagued by low socioeconomic indicators, and it is also where acid is easily accessible in local markets and frequently used to clean cotton. According to an unbiased study, 9,340 people in Pakistan were victims of acid attacks between 1994 and 2018 (Wong, Y. 2021). Unless the government takes strong action to put an end to the evildoer, such attacks will continue to occur in the nation. According to the Acid Survivors Trust International, 80% of acid attack victims are women, putting acid attacks in the category of gender-based violence (J. G. 2019). Although attackers also target men, the problem primarily impacts women and is more likely to happen in societies where there is a strong gender division (Duggan, M. 2020). This way of life supports gender inequality and highlights the vulnerable status of women in Pakistani society, who frequently face attacks not just from outsiders but even from their own spouses and relatives.*

**KEYWORDS:** epidemiological study, acid burn, incidents, Pakistan, causes, consequences, prevention strategies

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### **INTRODUCTION**

According to Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF), there are about 200 acid attacks every year in Pakistan, and there have been more incidents reported this year than last (Ahmad, S. 2022). Murder is regarded better than throwing acid (Mihaela, B. I. 2015). Unfortunately, Pakistan is becoming

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more and more popular for hurling acid. A woman in Lahore was recently beaten with acid after rejecting a marriage proposal (Ashraf, S. 2017). South Punjab, a region known for its agriculture and as the "cotton belt," is where more than half of all acid-related crimes occur. This region has historically been plagued by low socioeconomic indicators, and it is also where acid is easily accessible in local markets and frequently used to clean cotton. According to an unbiased study, 9,340 people in Pakistan were victims of acid attacks between 1994 and 2018 (Wong, Y. 2021). Unless the government takes strong action to put an end to the evildoer, such attacks will continue to occur in the nation. According to the Acid Survivors Trust International, 80% of acid attack victims are women, putting acid attacks in the category of gender-based violence (J. G. 2019). Although attackers also target men, the problem primarily impacts women and is more likely to happen in societies where there is a strong gender division (Duggan, M. 2020). This way of life supports gender inequality and highlights the vulnerable status of women in Pakistani society, who frequently face attacks not just from outsiders but even from their own spouses and relatives.

There are numerous burn-related problems. Burn victims' physical, psychological, socioeconomic, and socio-political conditions are all impacted (Pike, I. 2021). Infection is a leading cause of death from burns caused by antibiotic-resistant forms of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Staphylococcus aureus* (Mencalha, A. L. 2022). Inhalational injury, particularly to the face, and direct trauma to the upper airways from inhaling hot gases are two instances of pulmonary issues (Perveen, A. 2022).

### **Purpose and objectives of the study**

The study's goal is to investigate acid attacks on women in Pakistan. The study investigates the historical, social, cultural, and political factors that have given rise to this sort of gender violence. The research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the circumstances of acid attack victims, their families, and the communities in which they reside, as well as the legal and medical experts who aid them.

Based on the information given, the following could be among the project objectives for prevention strategies of acid burn:

- Increase your awareness.
- Create and implement an effective policy.
- Identify risk variables and describe the load.
- Prioritize research by promoting successful treatments.
- Make available burn prevention programs.
- Improve burn care.

## **Research Questions**

- In what proportions and how frequently do women in Pakistan's various regions experience acid attacks?
- In how many cases and patterns do acid attacks on women occur across Pakistan?
- What sociocultural elements influence the frequency of acid attacks on women?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Prevalence and incidence of acid attacks in Pakistan**

There have been many instances of acid attacks, often known as acid violence, throughout the world (S. K. 2021). The severe effects of this type of violence include death, psychological distress, disfigurement, and disabilities. Despite being illegal under national and international law, acid attacks still happen frequently in Pakistan, which is a major cause for concern (Arshi, M. 2017). In Pakistan, acid attacks are very common, with the face being their main target (Hadi, A. 2017). These acts are basically committed by men, while the victims are almost women.

