

## **Motivational Aspects of Honor Killing: A Case Study of District Jhang, Punjab Pakistan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Honor killing has moral, social, and cultural foundations that determine its perseverance and expression. This is a persistent practice for centuries not only in Pakistan but also in many other parts of the world. However, the focus of this research was to explore the motivational aspects of honor killing. The research was qualitative in nature. Data was collected from 8 respondents from district Jhang by using a convenient sampling technique with the help of local police stations. The findings revealed that factors such as social values and traditions, insults and criticism come from society, personal ego, family pressure, illiteracy and limited knowledge about religion motivate people to involve in an honor killing. Law and justice institutions should implement the honor killing laws forcefully. To change people's attitudes, help should be taken from NGOs, media, and policymakers.

**Keywords:** Honor Killing, Cultural, Motivational, Traditions

### **Introduction**

Violence against women (VAW) is now a matter of major public and academic interest worldwide (Gangoli et al, 2007). In patriarchal societies, women are under the influence of a lot of societal negative power, due to the fact that any misconduct on their part can become a source of shame and dishonor to the male members of their community (Kandiyoti, 1988.) Female chastity and modesty are considered to be essential components of the family's 'honor' (Derne, 1994);

### **Family**

According to UNICEF, honor killings have existed since ancient times and often involve brothers, fathers, and uncles killing female relatives for forced

or alleged extramarital sex, even when they have been raped, in the cause of family "honor." Werbner (2007) reported that the term 'honor' killing commonly refers to the murder of a woman by members usually close to her family who do not approve of her feminine behavior or sexual nature. Another definition explains, "Honor concepts are only another way of understanding the process of patriarchy which is fixed in the assumption of male authority over women and male definition and setting standards for "acceptable" female behavior" (Jafri, 2008).

In the context of Pakistan, "when a man takes the life of a woman or commits violence against a woman of any kind and claims that he did so because she engaged in immoral sexual behavior, often known as an honor killing or violence connected to honor." The killing of an illicit or immoral female and sometimes but not always, of the man named as her illicit partner is intended to cleanse shame, restore honor, and enforce a social code that defines and controls women's lives as per enforced by society itself (Ali, 2001). Gill (2009) argued stated that honor is highly valued in South Asian societies and that families achieve "honor" and distinction via the behavior, acts, and social performances of women. The family 'honor' must be preserved at all costs: family interests take priority over individual interests. As izzat or honor relies on the behavior of women, safeguarding the family izzat can also be viewed as a means of exercising social control over women's bodies and behavior with or without their consent. Consent to patriarchal standards of religion, culture, and class is highly promoted, and how each woman adheres to the value systems ingrained in these institutions is reflected in how her blood and marital families view her.

Honor killings have become a major area of concern in recent years all over the world (Khaskheli et al., 2018). It manifests itself in many ways and at all social levels. Because it is generally tolerated and not even seen as a deviant behavior, many types of violence that are deeply ingrained in our culture are not recognized as violence by the majority of our society. (Hongdao, 2018; Jafri, 2008).

Pakistan is considered the most dangerous country for women where cases of honor killing are on the rise with the highest incidence rates in the world (Greff, 2010). Punjab had the highest "honor" related crime rate (HRCP, 2018). According to The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2014), approximately 15222 cases of Honor Killing took place from 2004-2016. In 2014, the number was 837 women including 75 minors. In 2016, a total of 248 cases of honor killings were reported in Punjab (Punjab Police report,

2017). Honor, unlike morality, cannot be displayed selectively; it guides all actions. Any attempts to recover it are met with resistance once gone. A feeling of respect is only ingested at the feet of elders and from the environment of one's lived life, even if moral behavior can be taught in institutions. It is possible to discern whether or not a behavior is moral. The mythological empire undoubtedly deserves honor. Honor is inherent in the primitive and in nature; morality is the result of civilization and civilized action. (Jafri, 2008).

In view of the ongoing introductory debate, current aimed to find out the etiology of honor killing in district Jhang which is located in southern Punjab, Pakistan.

### **Methodology**

This research opted for a qualitative research methodology. The research was conducted in Jhang, a small district of Punjab, Pakistan. Since 2001, a total of 32 murder cases were reported in this district in the name of honor. Of the 32 cases, data were collected from 8 respondents (who commit the murder) by using the convenient sampling technique with the help of local police stations. Data was collected by using a semi-structured interview guide.

In the present research, various steps were involved from data collection to data analysis. Firstly, data were collected by using the Punjabi and Saraiki languages. Secondly, the data were transcribed into the English language by carefully maintaining the meanings and intensity of the words. Thirdly, themes were drawn from the data. The key findings of the study were then addressed in light of the themes deduced from the data that had been collected.

### **Data Analysis**

After the collection of information from the respondents the data were analyzed by thematic analysis. The discussion and data analysis is given below:

### **Values, Customs**

Values and customs refer to the rigorous rules and regulations that are followed by the members of society. In Punjab, Pakistan the roots of honor killing are underpinned in the socio cultural values of the society. All the respondents of this study reported that they are motivated for honor killing

by the values and customs of the society. For example one respondent argued that;

*“Norms of society motivate me for honor killing. I am satisfied with my act”*

The findings of present research depicted that person who involve in honor killing is called “*Garatmand*” (Dignified) in local language. However, a majority of the respondents told that they don’t compromise on their *gairat* (honor). For example, one respondent spoke that;

*“Honor killing is a custom of society. I got sympathy from society, after killing my sister, people honored me with the title of Gairatmand”*

