

Journal homepage: <https://jll.uoch.edu.pk/index.php/jll>**Portrayal of Women's Exploitation by Pakistani Female Writers: An Analysis of Selected Short Stories by Fahmida Riaz, Bina Shah, and Qaisra Shahraz: Kamla Bhasin's Understanding of Patriarchy**¹ Mehak Dahiyo, ²Salma Naz¹ BS Scholar, Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan² Assistant Professor, Adamjee Govt. Science College, Karachi, and a PhD Scholar at IEIL, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan**Article Info**

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Abstract

This study is a feminist analysis of selected short stories such as *Daughters of AAI* by Fahmida Riaz, *The Optimist* by Bina Shah, *The Elopement*, *The Discovery*, and *Perchanvah* by Qaisra Shahraz in light of Bhasin's idea of Patriarchy. The study mainly focuses on the portrayal of women's exploitation presented by Pakistani female writers in their short stories through textual analysis with the help of close reading. It is found that women are exploited in many ways, as represented by writers in their short stories. The findings of this study include that social, economic, psychological, cultural, and physical exploitation of women is commonly practised in patriarchal institutions, and it has been realistically portrayed by Pakistani female writers to educate the readers. Based on this study, it is recommended that future researchers still have the space to work on these short stories with different frameworks to add something new to literary research.

Introduction

The treatment of women, mainly based on exploitation in a patriarchal society, is a reflection of how that society perceives them. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word exploit can be defined as using someone for "one's own advantage". This definition applies to the treatment of women in a patriarchal society, who are used, controlled, manipulated, and exploited by powerful entities as women are associated with the marginalized gender. All these practices are formalised in the form of laws and practices of all social institutions, as they are controlled by the people of the dominant gender (Bhasin, 2019). In a society where there is a lack of diversity and involvement of stakeholders in decision-making processes, one can expect such exploitation as it is not the lived experience of those who are running these social, cultural, and economic institutions. Moreover, focusing on the treatment of women, literature is a domain that aims to portray the diverse experiences of both dominant and dominant entities in society. In literary fiction, women are depicted in multiple ways, as some writers objectify them, and others portray women's experiences based on how they perceive women. However, the depiction of women changed in literature when female writers started writing about their lived experiences; their female characters were profound and subtle as compared to those presented by male writers. Further, the arrival of feminism, played an important role in literature as it provided the framework for women to dissect and interpret their experiences. Moreover, following the trends of global literature, Pakistani female writers found a source in the form of fiction to channel their emotions, feelings, and experiences. Pakistani literature is full of such stories that amplify the collective voice and struggle of women. Portraying collective humiliation and victimization of women, Pakistani female writers also challenge such misogynist notions to redefine women's role in male-dominant society (Parveen & Qadir, 2019).

Pakistani short stories reflect different types of exploitation women encounter in a patriarchal society based on their gender identity. Short Stories selected for this article demonstrate such struggles. Fahmida Riaz's *Daughter of AAI*, is one such example. This story is about women living in rural Sindh who are exploited by their husbands and landlords. One of its important characters is *AAI* who is a divorced woman taking care of seven children without any financial support from her husband. Her mentally challenged daughter *Fatima* becomes a victim of sexual assault, not once but twice, and becomes pregnant. Since there was no institutional help, they could access, women of the village collectively helped Fatima by declaring her "*Allah Wali*" and gave her child to help a young woman who was the

widow of a landlord, whose stepsons denied her share in the property. She claimed Fatima's child as her own secured her share of the inheritance and got her financial rights. Secondly, *The Optimist* by Bina Shah is about a girl named Raheela. Her family is based in Britain, but her parents arranged her marriage to a Pakistani man without her consent. She becomes the victim of an unhappy arranged marriage and starts living with her in-laws in Pakistan, but eventually, she escapes this forced marriage. Besides these, Qaisra Shahraz's short stories also attempt to highlight the existing exploitative structures that highlight patriarchal practices. Firstly, *A Pair of Jeans* tells the story of Miriam, living in Britain, who was engaged to a Muslim Pakistani boy. His parents selected her for their son only because she appeared to be an ideal girl, as she conformed to Pakistani cultural norms set for women. Later, she is rejected by her future in-laws after they see her in Western clothes. Another story, *The Elopement*, is about a girl named Rubiya who elopes with a stranger but eventually returns home. Her family was more concerned about the comments of society than their own daughter's wellbeing. For their honour, they tried their best to hide this truth from their father and society. *The Discovery* is the sequel to *The Elopement*, which shows Rubiya's life after marriage. Her husband is infuriated after knowing that, before marrying him, his wife eloped with a stranger. He psychologically tortures her, and eventually, Rubiya decides to leave her husband. Lastly, *Perchanvah* is a story of a young married girl named Faiza who is pregnant. Her mother-in-law forbids Faiza from meeting her best friend Salma, who has experienced multiple miscarriages, so she is a *Perchanvah*, an evil shadow, for Faiza. Soon, Faiza had a miscarriage due to her negligence. Unfortunately, it happened after meeting Salma, so her mother-in-law blamed Salma for this incident. This story is about the stigma attached to married women who have had miscarriages, so they become a curse for other pregnant women. In conclusion, these short stories depict the invisibilization of multiple forms of exploitation faced by women through impunity and social legitimization.