Women are especially vulnerable since they are regarded as a symbol of family honour, and their physical attractiveness is inextricably linked to their social standing and marriageability (Straus, M. A. 2016). Women who do not obey or behave according to established rules are considered as a threat to society's dominating institutions, leaving them more vulnerable to acid attacks (K. T. 2013). Between 2010 and 2016, 1,500 acid assaults were documented in Pakistan, according to a survey conducted by the Acid Survivors Foundation (Emmanuel, O. 2017).

However, because many incidents don't get reported due to reaction fears and administrative and judicial negligence, the actual number of attacks may be higher (Schelbe, L. 2022). Acid attack victims frequently encounter obstacles to justice, such as corruption, incompetence, a convoluted legal system with high courts, sharia courts, and tribal tribunals (Mantoan, L. 2014). Sometimes spouses or family members would attack their partners to control or punish them. In other situations, the assailants can be people who the victim has rejected or who perceive the victim as a threat to their social standing. Since using acid as a weapon necessitates little in the way of physical prowess or skill, it is a particularly pernicious form of violence (Mahfouz, J. 2020). Acid is a favorite weapon among attackers in Pakistan due to its ease of availability and the lack of limitations on its sale and distribution. Attackers can easily carry out attacks without worrying about being arrested because they can buy acid from local stores without any questions being asked (Amarasingham, A. 2019).

The complicated social and political history of Pakistan can be used to explain why acid assaults are so common there. Men in Pakistan's rural communities first used acid as a weapon to punish women who disobeyed traditional norms or refused to act in accordance with their expectations (Ismail, F. 2023). Women from all backgrounds were victims of acid attacks as they spread in

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frequency over time. The occurrence of acid attacks has also been influenced by the rise of religious fanaticism in Pakistan. Extremist organizations have attacked women who they perceive to be questioning established gender roles, such as feminist campaigners and anyone who disobey severe dress regulations. These kinds of attacks are regularly used as a form of punishment and to exert control over women (Ashraf, I. 2021).

### **Consequences of acid attacks on the victims and their families**

The Victims of acid violence suffer severe and lingering effects (S. K. 2021). Victims of acid violence may experience severe and permanently changing effects. Physical and psychological trauma, permanent disfigurement, blindness, and other incapacitating medical ailments are common among victims, as well as other serious health issues (Swart, D. 2009). In addition to facing several obstacles to accessing sufficient medical care and rehabilitation services, victims of acid violence may also continue to encounter social shame and discrimination (Ashraf, S. 2017). The psychological trauma brought on by acid assault can be quite severe and result in despair, anxiety, and other mental health conditions (P. Ø. 2013). Victims of acid assaults can suffer devastating physical and mental disorders. Acid creates severe burns that can result in death, deformity, and even physical handicap. Victims frequently need several operations and ongoing medical care, which can be expensive and out of reach for many (aniri, L.(2020).

### **Previous research on prevention strategies for acid attacks in Pakistan and other countries**

Numerous attempts have been made in Pakistan in recent years to stop acid violence through law change (Hussain, R. 2008). The Pakistani government introduced the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Bill in 2011, which imposes harsh penalties on acid violence perpetrators and develops a framework for acid assault prevention and treatment (Singh, S. 2015).

Every country in the world experiences human rights breaches, including violence and abuse against women and girls. It has an impact on each social class and age group in society. Women all over the world experience various types of cruelty every day, including sexual assault by strangers, loved ones, and public figures; domestic violence, which includes spousal murder; being threatened with, burned, beaten, and acid attacks; custodial abuse and torture; and ritual honor killings (R. A. 2006). A horrific crime like an acid attack has a devastating impact on both the victims' and their relatives' life. Due to a lack of institutional and legal frameworks to handle the issue, acid attacks are more common in Pakistan. The current judicial system frequently falls short, doesn't work well, and doesn't help acid attack victims. In addition, nobody in law enforcement, healthcare, or the public is sensitive to the danger and effects of acid violence (Garcia-Moreno, C. 2005). This lack of understanding and sensitivity frequently results in insufficient responsiveness and assistance for victims.

