

Exploring The Socio-Cultural Factors Underlying Honor Killings In Pakistan: An Overview Of District Swat

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Abstract:

Honor killings are deeply ingrained acts of violence against women found across cultures worldwide, targeting those accused of sexual misconduct or deviating from societal norms. Despite attempts to advance gender equality and human rights, honor killings persist as a global problem. Pakistan experiences a high prevalence of honor killings due to societal pressures, discrimination, and violence against women, enforced by the concept of honor known as "Izzat," which places tremendous expectations on women to conform. Recognized as discrimination and a violation of women's rights, the United Nations identifies honor killings as a grave human rights issue undermining gender equality. Efforts at national and international levels have been made to combat the issue, establishing organizations and legal frameworks to protect women. Nevertheless, honor killings persist, necessitating increased action and awareness. Challenging patriarchal norms, promoting gender equality, empowering women, providing education, and driving cultural change are crucial steps toward eliminating honor killings and establishing a fairer and more equitable society for all. The present study is an attempt to provide an insight for understanding honour killing and its prevalence at world and Pakistan level.

Keywords: Honour Killing, Factors, Global level, Pakistan Level, Gender violence, Gender discrimination

Introduction

The domain of honour is primarily based on criteria principles and traditions of ethics to drive this principle so that no one can break the trust or misuse it, and it can be seen as a value system. However, honour killings (HK) are premeditated killings of women for real or perceived sexual misconduct and relationships. In such killings, mostly men or relatives are involved in arranging or forcing women into marriage, seeking employment, having extramarital affairs, or experiencing sexual abuse. These types of killings are not new but can be traced back to pre-Islamic and ancient desert tribal cultures. (Iqbal, 2006).

Honour killings are a form of domestic violence wherein women are perceived as hoarding the honour of a man or family and thus have to protect their virginity and chastity. Women are generally killed by their male relatives in order to restore the family's honour because they are perceived to have defiled the family's honour. Honour killing is not limited to women; men can also be killed in the name of it. The origins of honour killings can be traced back to ancient customs that have become ingrained in many cultures. A woman is considered a source of honour for her family according to such tribal customs and has a deep connection with respect and standing in society. In Pakistan, for example, women are "honored as the men they belong to." It is perceived

that if a woman has entered into an 'illegitimate' relationship or has been behaving in an 'inappropriate manner', it defames her family as his guardian and the family. A person's ability to protect his or her dignity is judged by his or her family and neighbors. Therefore, he must determine his power to protect his honour in public. (Syed et al., 2019)

Honour killings of women are part of a widespread patriarchal trend of violence against women that spans race, class, religion, and age. Violence against a woman for the reason that she is a woman, including honour killing, is recognized by the United Nations (UN) as a form of discrimination that seriously undermines women's ability to cherish equal rights and freedom.

Although violence against women (VAW) has lately been listed as a serious human rights issue and a type of discrimination, it has long been regarded as a common, good event and a private matter, even by women, in which any government authority must not interfere. Emblematic violence against women played a key role in maintaining patriarchal power and dominance through the joint schemes of the social world, the education system, and the concepts of religions. (Gill, 2009)

In a society based on honour, no matter how much a woman's activities are valued, a man is characterized as the leader of the family. The person is the protector of his and his family's 'honour'; he has a duty to defend himself against any treatment that may be seen as defiling or degrading by his community. As long as he values them as a resource, the man is supposed to protect his "own" women, whom he considers his property. It effectively serves as a symbol of "honour".

Violence against women is classified into several categories. Some types of violent

behavior by individuals include rape, domestic violence (DV), sexual harassment, reproductive oppression, female infertility, prenatal sex selection, acid attacks, and so on. And some harmful acts based on tradition, such as honour killings, dowry violence, genital mutilation of women, marriage without consent, etc. (Chohan, 2016)

The Swat Valley in Pakistan is known for its stunning natural beauty and is often referred to as the "Switzerland of Pakistan." The region attracts numerous tourists due to its green mountains, meadows, and pleasant climate. (Rahi, 2010). The social structure in Swat follows the typical patterns found in rural and tribal areas of Pakistan, ranging from extended to nucleus and semi-nucleus families. Women are generally respected and valued within their families and clans, as long as they adhere to traditional and unwritten societal boundaries. Crossing these boundaries is seen as a threat to the honour of tribes, clans, and families, which can result in negative consequences for family members. (Tabassum, 2016).