Background of the Study

The purpose of writing this paper is to analyze the portrayal of the exploitation of marginalized gender, mainly women, in a patriarchal society. To highlight the exploitation of women in a patriarchal society, the researcher has selected six short stories written by Pakistani female writers. These writers give us a realistic image of Pakistani society, unlike most Pakistani male writers who write about women with a male gaze. It deals with portraying women's exploitation in short stories written by Pakistani female writers.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate how Pakistani female writers have portrayed the treatment of women in Pakistani society.
2. To explore the social, economic, psychological, cultural, and physical exploitation of women

Research Questions

1. How have Pakistani female writers portrayed the treatment of women in Pakistani society in their short stories?
2. How are women socially, economically, psychologically, and physically exploited?

Related Literature

Much research has already been conducted on these short stories with different lenses. Research paper-based *Daughters of AAI* by Shaikh et al. (2019) is a comparative analysis of four stories: two written by Daniyal Mueenuddin, one by Shahrukh Husain (female), and another story, *Daughters of AAI* by Fahmida Riaz. The paper concludes that male writers use more sexist and misogynist language as compared to female writers. As in one of his stories, Mueenuddin's comparison of female breasts with mangoes, to create a humorous impact, shows the objectification of women and the chauvinist attitude of Pakistani male writers. On the other hand, instead of using euphemistic terms, Fahmida Riaz uses the term menstruation to destigmatize it and let the world know about female experiences and their struggles. On the other hand, Rind et al. (2017) analyze *Daughters of AAI* differently in the light of Bourdieu's field theory. It concludes that through women's collective efforts, based on accepted religious practices in their field, they saved Fatima and made her a capable and self-sufficient woman.

Moreover, subaltern analysts Qamar (2021) and Zeb et al. (2019) discuss the gendered subalternity of women in the same story, subdivided into age-based Subalternity, which includes early marriages. Characters like AAI and Mumtaz Begam became victims of this norm. Second is class-based subalternity, as the landlords of the village had the power to assault women. The third is law-based subalternity, killing women in the name of honour without any legal punishment. In the story, "Zainab" was one of those victims. On the contrary, the feminist analysis of another

story, *The Optimist*, by Mehmood and Sibtain (2020), celebrates women's bravery in confronting patriarchy. According to them, Bina Shah has presented Raheela as a rebellious woman, and, ironically, the writer has portrayed a Pakistani husband as a supportive husband. Besides this, Lashari (2023) focuses on two story aspects. First, how different men in the family exploited the female protagonist to keep her submissive, which might end up in otherization and submission of marginalized gender. Second, he applauds revolt's role in confronting such submission in patriarchal structures.

Different researchers have analyzed another story, *The Pair of Jeans*, to prove that sexual and self-objectification of women is one feature of patriarchal mindsets. Ali et al. (2021) show how Mariam has been objectified based on her dress, which reflects the dogmatic beliefs of society that if a girl wears Western clothes, she won't be a good daughter-in-law. This leads to women's internalization of these ideas and ends in their self-objectification as Mariam and her mother feel ashamed that Miriam's in-laws have seen her in Western clothes. Moreover, Ahmed (2009) analyzed the oppression and struggles of women in Qaisra Shahraz's short stories and novels. However, Octarinanda & Seswita (2020) mainly focused on the capabilities of the protagonists in their stories who confronted Patriarchy and decided to live with dignity, like the protagonist of *The Elopement*, who rebelled to find happiness by deciding to live with the person she wanted to live with. Still, she soon realized that to live with dignity, she had to change her own decision and return to her family. Another analysis of the sequel of this story by Parveen & Qadir (2019) shows the intellectual awakening of Women like Rubiya; after marriage, she left her chauvinist husband and embarked on a journey to live on her terms, and Zainab Bibi in *Perchanvah* is the one who discusses the taboo topics of pregnancy and miscarriage in front of men and tries to stop the stigmatization of these topics in society. But none of these researchers have collectively looked at the physical, psychological, cultural, social, and economic exploitation of women in light of Eastern feminist theorists, so the space left by them will be filled by this article, where the exploitation of women in these selected short stories will be analyzed with Kamla Bhasin's understanding of patriarchy.

