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Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

**Author (s):** Hina Rehman , Prof. Dr. Noor Ul Amin

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**The Contribution of the Public Sector in Women  
Protection initiatives: A Case Study of Social Welfare  
Directorate Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**

\*Hina Rehman

\*\* Prof. Dr. Noor Ul Amin

**Abstract**

*This study investigates the key challenges and obstacles in the implementation of women protection initiatives by the Social Welfare Directorate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates quantitative data from surveys and qualitative insights from interviews with beneficiaries, community leaders, and government officials. Findings reveal that insufficient awareness, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and socio-cultural barriers significantly hinder the effectiveness of these initiatives. While a majority of respondents reported challenges related to service accessibility and quality, recommendations for improvement include enhancing public awareness campaigns, increasing funding, and fostering community involvement. By addressing these issues, the study aims to inform policy improvements and contribute to the creation of a safer and more supportive environment for women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.*

**Keywords:** *Women Protection, Social Welfare Directorate, Implementation Challenges, Socio-Cultural Barriers, Public Awareness, Policy Improvements,*

**.1 Introduction**

The protection and empowerment of women have become central to policy discussions across many countries, particularly in regions where gender-based violence (GBV) and inequality are prevalent. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, the Social Welfare Directorate has implemented various women protection initiatives to address these challenges. Despite significant efforts, these initiatives face substantial obstacles, particularly in their effective implementation (Khan, 2019). The public sector, particularly through the Social Welfare Directorate,

\*Ph.D Scholar (Pakistan Studies) Islamia College University Peshawar

\*\*Chairman / Associate Professor, (Pakistan Studies) Islamia College University Peshawar

plays a crucial role in developing policies and delivering services aimed at safeguarding women. These efforts include providing shelters, legal aid, and awareness campaigns that aim to reduce incidents of violence and promote gender equality. However, while these initiatives offer much-needed support, their efficacy is often hindered by numerous socio-cultural and institutional challenges (Mohsin, 2020). A key challenge lies in the deeply rooted traditional attitudes and societal norms that frequently obstruct the successful implementation of these initiatives. Moreover, inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and insufficiently trained staff further compromise the effectiveness of the programs. Additionally, bureaucratic inefficiencies and a lack of coordination between various stakeholders, such as NGOs and government departments, create gaps in service delivery and hinder the creation of a comprehensive, unified approach to women's protection (Shabana, Javed, & Adnan, 2022) .

The Social Welfare Directorate of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa is a pivotal institution in the province, dedicated to the welfare and development of its citizens. Established to address the diverse social needs of the population, the directorate focuses on vulnerable groups, including women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities (Ahmad, 2020). Its mission is to promote social justice, protect human rights, and ensure that all individuals have access to the resources and support they need to lead dignified lives. One of the primary functions of the Social Welfare Directorate is to implement and oversee social protection programs. These programs are designed to provide financial assistance, healthcare, education, and other essential services to those in need (Mushtaq & Ahmed, 2022). In addition to its programmatic efforts, the Social Welfare Directorate is actively involved in policy development and advocacy. It works closely with other government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international bodies to formulate policies that address social issues effectively. This collaborative approach ensures that the policies are comprehensive and reflect the needs and aspirations of the people they are designed to serve (Ullah et al., 2023). The directorate also places a strong emphasis on capacity building and institutional strengthening. Through training programs and workshops, it aims to enhance the skills and knowledge of its staff and partners. This not only improves the quality of services provided but also ensures that the directorate can adapt to changing social dynamics and emerging challenges. The commitment to continuous improvement and innovation is a hallmark of the Social Welfare Directorate's approach to social development

(Khan et al., 2023).

As the world grapples with evolving notions of gender equality and justice, it becomes crucial to analyze the effectiveness of existing measures and identify areas for improvement. The choice of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as the study's focal point is deliberate, considering the province's distinct sociocultural dynamics. Through this research, we aim to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical outcomes, shedding light on the lived experiences of women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Hussain & Hussain, 2018). By doing so, we aspire not only to contribute to academic scholarship but also to provide actionable insights that can inform policy decisions and empower the public sector to play a more effective role in women's protection. United Nations (Women, 2020) for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reports disparities in education, health, economic empowerment, gender-based violence, and leadership and political participation between women and men, boys, and girls. The Social Welfare Directorate of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been instrumental in advancing women protection initiatives within the province. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by women, the directorate has developed and implemented a range of programs and services aimed at ensuring their safety and empowerment. These initiatives are designed to address both immediate needs and long-term goals, providing comprehensive support to women at risk. One of the key roles of the directorate is to provide safe spaces for women who have experienced violence. This includes the establishment of shelters and crisis centers where women can seek refuge and receive necessary support services. These facilities offer not only physical protection but also legal aid, psychological counseling, and healthcare, helping women to recover and rebuild their lives. The directorate's commitment to creating a safe and supportive environment is a critical component of its women protection strategy.