Honour killing is a widespread phenomenon across different states in the world, including Pakistan. In Pakistan, women often fall victim to traditions and customs enforced by dominant male figures such as fathers, brothers, or husbands. (Ullah, 2010). The traditional and patriarchal culture in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa gives men the upper hand over women, confining them to their homes. (Khan, 1982). In rural areas of Swat, where the dominant Pakhtun culture is prevalent, violence in the name of honour and the killing of women to protect family respect and prestige are not uncommon. (Room, 2013). Although the incidence of honour killings in Swat may be relatively lower compared to other rural areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it remains a prevalent tradition that is often carried out without fear of legal consequences. (Khan, 2018).

Despite the existence of legal systems and punishments, the concept of "Pakhtu-Ghairat" (Pakhtun honour) overrides societal norms and legal barriers when it comes to determining the life or death of loved ones. (Room, 2013).

Origin and Prevalence of Honour Killings

Honour killings have been on the rise around the world. The source of honour killings and the command of women are strengthened with the passage of time in various cultural and traditional historical accounts around the globe. In fact, since ancient Rome, violent hostility towards the "sexual expression of women" has been acknowledged, justifying honour killings and taking action against disrespectful women. Men were treated harshly if they failed to do so. Throughout the family structure. Roman law gave men absolute power over their offspring and their spouses. In addition, during the Qing dynasty of China, husbands and fathers could kill women accused of alleged defiling. Punishable by death was the custom carried out by Ameridian Aztecs and Incas with regards to women allegedly convicted of defiling the honour of their families. (Afshan et al., 2019)

The occurrences of honour killing are found across the globe, with variation in their nature and intensity. According to the estimated statistics of the UN Population Fund (UNPF) (2000), every year almost 5000 women are killed in the name of honour across the globe. Honour killings are found all over the world, with different natures and severity. According to UN Population Fund (2000) estimates, about 5,000 women are killed in the name of honour each year worldwide. (Syed et al., 2019)

Honour killing is also related to the concept of purification and restoration of family honour in the event of a violation of

established principles. Honour violence is primarily conceived by the family in response to the perception that women have violated the dignity of their family by crossing a sexual line. Honour killings are often a reaction to the belief that when a woman or girl violates her family's honour due to sexual abuse, it embarrasses the whole family, and thus her punishment will not be a personal matter. Furthermore, majority cultures and societies support violence against women, which is primarily committed in the domestic sphere and especially in the Arab world, in the name of honour killings, usually by family. Honour killings are a global exercise in which two-thirds of victims are killed by their families. Original. Honour killings are a tradition that separates the double standards of a male-dominated society, where killing a girl is an acceptable practice that threatens her family's reputation. (Smart, 2006) Honour killings are a universal phenomenon, found not only in Arab cultures but also in Muslim communities in Western urban centers. In recent years, there has been a sharp rise in the number of honour killings among the Muslim diaspora in the West, including in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. (Xavier, 2015)

Pakistan and Honour Killing

Since women in Pakistan face severe backwardness, discrimination, marital violence, honour killings, parental pressure, and other brutal rituals, Pakistani society has one of the highest homicide rates in the world, with one in five (approximately 1,000) of all homicides reported to have the highest homicide rate in Pakistan. (Syed et al., 2019)

'Honour' is highly valued in South Asian communities. Families gain 'dignity' and prestige from women's behavior, actions, and social performances. Because honour depends on women's behavior, protecting the

family can also be seen as a means of exercising social control over women's bodies and behaviors. Family 'honour' must be protected at all costs. Family interests take precedence over individual interests. Consent to the basic tenets of religion, culture, and class is strongly encouraged, and the woman who adheres to such a patriarchal system in all its manifestations is a reflection of the fact that she is intact with her marriage and blood. (Gill, 2009).

The culture of Pakistan revolves around the concept of "Izzat" (honour), which places immense pressure on women to maintain family and community stability. Any behavior that goes against cultural norms, such as resisting an arranged marriage or reporting sexual assault, is seen as a threat to male and family honour and can lead to gender-based violence. Society is dominated by men and views women as having no right to choose their own partners. (Iqbal, 2006).