Theoretical Framework

A feminist framework is intentionally chosen for this article, as the selected short stories deal with the subjugation and emancipation of women in a patriarchal society. Kamla Bhasin is a strong advocate of women's rights and a staunch critic of South Asian Patriarchy. The book "From Patriarchy to Equality" is a compilation of her writings on feminism. Some of its main ideas, relevant to this research paper, are briefly discussed.

According to Bhasin, patriarchy does not mean only the rule of a patriarch or father. Still, it means a social system where men make major decisions and control property, economic resources and the production, and reproduction of women. In addition, women are considered the property of men, so they confine women to homes and completely control their lives. Patriarchs are so alarmed that when women try to fight their undemocratic system, they are negatively labelled as Bhasin calls "*unfeminine*" and "*beparda*". She also elaborates on the negative impact of patriarchy on women, as she mentions that "the feeling and experience of subordination destroy self-respect, self-esteem, and self-confidence and set limits on our aspirations" (Bhasin, 2019, p. 103). Moreover, through the reinforcement of patriarchal norms, women have internalized and accepted their subjugation, which helps men in the process of subjugation, subordination, and exploitation of women. She maintains that all the social institutions are patriarchal in structure because they are completely controlled by men, which facilitates them to neglect and justify crimes committed by men against women. Some of those institutions are discussed below:

The family is the most patriarchal institution in its structure. It is controlled by a family master who makes family members obey the rules he has devised (right or wrong), and those who do not conform to these rules, mainly women, are punished. It is this institution, she states, where a man "controls women's sexuality, labour or production, and mobility" (Bhasin, 2019, p. 110). It is not just the labour women do at home, but the labour done by women outside the house is maintained by a patriarch who is either her husband, brother, or father. This institution decides whether she can sell her labour or not. Men in the family can control and enjoy their wages if they like, and if they don't permit, most eligible women lose better jobs and are forced to work at home, which Basin calls "house-based" production. It is also the most exploitative system, as it rips women off their freedom and traps them by making women financially dependent on men forever. Moreover, Bhasin (2019) asserts that this institution controls women by monitoring their

mobility. Men either impose "Perda" on them or confine them in domestic spaces. Also, through the segregation of genders, they control women's sexuality, reproduction, and labour.

Relationship between Masculinity and Violence: Bhasin (2019) asserts that in this institution, boys learn the definition of masculinity to practice it, which consists of domination, aggression, and desensitization. This understanding affects all their relationships with women. They start to see them as objects to assert their dominance, control, exploit, and rape women when they protest masculinity. Further, she believes that boys are brought up in a system where might is right, so they end up using their bodies as weapons to control, enslave, and threaten women. She maintains that physical, sexual, and psychological violence committed against women impacts their confidence intensely and impacts their work in society.

Legal System: "In South Asia, every legal system considers man the head of the household, natural guardian of children, and primary inheritor of property" (Bhasin, 2019, p. 11). So, all the violence is done by men against women because male superiority and power manifested in the form of domestic violence is not only tolerated but normalized in society. Besides, men violate women because they can legally get away with it. Taking everything into account, it is the legal and socially biased system that leads to the legitimization of violence committed by men against women.

Economic system: In patriarchal societies, productive work done by women is not considered valuable labor as all household chores and child-rearing are unquestionably considered women's responsibilities, but the productive work done by men is properly paid, giving them recognition in society. This naturalization of unpaid labor done by women further exploits women in patriarchal societies.

Limitations of Her Theory: Bhasin generally talks about the impact of patriarchy on women, but she does not specifically talk about the psychological impacts of patriarchy on women. However, this article will analyze the psychological exploitation of women in patriarchal society as reflected in selected short stories and link it with Kamla Bhasin's idea of patriarchy.