### **Problem Statement:**

Despite the establishment of numerous women protection initiatives by the Social Welfare Directorate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the region continues to experience significant challenges in safeguarding women from gender-based violence and promoting their rights. Although shelters, legal aid, and counseling services have been set up, the effectiveness of these programs is often hindered by socio-cultural barriers, limited resources, and inefficient coordination among stakeholders. The key issue lies in the implementation phase, where factors such as inconsistent policy execution across different regions, inadequate funding, and poor infrastructure weaken the impact of these initiatives. Furthermore, deeply

ingrained societal norms that perpetuate gender inequality and violence against women create additional hurdles that the public sector struggles to address. Bureaucratic inefficiencies and a lack of trained personnel also compound these problems, preventing the initiatives from reaching their full potential. This paper seeks to identify the key challenges and obstacles in the implementation of women protection initiatives by the Social Welfare Directorate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. By focusing on these issues, the study aims to uncover gaps in the current system and provide actionable recommendations for improving the effectiveness and reach of women protection efforts in the region.

#### **Women Protection: An Overview**

Women protection refers to the collective measures, policies, and practices implemented to ensure the safety, well-being, and rights of women. This encompasses a broad range of initiatives aimed at preventing violence against women, supporting victims of violence, and promoting gender equality (Ullah et al., 2023). Women protection is a critical aspect of human rights and social justice, seeking to create a society where women can live free from fear, harm, and discrimination.

#### **.1Preventive Measures**

One of the core components of women protection is the implementation of preventive measures to stop violence before it occurs. This includes public awareness campaigns that educate communities about the harms of gender-based violence and the importance of respecting women's rights. Educational programs in schools and community centers play a significant role in changing attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate violence against women. These initiatives aim to foster a culture of respect, equality, and non-violence (AMJAD, 2022).

#### **.2Legal Frameworks**

Effective women protection relies heavily on robust legal frameworks that criminalize acts of violence against women and provide mechanisms for justice and accountability. This includes laws against domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, and human trafficking. Legal frameworks also establish procedures for the protection and support of victims, such as restraining orders, legal aid, and witness protection programs. Ensuring that these laws are effectively enforced is essential for deterring perpetrators and delivering justice to victims (Elahi, 2016).

#### **.3Support Services**

Providing comprehensive support services to women who have experienced violence is another crucial aspect of women protection. These services often

include safe shelters, legal assistance, psychological counseling, medical care, and vocational training. Support services aim to address the immediate needs of victims and help them recover from trauma (Ali et al., 2023). By offering a holistic support system, these services empower women to rebuild their lives and regain their independence.

#### **.4Institutional Mechanisms**

Institutional mechanisms, such as dedicated government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international bodies, play a vital role in coordinating and implementing women protection initiatives. These institutions work together to develop policies, provide services, and monitor the effectiveness of protection measures. Collaboration among various stakeholders ensures a comprehensive and cohesive approach to women protection, leveraging the strengths and resources of each partner to achieve common goals (Dawar, 2019).

#### **.5Advocacy and Empowerment**

Advocacy efforts are essential for raising awareness about women's rights and pushing for systemic changes that enhance women protection. This includes lobbying for stronger laws, improved enforcement, and increased funding for protection programs. Empowerment initiatives, such as education and economic opportunities for women, also contribute to their protection by reducing their vulnerability to violence and exploitation (Ullah et al., 2023). Empowered women are better equipped to assert their rights and participate fully in society. Women protection is a multifaceted effort that requires the combined efforts of individuals, communities, institutions, and governments. It aims to create a safe and supportive environment where women can live with dignity and freedom. By addressing the root causes of violence, providing legal and support mechanisms, and promoting gender equality, women protection initiatives contribute to a more just and equitable society for all (Panzai et al., 2019).