Furthermore, in patriarchal societies, women are invested with extremely negative power, as any kind of disrespect from them can lead to embarrassment and disrespect for male members of the entire community or race. Women's dignity and decency are considered essential parts of family honour. The result is systematic control of women's social and sexual behavior. Honour-based violence is a key component of patriarchal order, and violence against women is designed to protect women in order to maintain their human status. (Gill, 2009).

Honour killings are prevalent in Pakistan and are a form of violence against women. Women suspected of adultery or premarital affairs are killed and declared "Kari," while men are killed as "Karo." The decisions to carry out these killings are often made by influential people in the community through Jirgas. In tribal societies, the perpetrators are seen as vindicating their honour. This practice, known as "Siyahkari" in

Baluchistan, "Karo Kari" in Sindh, Tor Tora in tribal areas and KP, and Kala Kali in Punjab, occurs in all areas of the country. (Robina, 2020).

Islam is the main religion of the people in Pakistan, but the country is also home to Christian and Sikh communities that are also Pakistani citizens, and they promote chastity and obedience among females. These same principles are used by perpetrators of honour killings to justify their actions. However, these religions aim to deter adultery, disobedience, and homosexuality through non-violent means. While these religions disapprove of self-help killings, including honour killings, they do recognize the act as a form of capital punishment. (Ullah, 2010)

Honour killing in Swat

As we discussed, the society of Swat is Pashtun, and the people follow Pashtun rules according to their society. Culture never dies completely. With the passage of time, changes come in society. If we look at society, a lot of changes come with time. We know that males do not spend their lives without females, and society is not just for males. In every society, women have their own roles. But this role is different in every society. In Europe, women work in factories, but in Swat society, it is not possible because people do not like it. Now, it doesn't mean that women don't work; they do, but inside the house, if the male works outside, the female takes care of the house. In the past, women did not become teachers or doctors, even if people did not like female education.

Women have no rights in Swat. Islam has given it, but the State of Swat has not given it. Because it was not included in Swat customs. (Room, personal communication, December 14, 2020.) Even the king of Swat said that women have no right to inheritance. In Swat society, property was divided among male heirs; women did not get any share in

the land (Room, 2018). In 1949, in his will, he wrote to divide all his property among his sons, and the daughter was deprived. If someone brought a request to give me a share in the inheritance, it was the king's will, but no one could do it of their own free will. If someone used to give, he would need special permission from the king. Even the land that the woman received as a dowry was not allowed to be sold. If she died, the land would go to her husband or sons, and the daughter would lose it.

But now the situation has changed. Every person tries to ensure that their children, male or female, achieve an education. If a person cannot educate his children more, he must try to give less. (Room, personal communication, December 14, 2020.)

The people are still following their customs and traditions, especially in rural areas where people are strictly followers and have not compromised on their customs.

Honour runs through their body like blood. Women consider themselves honorable, and they show respect to women a lot, but a small step against their rules can become a death sentence. Several women have suffered due to this societal evil. Due to this honour,

several females become murderers without any sin, and their cases are not registered in police stations because their father and brother do not bear that people taunt their sister, daughter, mother, or wife. They like to murder females so that no one taunts them. (Neelam, March 18, 2021). If someone wants it to end at once, it is impossible. Because what is included in the blood takes time to change. Now even this tribal thinking cannot abolish the law. Because people know about the law and what the punishment is, yet they kill. Those people whose minds have changed do not kill in the name of honour. Now, time will be required to implement this law here or to change this thinking.

مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

whoever killed a person (unjustly), except as a punishment for murder or for spreading disorder in the land, it would be as if he killed all the people (of society); and whoever saved him from unjust murder and made him survive, it would be as if he saved the lives of all the people (of society, i.e., he rescued the collective system of human life). Surah Maidah, Ayat/Verse No. 32 (Room, personal communication, December 14, 2020)