Discussion

Social Exploitation

The family is the social institution where women are mainly exploited. Pakistani female writers have depicted such exploitation in their stories. In *The Optimist*, the female protagonist is exploited and manipulated by her family. She was forced to marry Adnan without her consent because the consent of a daughter does not matter in Pakistani families, as her parents told her, "There's no question of asking you; we're your parents. We love you. We want the best for you" (Shah, 2009, p. 249). It is a culturally accepted fact that girls will eventually submit to all the decisions made by the family without giving it a thought. This parental persuasion is justified by the argument for the girl's benefit.

Similarly, Shahraz criticized this institution for exploiting Rubiya in *The Elopement*. Her father was an authoritative figure, so she preferred elopement to discussing her affair with her parents. Further, when Rubiya comes back, the first thing that comes to her mind is, "Rubiya could not believe her luck. He (father) did not know!" (Shahraz, 2013, p. 97). She was happy about the fact that her father didn't find out about her elopement because she knew what the consequences could have been if her father knew: she might have been punished, and forced marriage would have been the worst nightmare for her. This reflects the fact that one rarely finds space for conversation in a patriarchal society. The family reflecting such a society replicates the same thing, where an authority makes the decisions. The rest of the family members are supposed to follow that decision, mainly women, as they are doubly oppressed in the institution of family. Bhasin (2019) also maintains that in patriarchal Institutions, like families, women are always kept submissive in different ways, along with servants, under the rule of an Alpha male. However, Ali et al. (2021) only focus on the objectification of women in patriarchal society, which leads to their self-objectification. On the other hand, Octarinanda & Seswita (2020) focused on the protagonist's rebellious nature in *The Elopement* rather than her exploitation. These short stories confront the rudimentary structure of the family as a social institution, where a new generation demands reformation and improvement.

Economic Exploitation

Economic exploitation of women is commonly practised in patriarchal societies. Fahmida Riaz, Bina Shah, and Qaisra Shahraz have profoundly depicted it in their works. In *Perchanvah* and *The Elopement*, there is no evidence of women being financially independent. Their role is to perform household chores and keep everybody happy. Shahraz

explains in *The Elopement*, "Despite what they were going through, they managed to cook the evening meal, although in silence, and to act as normal as possible" (p. 95). Further, in *Perchanvah* Faiza said, "I don't know why, but I seem to have a craving to do household chores" (Shahraz, 2007, p. 62). However, in *Discovery* Rubiya is a working woman. When she returned from work, "She didn't know whether the dinner was made. But if it were not, she would make it" (Shahraz, 2013, p. 110).

Shahraz discusses the economic exploitation of women in the patriarchal institution of family in her story, *The Elopement*. The narrator explains that 'they' [women] are supposed to fulfil their household responsibilities on time. The narrator refers to the word 'silence', which has the connotation of the oppressive structure of family and society also, 'acts normal' is used for no resistance against the situation. This pressure indicates control and women in the house are not allowed to express their feelings; rather, they are supposed to please everyone around them through their work and happy posture. They may not raise any questions against it (Bhasin, 2019). Ahmed (2009) also concludes that Shahraz has depicted the inhuman treatment of women in a patriarchal society. Economic exploitation is visible through Rubiya in *The Discovery*. It is narrated that when she returns from work, she must prepare the dinner. This narration has the connotation of exploitation and the double standard of society. When a male member of the family does a job, he does not have this concern for cooking, but a woman must fulfil this responsibility, too. This proves that even those women who earn must take all the responsibilities of the house along with their jobs, as it is an unnegotiable responsibility of women in a patriarchal society (Bhasin, 2019).

Similarly, Faiza in *Perchanvah* has internalized the notion that taking care of the house is the sole responsibility of a daughter-in-law. Through the reinforcement of patriarchal norms, Faiza, Rubiya, and other Pakistani women have accepted their subjugation and helped men in the process of subjugation (Bhasin, 2019). However, Parveen & Qadir (2019) believe that such stories challenge the traditional ideas of femininity by questioning these stereotypical practices.

Another dimension of economic exploitation is highlighted in *Daughters of AA*, where women have partial financial independence. Such exploitation is depicted through the characters of Raheela and AAI, along with all the women of her village. Raheela explains, "My father threatened to lock me up, [sic] to force me to quit my job if I did not listen to him" (Shah, 2008, p. 250). Raheela's father tries his best to make Raheela economically dependent to make her obey all his decisions. Moreover, when Raheela insisted that her in-laws wouldn't let her do any job after marriage, instead of taking her side, he said, "But why should you work? Adnan is doing so well for himself" (Shah, 2008, p. 250). Raheela's father's assertion shows that women cannot work independently. He wants to control her, and he further highlights the relationship between violence and his masculinity by referring to Raheela's future husband, 'Adnan'. This indicates that the family is a patriarchal structure of control. Men do not give the financial independence of a woman any importance, as it threatens their patriarchal structures. Her father knew that if Raheela were financially independent, Adnan would never be able to control her (Bhasin, 2019). Also, women like Raheela are kept financially dependent, which makes them submissive in all decision-making processes; even those decisions that affect their lives are made by men in the family (Lashari, 2023).