### **Insult or criticism from people**

In every society, people are labeled with traditional titles when they try to disobey the values and customs of society. In the perspective of honor killing, majority of the respondents of this research were labeled with *Be-gairat* (Shameless) and *Buzdil* (Timid). They conducted this act criticism of people, social pressure and negative labeling. For example one respondent told that;

*“My sister love affairs with a boy belonged to the neighborhood village. I killed my sister because her affair was disclosed. Before killing my sister I have faced criticism from people. They used to call me Be-ghairat and Buzdil”*

One other respondent reported that;

*“It was difficult for me and my family to live with the title of Be-ghairat and Buzdil that’s why I killed a female in my family”*

### **Personal ego**

Ego is a matter of pride for any individual in society. The people with weak ego mostly involve in criminal acts. In society, ego of a person is influenced by the opinion of the people. However, majority of the respondent of this study reported that personal ego was a motivational factor that force them to commit a murder. For example one respondent argued that;

*“I hate those women who involved in illicit relations”*

Similarly, another respondent reported that;

*“The women who involve in illegal affairs should be killed because it is an ultimate threat to the gairat (honor) of men in family”*

Another respondent spoke the following aggressive sentence during interview, he associated the character of woman with *izzat* (honor) of man;

*“If a family loses his izzat (Honor) everything is lost”*

### **Family pressure**

Family is considered as basic component of any society. Socio cultural landscape of Pakistani society is divided into joint and nuclear family systems. Mostly, household decisions of the family are taken by the males. Even, females are not allowed to take decisions regarding their education, job and marriage. When, they try to take decisions about their marriage, they become victim of honor killing. Of the 8 respondents of this study, 6 argued that they killed their female family members because they disobey the decisions of elders, wanted choice marriages or claimed the inheritance in property. For example one of the respondents reported that;

*“I was forced by my family to kill my female cousin because she was against her marriage. She wanted a choice marriage”*

Another respondent argued that;

*“If my family wants, I will kill any of my sister or cousin. If they (females) involve in any misconduct or go against the decisions of the male elders of my family, I will kill them”*

### **Illiteracy**

Illiteracy refers to a situation in which a person doesn't know how to read or write his or her name. In Pakistan, honor killing is associated with illiteracy. People blindly follow the traditional mind set society. Illiteracy blurs their vision and restricts them to follow the modern values of society. In this lieu, a few (2) respondents argued that honor killing exists in society due to the illiteracy. One young boy spoke that;

*“When I killed my aunt, I was in an emotional situation. I know I did wrong but I suggest, honor killing can be overcome by educating the people in society”*

6 out of 8 respondents argued that yes it is true that education can change the mindset of society. In this context, one respondent spoke that;

*“It is true that I am illiterate and involve in honor killing but how can I change the mind set of people in society?”*

### **Limited Knowledge about Religion**

Religion provides a code of conduct to society. The fear of sin and intention to involve in virtue force the individuals to maintain the social order. The findings of this study empower the arguments that a limited knowledge about Islamic teachings was a major motivational factor to involve in honor killing. For example one respondent spoke that;

*“Islam is a religion of politeness. I don't know where Islam prohibits the honor killing. Our society may have limited religious education in this regards”*

The findings of this study concludes that majority of respondents had misconception about the religious teachings. For an instance, they perceived that the woman who involve in illegal relations may responsible to spread vulgarity in society and she simply should be killed. In this lieu an aggressive respondent argued that;

*“There is no provision of love relationships in Islam. I killed a girl in my family because she was in a relationship which is prohibited in Islam”*

### **Discussions**

The current study discovered that land or property in some places, cultural values, and social customs are the main drivers of honor killing in Pakistan. The results of this study are consistent with those of Akhter et al (2001). They concluded that honor killing is a socially approved murder and its motivations come from the socially approved norm and traditions in southern Punjab where it is a widely accepted way of restoring a family's honor. Similarly, Hongdao (2018) concluded that in a strongly patriarchal society, women are often treated as minors throughout their lives and simply exploited or killed on demanding their property rights from their husbands or

father's family due to fact of their financial dependence on their spouse or father.

Present research concluded that honor killing is due to insult, criticism social and family pressure, and the patriarchal setup of society. The results of the current study are consistent with those of Shafaullah (2001). He conducted a study on "socio-economic causes of murders" and concluded that insult, criticism, and family pressure forced the murderers to commit the murder. Akhter et al (2001) concluded that social pressure forced the murderers to commit this brutal act.

This research found that personal ego is the main cause of honor killing in a society where honor is more important than a female. People hate those who are involved in illicit relations. This finding is consistent with the prior literature such as Kanchan et al (2016) concluded that the primary motivation behind these murders is to feed the egos of those whom the victim trusts and always seeks to for support and protection.

Present research concluded that honor killing is due to illiteracy and limited knowledge about religious education among people. These results are consistent with earlier research. For example, Faqir & Atta, (2013) concluded that the causes of honor killing include poverty, the Jirga system's lack of education, and tribal laws. Schacht (1964) argued that Islam is a thoughtful religion that ensures the protection of women's rights and no instance approving of this brutal practice can be found in the Qur'an or in the Hadiths even if religious scholars falsely say so. If anyone involves in this practice, this means he has limited knowledge about Islamic teachings.

## **Conclusion**

Present research concludes that the factors such as social values and traditions, insult and criticism from society, personal ego, family pressure, illiteracy and limited knowledge about religion motivate people to involve in an honor killing. Despite proper laws, the government has failed to curb this brutal act from society. Law and justice institutions should implement the honor killing laws forcefully. To change people's attitudes, help should be taken from NGOs, media, and policymakers.

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