Table 2.4.1 Honour Killing Registered Cases from 2011-2018

S No	Circle	2011			2012			2013			2014			2015			2016			2017			2018			Grand Total				
		No. of Cases Registered		Killed Women	No. of Cases Registered	Killed Men	Killed Women	No. of Cases Registered	Killed Men	Killed Women	No. of Cases Registered	Killed Men	Killed Women	No. of Cases Registered	Killed Men	Killed Women	No. of Cases Registered	Killed Men	Killed Women	No. of Cases Registered	Killed Men	Killed Women	No. of Cases Registered	Killed Men	Killed Women	No. of Cases Registered	Killed Men	Killed Women		
1	Saidu Sharif	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	5	4
2	Bariokt	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	2	
3	Kabal	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	3	1	3	2	-	2	-	-	9	4	8	
4	Matta	1	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	2	-	1	-	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	5	4	
5	Khwaza Khela	1	-	1	1	1	1	3	-	2	2	-	1	1	-	1	-	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	-	-	1	7	10	
6	Madyan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	-	-	6	3	6	
Total		2	1	1	3	1	3	3	-	2	6	6	3	4	5	3	7	3	5	11	6	9	8	4	8	44	27	34		

Source: Police department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Swat

The table displays data on registered cases of violence against men and women in seven tehsils from 2011 to 2018. In 2017, there were 1 registered case of violence against men and 1 killed man. In 2018, there were 2 registered cases, 1 killed man, and 1 killed woman. In

2014, there were 1 registered case, 1 killed man, and 2 killed women. In 2018, there were 3 registered cases, 2 killed men, and 9 killed women. In total, there were 44 registered cases of violence against men, 27 killed men, and 34 killed women across all years.

Honour Killing un-reported Cases from 2011-2018

Year	No of HK Incidents	Suicide	Total
2011	Data not exist		
2012	16	1	17
2013	29	1	30
2014	14	1	15
2015	27	12	39
2016	34	19	53
2017	28	22	50
2018	16	12	28
Total	164	68	232

Source: The Awakening a Society for Social & Cultural Development swat

The table shows the number of incidents and suicides that occurred in a particular year. The data is available for the years 2012 to 2018. In 2012, there were 16 incidents and 1 suicide, while in 2013, there were 29 incidents and 1 suicide. In 2014, there were 14 incidents and 1 suicide, while in 2015, there were 27 incidents and 12 suicides. The number of incidents and suicides increased in 2016, with 34 incidents and 19 suicides, and decreased slightly in 2017, with 28 incidents and 22 suicides. In 2018, there were 16 incidents and 12 suicides. The total number of incidents and suicides from 2012 to 2018 were 164 and 68, respectively, with a total of 232 incidents in the same period. (Awakening, 2023).

The Position of Women Overall in the World

Women overall in the world today spend vigorous lives, even enjoying better jobs, good education, and getting the top salaries than in the past. In many states, women control the highest seats and perform the highest-level leadership roles. With the passage of time, enormous improvements have come to the forefront on behalf of women in their education progress, employment chances, literacy ratio, and living standards, which have not been found in the past several decades. Actually, as long as women have good lives, the family will flourish and the nation will run on a progressive line.

In the majority of parts of the world, women live poor lives, which is more than 70%. They have no access to basic needs, and sometimes they face these problems from a gender perspective. Around the world, millions of females spend their lives under the old tradition of customary laws. They have been deprived of their civil and political rights. Many South Asian and Middle Eastern states have sex discrimination in their societies.

Throughout history, women have not found equal rights or places with men. In innocent society, women are considered less intellectually, morally, and physically than men. Even though they considered them their property. In the 15th century, women in Europe had some rights, and in the middle of the century, some material was published that encouraged women to read the Bible and arrange religious activities or services at home. In the 17th century, a small voice of women raised the issue of women's rights, especially for educational purposes, but the vice did not resonate. In the 18th century, the seeds of new feminism were sown, with this, several democratic ideas came to the forefront, but still, the majority of women were attached to their traditional system. (Ross,2008)

In Britain, the first feminist work introduced was Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Women," which discussed educational and political equality the same as that of men. After the First World War (WW), the League of Nations was established. At that time, there was no organization of women that ran with other organizations or even with this international organization. At that time, women in Britain and the US wanted to participate in state political affairs. When they saw the value and work of this organization, they wanted to be involved in its achievement of their worldwide national objectives. (Pietile, 2007).