Besides this, in *Daughters of AAI* all the women of the village did hard labour to make both ends meet, and the men did no hard labour, as sarcastically mentioned in the story, "Madam, the men halal the chicken" (Riaz, 2008, p. 103). This example manifests that the economic exploitation of women in patriarchal societies is normalized and naturalized to benefit the oppressors. Moreover, another character named Mumtaz Begam was denied her share in the property by her stepsons, who claimed that "She was merely the landlord's mistress" (Riaz, 2008, p. 106). The men of the house decided her fate as Mumtaz had no son; they refused to even give her any status by calling her a mere mistress of their father. Furthermore, women have no respect, power, or status in a patriarchal society without a male counterpart. Bhasin (2019) also maintains that the father and husband are respected as lords of the house and have the power to control the labour, share in inheritance, and production of women. On the contrary, Rind et al. (2017) and Mehmood and Sibtain (2020) focus on the rebellious nature of women in these short stories instead of their exploitation in a patriarchal society. However, looking at the exploitation of such characters, one can conclude that the economic exploitation of women in the institution of family creates a safe platform for men to exploit them further, as the partial or complete financial dependence of women on men blocks every chance of their rebellion.

Psychological Exploitation

Pakistani female writers have also portrayed psychological exploitation and its impact on women. Shahraz's *Perchanvah* depicts a different dimension of psychological exploitation, where women stigmatize and mentally torture those women who have had miscarriages. Salma tells Faiza, "I cannot begin to describe to you the suffering I have undergone, not only at the loss of my babies but also the way that some women have treated me instead of offering sympathy, they have recoiled from me" (Shahraz, 2013, p. 62). Furthermore, when Faiza had a miscarriage after meeting Salma, everyone blamed Salma for Faiza's miscarriage. Her mother-in-law, Kaniz, went to Salma's house to insult Salma for meeting Faiza. Salma started blaming herself for committing such a crime, saying, "Perhaps there was something after all in the concept of *Perchanvah*. Perhaps it did affect women" (Shahraz, 2013, p. 70). This alienation and criminalization of a victim leads to the internalization of such dogmatic beliefs; eventually, the victim considers herself a criminal without committing a crime. Further, in a patriarchal society, there is no concept of sisterhood, as oppressors want women to consider each other enemies. Hence, women internalize patriarchal values and eventually exploit each other.

Besides this, Shahraz also depicts the psychological exploitation of women in the institution of marriage through the marital relationship of Jameel and Rubiya in *The Discovery*. When Jameel discovers his wife's past relationship with another man, his behaviour changes; he starts commenting negatively on his wife. Once, she asked him a question, and his reply was, "What is it to you where I am going? Unlike you, I am not likely to go off with anybody" (Shahraz, 2013, p. 110). Jameel's continuous toxic behaviour deteriorated Rubiya's mental health. "In her mind, she saw a picture of Jamil gradually turning into a tyrant, and she gradually became more and more obsequious because of his discovery" (Shahraz, 2013, p. 111). His toxic masculinity made him an oppressor, as he could not tolerate the idea of Rubiya being with another man. As a patriarch, he wanted control over Rubiya's body, sexuality, mobility, and her past as well.

On the other hand, she was psychologically disturbed to the extent that she decided to end this marriage, as she was psychologically violated in her father's house when they found out about her elopement. She did not want to go through the same mental trauma and turmoil again in this marriage. This realization helped her eventually end this superficial marriage. Bhasin (2019) also argues that Patriarchy perpetuates if the oppressed participate in it, so the oppressed need to raise their voice against violence. Similarly, Octarinanda & Seswita (2020) and Parveen & Qadir (2019) point out the role of women in a patriarchal society where they are considered submissive. Still, they must courageously sustain their dignity like Zainab Bibi and Rubiya. However, these stories also disclose the toxic reality of a patriarchal society where men internalize toxic masculinity through the process of "gendering," which they exercise on their wives in different forms to psychologically exploit women as it is socially legitimized in the institution of marriage.