In recent years, there has been significant attention worldwide to the importance of protecting women, acknowledging the necessity for comprehensive efforts to ensure their rights and well-being (Ibrar et al., 2023). Their study took a detailed look at how the public sector, particularly the Social Welfare Directorate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, contributes to initiatives aimed at protecting women. As we delve into this complex investigation, it is crucial to place our study in the larger context of issues related to women's protection, not only in Pakistan but also within the distinctive socio-cultural environment of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

**Objective:**

.1 To identify the key challenges and obstacles in the implementation of women protection initiatives by the Social Welfare Directorate.

**Research Question**

The primary research question to be addressed in this paper is as follows:

.1 What are the key challenges and obstacles faced by the Social Welfare Directorate in the implementation of women's protection initiatives?

**Significance of the Study**

This study holds significant importance both in academic and practical contexts. Academically, it contributes to the evolving discourse on women protection and gender equality by offering an in-depth analysis of the public sector's role, which has received limited attention in existing research. By focusing on the Social Welfare Directorate of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the study provides a detailed examination of government-led initiatives, shedding light on their strengths, weaknesses, and overall impact. This research enriches the existing body of knowledge by filling a critical gap and offering new insights into how public sector efforts can be optimized to better serve women's needs. Practically, the findings of this research can inform policy and practice in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and potentially other regions facing similar challenges. By identifying effective strategies and highlighting areas for improvement, the study can help government entities and stakeholders enhance the effectiveness of women protection initiatives. The recommendations derived from this research can lead to more informed decision-making, better resource allocation, and the development of targeted interventions that address the specific needs of women at risk. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the creation of a safer and more equitable environment for women, not only in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but also in other contexts where women face similar threats to their safety and well-being.

**Literature Review**

Ahmad (2020) explored the role of public sector institutions in protecting women from gender-based violence in Pakistan. It highlighted the importance of legal frameworks and support services such as shelters and legal aid. However, it identified key barriers to effective implementation, including resource constraints, insufficient coordination among stakeholders, and a lack of public awareness. The research emphasized the need for a holistic approach combining policy reforms and socio-cultural change to improve women's safety.

Ullah et al. (2023) examined the impact of socio-cultural norms on the implementation of women protection policies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It found that patriarchal values and rigid gender roles create significant challenges for policy implementation, limiting women's access to protection services. The study also discussed the lack of community engagement in policy processes, recommending more localized interventions to overcome cultural barriers and improve the efficacy of protection initiatives.

Ali et al. (2023) focuses on the Social Welfare Directorate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, this study assessed the effectiveness of shelter homes, legal aid, and psychological services for women. It revealed that despite the existence of key infrastructure, the lack of trained personnel, inadequate resources, and bureaucratic delays significantly reduce the effectiveness of these initiatives. The study suggested improvements in staff training and resource allocation as critical steps toward improving service delivery for vulnerable women.

Mushtaq & Ahmed (2022) investigated the role of policy implementation theory in understanding the gaps in women protection programs in Pakistan. The researchers emphasized the importance of policy actors, resources, and communication in driving successful implementation. Their findings revealed that inconsistent communication between governmental agencies and a lack of clear evaluation methods hindered effective policy execution, particularly in remote regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Hussain & Hussain (2018) analyzed the historical evolution of women protection laws in Pakistan, with a focus on domestic violence legislation. It highlighted the role of both international and local advocacy groups in pushing for legal reforms. However, the study also pointed out that despite these legislative advances, enforcement remains weak due to socio-political resistance, lack of awareness, and insufficient support from law enforcement agencies, particularly in conservative areas.

Jafree (2023) looked into the effectiveness of community-based approaches to addressing gender-based violence in rural Pakistan. It highlighted the success of grassroots organizations in raising awareness and providing direct support to victims. However, it also noted that limited collaboration between NGOs and public sector entities hampers the scalability of these interventions. The study recommended stronger partnerships between civil society and government agencies to enhance service reach and effectiveness.