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A comprehensive plan to minimize acid violence must address the root cause societal, cultural, and economic conditions that feed this form of violence. The legal system must be enhanced, education and employment opportunities expanded, and gender equality and women's empowerment supported (Ellsberg, M. 2014). Additionally, there is a requirement to raise public, medical, and law enforcement awareness and sensitivity to the effects of acid violence.

Global figures of the annual number of acid attacks victims are unavailable. Violence caused by acid has also been recorded in Afghanistan, Cambodia, China, India, Jamaica, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, and Uganda, in addition to Bangladesh (Gopinath, C. 2023).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Utilizing quantitative methods, research on acid attacks has only ever examined the incidence, consequences, alleged causes, and amount of burning. Qualitative research methodologies are not used to analyze acid attacks since they are a multifaceted, cultural phenomenon. However, qualitative methods may be able to offer greater awareness of less well-known and socially constructed phenomena. As a result, the attentive application of qualitative approaches may improve and broaden our understanding of burns. We think that the occurrence of acid attacks is socially and culturally produced. We used grounded theory to investigate many facets of this phenomena. This paper evaluates several quantitative studies that have surveyed acid attack victims, their families, and people of the community to collect data. The frequency of acid attacks, their effects on survivors, and the social and economic repercussions for the family and community are all examined in a number of these quantitative research.

Additionally, some quantitative studies that have been reviewed determine the public's awareness of, attitudes towards, and perceptions of acid attacks.

### **Study design**

We utilized grounded theory to supervise our sampling, data collecting, and analysis. Inductive analysis is the primary tool used in the research strategy or methodology known as grounded theory, which is used in qualitative research.

### **Data analysis**

A review of the literature was used. This method included a review of the literature, qualitative and quantitative research, case studies, and reports from governmental and non-governmental organizations.

## **RESULTS**

In Pakistan, hundreds of women are the victims of acid attacks each year. The history, social conventions, and cultural practices of the nation all have a significant impact on acid violence. In

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short, women who seek education or work outside the home frequently face violence in a culture where men predominate. Victims experience societal disgrace and discrimination in addition to physical and psychological pain.

### **Limitations of the study**

A common kind of gender-based violence, acid violence, or acid attacks, occurs in many nations, including Pakistan. There are still several limitations that must be noted, despite the large number of research that have been done on the incidence and consequences of acid assault against women in Pakistan. Three significant limitations of the study on acid attacks against women in Pakistan that will be discussed in this paper are the sample size, data collecting, and access to victims.

The small sample size is one of the study's limitations regarding acid abuse against women in Pakistan. This study's sample size was modest, and it's possible that it doesn't accurately represent all Pakistan's victims of acid attacks. Another limitation of the research on acid attacks against women in Pakistan is its reliance on secondary sources and case studies for data collection. Lack of access to victims of acid assaults becomes the third limitation of the study on acid attacks against women in Pakistan. Due to their limited access to victims of acid attacks, the researchers may not have been able to fully examine how acid assaults affect victims and their families. These limitations may restrict the findings' generalizability and validity. As a result, future research on acid violence against women in Pakistan should strive to overcome this constraint to present a more complete picture of the epidemic.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Awareness could be raised by men and boys-focused education efforts. Survivors deserve financial, emotional, and social support. On this problem, policymakers must improve their technical proficiency.

### **Final thoughts**

Future research should also focus on conducting in-depth studies on the effects of acid attacks on victims and their families. Investigating these consequences on individuals and groups includes looking at their social, psychological, and physical effects. In-depth analyses can help researchers better understand the scope of the issue by identifying the long-term effects of acid attacks on survivors and their families.

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