Cultural Exploitation

The portrayal of the cultural exploitation of women in their short stories discloses the impact of cultural stigmas on women. All the choices women make should be based on the rules of society, even their choice of dress code. *Pair of Jeans* Miriam was rejected by her future in-laws after they saw her in the Western dress code. It was proof for them that she was an independent, liberal girl who would not be a good wife for their son. Her father-in-law said to his wife, "Did you notice what time she came in? She knew we were coming, yet that made no difference to her; what if she has a boyfriend already? What if she takes drugs?" (Shahraz, 2013, p. 50). It demonstrates that Miriam's choice of dress became a parameter for them to judge her character only because she was wearing jeans; they inferred that she did drugs and had a boyfriend. Her choice of dress was seen as a threat to the authority of her in-laws. Moreover, they didn't accept that a woman could have a choice of dress and freedom of mobility. Bhasin (2019) also maintains that in patriarchal institutions, men completely control a woman's dress, which affects women's confidence and mobility. Similarly, Rashid (2021) also argues that Miriam was rejected because she did not conform to Eastern dress codes. Unfortunately, in patriarchal institutions, instead of changing stagnant beliefs, women like Miriam, who rebel against those norms to bring about change, become victims.

Physical Exploitation

In patriarchal societies, the normalization of the idea of physical violence committed by men against women and its practice, facilitated by social institutions leads to the perpetuation of gender-based physical violence. *The Optimist*, *The Discovery*, and *Daughters of AAI* reflect such behaviour and exploitation.

The Optimist depicts the desensitization of gender-based physical exploitation by men. Adnan says about Raheela, "She was soft and tender and so brave; even that first night, she didn't cry or make any noise that indicated I had hurt her, even though I've heard that most girls make a terrible fuss about their first time" (Shah, 2008, p. 253). This narration exhibits how Adnan expects women to be quiet about physical abuse. Men are consciously indifferent towards domestic physical abuse, mainly marital rape committed by them. However, when women muster up the courage to talk about such exploitation, men call it fuss, as they want women to be quiet about such violence as they consider themselves owners of women's bodies. Bhasin (2019) demonstrates that such indifference towards violence by men leads to the perpetuation of gender-based violence. However, Lashari (2023) argues that this acceptance of male supremacy leads to the otherization and victimization of women. On the other hand, *The Discovery* depicts the physical exploitation of Rubiya through the character of her husband, Jameel. Shahraz (2013) says, "Jameel wanted to lash out at her, call her the horrible thing that she was. He wanted even to do physical damage to her" (p. 110). After finding out about Rubiya's elopement, Jameel is so angry that he has this urge to beat his wife, as he believes that he is entitled to do so, as physical exploitation is socially permitted in the patriarchal institution of marriage. Rubiya is treated as an honor, and this honor subjugates her to the patriarchal structure of a family. Her elopement is considered her rebellious attitude towards her family, which has hurt Jameel's dominance (Bhasin, 2019). Octarinanda and Seswita (2020) conclude that such stories reflect how women are exploited today in patriarchal societies.

Daughters of AAI depicts physical exploitation in the form of rape. It is depicted through the character of Fatima; she is a mentally challenged young girl in the story who was twice raped by an unknown man when her mother was at a job. AAI tried her best to hide this pregnancy from village men because "it would be a matter of their honour" (Riaz, 2008, p. 104). This narration shows Fatimah is sexually abused, but still, she is condemned for the action for which she is not responsible. Villagers are ready to kill innocent girls in the name of honor, but they fail to challenge the patriarchal role of men and victimizers (Bhasin, 2019). Qamar & Zuberi (2021) put this legitimization under the category of gender-based subalternity, which gives men from any class the right to exploit women to the extent that the rape committed by them is neglected. These examples are evidence of the fact that this social and institutional legitimization of the idea and practice of gender-based crime committed by men against women is only permitted in a patriarchal framework.

Conclusion

This paper dissects the presentation of different forms of exploitation portrayed by Pakistani female writers. These female writers have depicted different forms of exploitation in these short stories, commonly witnessed in patriarchal societies. Normalization of this violence leads to its reinforcement, which is why this study educates the readers about exploitation and its multiple forms, such as physical, economic, psychological, social, and cultural exploitation of women, along with its impact on the victims, in light of Kamla Bhasin's idea of patriarchy. Moreover, future researchers should choose another feminist theorist or multiple theorists to analyze these short stories. Lastly, new researchers can apply Kamla Bhasin's framework to new stories regarding Patriarchy in different contexts besides the short stories discussed in this article.

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