Dawar (2019) evaluated the collaborative efforts between public sector institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in delivering women

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protection services in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It identified the need for more integrated and coordinated efforts among government departments, NGOs, and local communities. The research also stressed the importance of capacity building for both public officials and NGO workers, suggesting that improved training and resource allocation could enhance the overall impact of women protection programs.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explore the key challenges and obstacles in the implementation of women protection initiatives by the Social Welfare Directorate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The mixed-methods approach is particularly suited to the complex nature of this issue, as it combines the robustness of quantitative data with the depth of qualitative insights, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

### **Research Design**

The study adopts a descriptive and exploratory design. Descriptive research is used to systematically present current practices and scenarios related to the implementation of women protection initiatives. The exploratory component investigates underlying causes and seeks to uncover potential correlations between policy implementation challenges and the societal, economic, and cultural factors that influence these initiatives.

### **Population of the Study**

The population for this study includes three key groups: (1) beneficiary women who have utilized the protection services, (2) government officials responsible for implementing these services, and (3) members of the general public, including community leaders and activists. This diverse population ensures that the study captures various perspectives on the effectiveness and challenges of women protection initiatives in the region.

### **Sample Size**

The study sampled 90 respondents:

- 40 beneficiary women,
- 10 government officials,
- 35 members of the general public,
- 15 community leaders and activists.

This sample size ensures a broad representation of the key stakeholders involved in or affected by the women protection initiatives, providing a reliable basis for

statistical and qualitative analysis.

### **Sampling Technique**

The study utilizes purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique where participants are selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. This technique ensures that the study includes participants with direct involvement or significant knowledge of women protection initiatives, thereby enhancing the depth and relevance of the findings.

### **Data Collection Tools**

This study employs both primary and secondary data collection methods:

- **Primary Data:** Collected through structured surveys, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. Surveys provided quantitative data on the participants' experiences and perceptions, while interviews and focus groups offered qualitative insights into the challenges of implementing women protection policies.
- **Secondary Data:** Includes analysis of documents, reports, policy papers, and records from the Social Welfare Directorate and other relevant sources. This secondary data helped contextualize the primary findings.

### **Data Collection Process**

Data collection was conducted in two phases:

- .1 **Quantitative Data Collection:** Surveys were administered to beneficiary women and the general public, capturing measurable data on the impact of the initiatives.
- .2 **Qualitative Data Collection:** In-depth interviews with government officials and focus group discussions with beneficiaries were conducted to explore the key challenges in policy implementation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research is grounded in the Policy Implementation Theory, which examines how public policies are translated into action. The theory focuses on several key components relevant to this study:

- **Policy Design:** Evaluates the clarity and relevance of women protection policies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
  - **Actors and Stakeholders:** Analyzes the roles of government agencies, NGOs, and community groups in implementing these policies.
  - **Resources and Capacity:** Investigates the adequacy of resources and the institutional capacity to implement the initiatives.
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- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Assesses how well the implementation of these policies is monitored and evaluated to ensure effectiveness.

**Data Analysis**

The study employs both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods:

- **Quantitative Data:** Analyzed using descriptive statistics and SPSS software to identify trends and patterns within the data.
- **Qualitative Data:** Analyzed through thematic analysis, where recurring themes from interviews and focus group discussions were identified and interpreted to provide insights into the obstacles faced in the implementation process.

Data Analysis

**Questionnaire Analysis:**

In the below section of this paper the rescuer mentioned analysis of community leaders and activists, general public opinion, Beneficiaries, government officials , Community Leaders and Activists

How do socio-cultural factors in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa impact the implementation and acceptance of these initiatives?

	Frequency	Percent
Socio-cultural barriers	1	6.7
Bureaucratic issues	4	26.7
Insufficient awareness	5	33.3
Other (please specify)	5	33.3
Total	15	100.0

How do socio-cultural factors in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa impact the implementation and acceptance of these initiatives?

Moderately	2	13.3
Slightly	4	26.7
Not at al	4	26.7
Uncertain	5	33.3
Total	15	100.0

What opportunities do you see for improving the effectiveness of women protection initiatives?