Women's groups actively participated (WGAP) in the 1919 Paris Peace Conference from different states: the US, UK, France, and

Belgium. (n.d., Women's Empowerment) Five organizations of women were working on different rights for women; some were trying to improve the position of women in society, and some were trying to achieve equal rights for women. With the passage of time, different organizations were struggling for the rights of women, but still, women were not enjoying legal rights. In 1934, the international women's groups focused the attention of the League of Nations (LG) on investigating the status of women. The LG took different steps, even started inquiries about the status of women all over the world in 1937. The committee took several steps with the international women's organisation, but unfortunately, the world was interred in 2WW and an inquiry into the legal status of women was dismissed. (Bubbers,2017).

Charter of the United Nations

The United Nations Charter of 1945 first introduced "equal rights for men and women". Article 1 of the UN charter says, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".

Article 13: "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state."

Article 55: "Universal respect for human rights and freedom for all without distinction as to sex, race, language, or religion. But there was no exact department or body in the United Nations (UN) to work for women's rights. In 1946, the CSW Commission on the Status of Women was established. The CSW moved its activities forward with the arrangement of many proclamations and meetings. The UN established the UDHR, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which included 30 articles and provided equal status to women in all spheres of life. In 1967, the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against

Women (CEDAW) was one of the major human rights channels recognized by 173 states (Boerefijn et al., 2003), and in 1975, the International Women's Year was held in Mexico. After 1975, several conferences were announced in 1980 in Copenhagen, 1982, and 1995 in Beijing. (Ross, 2008). The secretary of the UN declared, "The movement for gender equality the world over has been one of the defining developments of our time" (Edwards, 2011).

In 1993, the World Conference on Human Rights was held, and at this conference, the Women's Rights Declaration was adopted. Very soon after the conference, the UN introduced the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW) and appointed a special rapporteur for this purpose. Different reports have been presented by the rapporteur on violence against women. (Ross, 2008)

Article 16 states that all men and women have the right to marry and establish a family without any restrictions based on their race, nationality, or religion. It also guarantees equal rights to both partners during the marriage and its dissolution. Article 16(2) states that marriage should only occur with the full and free consent of both parties who intend to marry.

Article 18 states that every person has the right to freedom of thought.

Article 19 states that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, while Article 22 guarantees the right to social security and its realisation (Universal Declaration on Human Rights 2015).

In 2000, two UN treaties came to the fore: the Human Rights Committee (HRC) and the Convention on Racial Discrimination (CERD). The Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESOR) pointed out in 1905 that it is the state's responsibility to provide family protection and take initiatives against

related domestic violence. In 2006, the SG of the UN adopted the first inclusive report on violence against women and the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women. Till 2008, the Security Council presented various plans on violence against women in armed conflict. But still, there is a large space in the human rights architecture. The most progressive step was taken in 2010 towards gender equality and women's empowerment when the UN established a women's wing. This action was highly criticised by the all-member states of the UN. (Women's Rights 2014)

Conclusion:

Honour killings are a deeply rooted form of violence against women that exists in various cultures and societies around the world. These killings, motivated by the perceived violation of family honour, target women who are accused of sexual misconduct or relationships outside of societal norms. Honour killings have their origins in ancient customs and have continued to persist despite efforts to promote gender equality and human rights.

The prevalence of honour killings is a global issue, with an estimated 5,000 women being killed each year in the name of honour worldwide. While honour killings are commonly associated with Arab cultures, they are not limited to these regions and have also been observed in Muslim communities in Western countries. Pakistan, in particular, has a high incidence of honour killings due to societal pressures, discrimination, and violence against women. The concept of honour, or "Izzat," places immense pressure on women to conform to cultural norms and maintain family and community stability. It is important to recognize that honour killings are a form of discrimination and a violation of women's rights. The United Nations acknowledges violence against women, including honour killings, as a serious human rights issue that undermines gender equality. Efforts have been

made at both the national and international levels to address this issue, with the establishment of organizations and the development of legal frameworks to protect women's rights.

However, despite these efforts, honour killings continue to occur, highlighting the need for further action and awareness. It is crucial to challenge patriarchal norms and promote gender equality to eradicate this form of violence. Empowering women, providing education, and promoting cultural change are key steps towards eliminating honour killings and creating a more just and equal society for all.

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