Enhanced training	2	13.3
Increased funding	3	20.0
Better community engagement	4	26.7
Improved policy implementation	3	20.0

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Other (please specify)	3	20.0
Total	15	100.0
How can community leaders and activists better support these initiatives?		
Increased advocacy	2	13.3
Greater involvement in implementation	2	13.3
Enhanced communication with stakeholders	3	20.0
More community education	3	20.0
Other (please specify)	5	33.3
Total	15	100.0

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**Explanation :**

The descriptive data provides insights into opinion of community leaders and activists regarding how socio-cultural factors, resource limitations, and strategic interventions impact the implementation of women protection initiatives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

**Socio-cultural Factors Impacting Implementation:**

The table indicates that socio-cultural barriers, such as traditional gender norms and conservative attitudes, account for 6.7% of the reported challenges, a relatively small percentage compared to other issues like bureaucratic inefficiencies and insufficient awareness. This suggests that while socio-cultural factors do present a challenge, they may not be the dominant obstacle. However, in practice, the persistence of traditional attitudes toward gender roles affects women’s willingness to access protection services, as reflected by the uncertainty expressed by 33.3% of respondents regarding the influence of these factors. Additionally, 26.7% of participants believed socio-cultural barriers had either "slight" or "no" effect on implementation, indicating that these challenges might vary across regions within the province, depending on the local socio-cultural context.

**Bureaucratic and Awareness-Related Challenges:**

Bureaucratic issues were seen as a significant barrier, with 26.7% of respondents acknowledging them as a key obstacle. These issues often manifest in delays, inefficiencies, and poor inter-agency coordination, which hinder timely implementation and the availability of resources. Insufficient awareness (33.3%) was highlighted as another major challenge, suggesting that many beneficiaries remain unaware of the services available to them, which limits the initiatives' reach and impact. This lack of awareness is a direct reflection of inadequate outreach and education programs.

**Opportunities for Improvement:**

When asked about opportunities to improve the effectiveness of women protection initiatives, respondents pointed to several key areas. Better community engagement (26.7%) emerged as the most commonly suggested improvement, emphasizing the importance of involving local communities in advocacy and outreach efforts. Similarly, increased funding (20%) and improved policy implementation (20%) were highlighted as necessary to enhance service delivery. Respondents also suggested that enhanced training (13.3%) for government officials and social workers would significantly improve the quality of services provided.

**Role of Community Leaders and Activists:**

The data reveals that community leaders and activists have a critical role in supporting these initiatives. Increased advocacy (13.3%) and greater involvement in implementation (13.3%) were identified as important ways community leaders could contribute. However, the need for enhanced communication with stakeholders (20%) and more community education (20%) underscores the importance of a collective, grassroots approach to addressing these issues. Respondents also noted that 33.3% of the challenges fall under the "other" category, which could encompass additional socio-political and logistical barriers not explicitly mentioned.

**General Public**

Opinion of general public regarding “To identify the key challenges and obstacles in the implementation of women protection initiatives by the Social Welfare Directorate”.

What challenges or barriers do you think exist in the implementation of these women's protection initiatives?

	Frequency	Percent
Lack of resources	1	2.9
Socio-cultural barriers	4	11.4
Bureaucratic issues	11	31.4
Insufficient awareness	12	34.3
Other (please specify)	7	20.0
Total	35	100.0

How do cultural or societal norms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa affect the success of these initiatives?

Moderately	3	8.6
Slightly	12	34.3

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Not at all	11	31.4
Not sure	9	25.7
Total	35	100.0

What suggestions do you have for improving the effectiveness of the women protection initiatives?

Enhanced community involvement <sup>2</sup>	5.7	
Increased funding	4	11.4
Improved training for staff	10	28.6
Better public awareness campaigns	8	22.9
Other (please specify)	11	31.4
Total	35	100.0

**Explanation:**

The general public's opinions regarding the challenges and barriers to implementing women protection initiatives by the Social Welfare Directorate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reveal several critical obstacles.

**Key Challenges in Implementation:**

A significant portion of the general public, 34.3%, identifies insufficient awareness as the major challenge. This highlights the lack of knowledge and information dissemination regarding available women protection services, which limits the initiative's reach and effectiveness. Bureaucratic issues follow closely at 31.4%, indicating that delays, inefficiencies, and poor coordination among government departments are common obstacles. Socio-cultural barriers, accounting for 11.4%, also play a notable role, particularly in regions where traditional norms restrict women from accessing these services. Interestingly, only 2.9% of respondents cited a lack of resources as a barrier, suggesting that while funding is necessary, other structural and systemic issues pose greater challenges. The "other" category, representing 20%, may include additional barriers such as legal complexities, political instability, or community resistance.

**Impact of Cultural and Societal Norms:**

When asked about the influence of cultural and societal norms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, public opinion varies. A large portion of respondents, 34.3%, believe that cultural norms only slightly affect the success of women protection initiatives, while 31.4% claim they do not affect the initiatives at all. This reflects the complex nature of societal attitudes toward women's rights in the region, where some communities may be more open to gender reforms than others.

However, 25.7% of respondents are unsure, which could indicate a lack of awareness about how deeply societal norms impact the success of these initiatives.

**Suggestions for Improvement:**

When considering suggestions for improving the effectiveness of women protection initiatives, the public prioritizes improved staff training (28.6%) and better public awareness campaigns (22.9%). This aligns with the earlier recognition that insufficient awareness is a major challenge. Training staff to effectively engage with beneficiaries and manage services is seen as a key step in improving the quality of service delivery. Increased funding (11.4%) and enhanced community involvement (5.7%) are seen as less critical by the public, although still important for ensuring the sustainability and outreach of the programs. Notably, 31.4% of respondents in the "other" category may suggest additional improvements such as legal reforms, stronger enforcement of policies, or targeted interventions in specific regions.

**Analysis of Beneficiaries**

Opinion of beneficiaries regarding identifying the key challenges and obstacles in the implementation of women protection initiatives by the Social Welfare Directorate” is as under

Did you encounter any challenges or difficulties while receiving these services?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	18	45.0
No	22	55.0
Total	40	100.0

Were there any issues related to the availability or accessibility of services?

Yes	24	60.0
No	16	40.0
Total	40	100.0

How could the services be improved to better meet your needs and the needs of other women in similar situations?

Improved availability	1	2.5
Enhanced accessibility	4	10.0
Better quality of service	12	30.0
More support options	11	27.5
Other (please specify)	12	30.0
Total	40	100.0

Are there any additional services or support you think should be provided?

Yes	22	55.0
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No	18	45.0
Total	40	100.0

The opinions of beneficiaries regarding the key challenges and obstacles in the implementation of women protection initiatives by the Social Welfare Directorate provide important insights into the actual experiences of those directly impacted by these services.

**Challenges Encountered While Receiving Services:**

A notable 45% of beneficiaries reported encountering challenges or difficulties when accessing these services, while 55% stated they did not experience any issues. This reflects that although a majority were able to access services without major obstacles, a significant portion still faced barriers, indicating room for improvement in service delivery.

**Availability and Accessibility of Services:**

A substantial 60% of beneficiaries reported issues related to the availability or accessibility of services. This suggests that, despite efforts to offer support, many women find it difficult to access the services they need. Accessibility challenges might stem from geographical distance, lack of awareness, or bureaucratic hurdles. In contrast, 40% of respondents did not face such issues, indicating that service accessibility is inconsistent across different regions or demographics.

**Suggestions for Improvement:**

When asked about potential improvements, beneficiaries highlighted several areas. Better quality of service (30%) was the most frequently suggested improvement, emphasizing the need for enhanced professionalism, faster response times, and more comprehensive support. Similarly, more support options (27.5%) were identified as crucial, suggesting that women in vulnerable situations require a wider range of services beyond the current offerings, such as psychological counseling, legal aid, and financial support. Enhanced accessibility (10%) and improved availability (2.5%) also emerged as important, though less frequently mentioned. Interestingly, 30% of respondents suggested "other" improvements, which could include individualized care, better communication, or more localized support centers.

**Additional Services or Support:**

A majority of beneficiaries (55%) believe that additional services or support should be provided. This suggests that while the existing initiatives cover essential needs, they fall short in addressing the full spectrum of challenges faced by women. The additional services could range from improved legal aid, mental health counseling, to more comprehensive post-crisis support. However, 45%



of respondents felt the current services were adequate, indicating that for some, the initiatives are meeting their needs satisfactorily.

### **Qualitative Analysis:**

#### **Challenges and Obstacles in Policy Implementation**

##### **1. Socio-Cultural Barriers**

A significant challenge identified through interviews with both government officials and beneficiaries is the socio-cultural resistance to women protection services. Traditional gender norms and patriarchal values prevalent in many areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa often discourage women from seeking help or reporting incidents of violence. These societal attitudes hinder the acceptance and utilization of services like shelter homes and legal aid programs. For instance, several respondents noted that deep-rooted beliefs about gender roles obstruct the effective delivery of protection services.

##### **2. Resource Constraints**

Inadequate funding and staffing levels are critical obstacles to the successful implementation of initiatives. Respondents highlighted that the Social Welfare Directorate often struggles with limited financial resources, resulting in insufficient infrastructure, including a lack of shelter homes and trained staff. This resource scarcity directly affects the quality and consistency of services provided to beneficiaries. Additionally, many programs lack the necessary financial backing to expand their reach into remote and underserved areas.

##### **3. Inconsistent Implementation and Bureaucratic Hurdles**

Interviewees also emphasized the challenges posed by bureaucratic inefficiencies. There are discrepancies in how policies are implemented across different districts, with some areas reporting successful outcomes while others struggle to provide basic services. Respondents pointed out that bureaucracy and poor coordination between government departments often delay the execution of programs, creating gaps in service delivery. Moreover, the lack of standardized operating procedures across the province results in inconsistent service quality, further hindering the impact of these initiatives.

##### **4. Lack of Public Awareness and Outreach**

Insufficient awareness of available services is another significant obstacle. Many beneficiaries reported that they were unaware of the existence of protection services, and those who were informed learned about them through inconsistent channels such as NGO collaborations or community outreach. The lack of comprehensive awareness campaigns, especially in rural areas, prevents many women from accessing the help they need.

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## **5. Collaboration and Coordination Issues**

Although partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local community groups were identified as essential in extending the reach of women protection services, the study found significant gaps in collaboration. Respondents highlighted the lack of coordination between the Social Welfare Directorate, NGOs, and other government agencies, leading to duplication of efforts in some areas and neglect in others. Enhanced communication and more structured partnerships were recommended to improve the delivery of integrated services.

## **6. Inadequate Monitoring and Evaluation**

The effectiveness of women protection programs is difficult to assess due to the lack of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Several respondents noted that the current metrics used to evaluate the success of initiatives do not accurately reflect the programs' impact on the ground. There is a need for more comprehensive evaluation techniques, including beneficiary feedback and outcome-based assessments, better to understand the successes and shortcomings of these initiatives.

## **Conclusions**

The paper aimed to identify the key challenges and obstacles in the implementation of women protection initiatives by the Social Welfare Directorate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, it became evident that while the Directorate has made significant strides in developing services aimed at protecting vulnerable women, several structural and socio-cultural barriers hinder their effectiveness. The findings highlight that insufficient awareness, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and socio-cultural resistance are the primary obstacles to the successful implementation of these initiatives. The lack of public awareness about available services prevents many women from accessing essential support, while bureaucratic delays and coordination issues across government departments slow the service delivery process. Furthermore, deeply entrenched patriarchal values in some regions discourage women from seeking help, posing a significant challenge to the acceptance of these programs. From the perspective of the general public, the need for better public awareness campaigns and enhanced training for staff emerged as critical areas for improvement. The public also recognized the importance of community involvement, advocating for increased collaboration between community leaders, activists, and government agencies to improve outreach and effectiveness. Beneficiaries echoed these sentiments, with many

calling for better service quality, more support options, and greater accessibility to women protection services. The study concludes that while the Social Welfare Directorate has laid a strong foundation for protecting women, there are significant gaps that must be addressed to enhance the efficacy of these initiatives. Improving coordination, increasing resources, and addressing socio-cultural barriers through targeted awareness campaigns are essential steps to overcome these challenges. Additionally, enhanced training for service providers, greater community engagement, and the inclusion of more diverse support services are necessary to ensure that these initiatives reach and effectively support the women who need them most.

**Recommendations:**

- .1 Increase Public Awareness: Launch targeted awareness campaigns to educate women about the availability and importance of protection services, especially in rural and remote areas.
- .2 Improve Service Quality: Enhance the quality of services by providing staff with better training, resources, and support, ensuring timely and effective responses to beneficiaries.
- .3 Address Bureaucratic Inefficiencies: Streamline processes within the Social Welfare Directorate to reduce delays and improve coordination across departments for faster service delivery.
- .4 Enhance Accessibility: Expand access to women protection services by establishing more shelters and support centers in underserved regions, ensuring geographical inclusivity.
- .5 Foster Community Involvement: Engage local community leaders, activists, and NGOs in collaborative efforts to enhance outreach, support, and implementation of protection initiatives.
- .6 Increase Resource Allocation: Provide additional funding and resources to improve the capacity of existing programs, enabling broader coverage and sustainability of women protection services.
- .7 Promote Cultural Sensitization: Address socio-cultural barriers through community-based interventions and education programs aimed at challenging traditional gender norms and promoting women's rights.

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