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Uncovering the Hidden Realities of Incest Relations in Context of Patriarchy and Culture: A Case Study of Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract: *Incest has been surrounded by mystery, debate, and legal restrictions since its inception. Anthropologists believe that incest is a culturally driven phenomenon. Estimates of the prevalence of incest in Pakistan are highly variable because these differences are mostly influenced by the definition of incest that is utilized as well as the technique of data collection. However, recent research suggests that the incidence of incest in Pakistan may be significantly higher than was previously thought. According to the findings of a study that was carried out by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), incest was implicated in 69% of sexual abuse occurrences that were reported in 2018. According to the study, families that strictly adhered to their cultural and traditional norms had a lower likelihood of disclosing any cases of incestuous rape that may have occurred within the family. The study takes into account the consequences of keeping it a secret.*

Key Words: Incest, Culture, Anthropologist, HRCP (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan), Patriarchy

Introduction

Incest is commonly defined as sexual relations or marriage between individuals who are closely related by blood or marriage and has been enveloped in secrecy, controversy, and taboo (Bimbinov, 2022). Incest has been subject to strong condemnation and prohibition in numerous cultures and legal systems throughout history. For example, the ancient Romans enacted stringent laws against incest, whereas the Judeo-Christian tradition strongly condemns it for religious and moral reasons. These cultural and religious taboos regarding incest have persisted through the generations and

continue to influence contemporary attitudes and laws regarding the practice. (Sharaby, 2019) In this study, an attempt was made to investigate the impact that culture and patriarchal society play in the pursuit of incestuous relationships as well as their ignorance in society. The researcher tried to unfold the incest-related realities through case studies and interviews, this study was helpful in making visible the realities of incest which were uncommon in the families, such as the belief that a woman would have initiated the incest relation is one of the stigmas attached with the incidents, the study helped to uncover that not only females but also males were being abused in the incest

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relations. The objective of the research is to examine if there is any role of culture and patriarchy in incest relations. The primary objective of this research is to investigate the untold and concealed factors and pathways that lead to incest, the impact of culture on the rising number of incidents and ignorant behaviour, as well as to examine how patriarchy reflects on both the offender and the victim. It was quite challenging to collect secondary data utilizing anthropological sources due to the fact that the research is predicated on cultural and male-dominated societies and the impact that gender discrimination and gender-related outbreaks of violence have on incestuous relationships. Because no organization was ready to disclose its information on incest victims and because victims of incest who were residing in shelters could not be questioned, the only choices that were available were snowball sampling and purposive sampling. The researcher was able to accomplish the goals and objectives of the study with the help of the respondents who were chosen. In addition to that, they contributed to the inquiry by helping collect enough samples. Another limitation that the researcher faced during the study was that respondents were not willing for pictures or voice recordings as they kept their incestuous relations very confidential and even sometimes, the only place allowed for their interviews was the house of the respondent's

Literature Review

Due to underreporting, cultural taboos, and legal repercussions, little is known about the incidence of incest globally. According to studies, the reported prevalence of incest ranges from 0.2% to 47.5%, depending on the culture and country. (Holanda, [2017](#)) Families with poor communication, insufficient parenting abilities, and a lack of emotional and social support are more likely to experience incest. (Davis, 2014) Incest may also be more common due to cultural and societal reasons including patriarchal beliefs and gender inequality. (Dahal, [2022](#))

Incest is a phenomenon that is culturally produced, according to anthropologists, which means that what defines incestuous behaviour differs among nations and cultures. For instance, while first-cousin weddings are prohibited in some communities, they are permitted in others. The acceptable social and sexual interactions that people can have with one another within a given society are determined by kinship systems, which frequently serve to perpetuate incest taboos. (Stone et al., [2015](#)).

Incestuous behaviour can be observed in many other animal species, not just humans. Cross-species comparisons have been utilized by anthropologists to shed light on the biological and evolutionary roots of incest taboos (Stone et al., [2015](#)). Studies on monkeys, for instance, have demonstrated that incestuous behaviour is frequently avoided because of mechanisms like sexual imprinting, in which people are more likely to mate with strangers who are similar to their opposite-sex parent.

Incestuous relationships can also result in abuse and exploitation because of the power dynamics present, especially when the parties involved are incapable of giving informed consent or are not giving their assent voluntarily.

Anthropologists have also looked at the methods used by various communities to limit and regulate incestuous behaviour. Religious doctrines and practices, such as the forbiddance of incestuous relationships in Christianity and Islam, serve to perpetuate incest taboos in many civilizations. (Broussard & Wagner, [2021](#)) Other countries' legal and political systems, such as those restricting sexual behaviour and marriage, serve to reinforce the taboos against incest.

Although there are taboos and laws against incest in many societies, incestuous behaviours still happen. Anthropologists have looked at a number of social and cultural aspects, such as poverty, cultural norms, and social isolation that might lead to incestuous behaviour. (Broussard & Wagner, [2021](#)) For

instance, incestuous relationships are sometimes considered as a way to protect family income and property, especially when the family is struggling financially. (Broussard & Wagner, [2021](#))

Distinct cultures have varied types of taboos against incest. Sibling marriage was permitted in some cultures, such as ancient Egypt, whereas it was the custom in other cultures, like the Inca civilization, to marry cousins. (Stone et al., [2015](#)) The prohibition against incest in many cultures extends to second-degree relatives, non-kin, and even third-degree relatives. (Lévi-Strauss, [1969](#)) These cultural differences include a variety of complicated causes, including social structure, religion, and economic issues.

One of the key elements that encourages incest has been identified as the patriarchal form of social organization. Sexual activity between immediate family members, such as parents, siblings, and other family members, is referred to as incest. A patriarchal system is one in which men are in positions of authority and women are under their control. In order to better understand how patriarchy encourages incest, this essay will analyze how patriarchal norms and beliefs contribute to the continued use of incestuous behaviour.

In patriarchal countries, where there is less protection for women and children from sexual assault and abuse, incest is more common, according to research. (Gupta, [2019](#))

Furthermore, patriarchy fosters a climate of silence and secrecy regarding incest and sexual abuse. This is due to the fact that sexual abuse and incest pose a danger to the patriarchal order by exposing instances of power abuse and family disintegration. Victims of sexual assault and incest are frequently stigmatized in patriarchal settings because they are perceived as defective or as having brought shame to their families. As a result, victims may become isolated and silent, with few options for seeking support or justice. (Collins & Thomas, [2021](#))

Men's dominance and control over women's sexuality is one of the main ways that patriarchy encourages incest. Men are frequently viewed as the primary family authority in patriarchal settings, and they have the authority to decide how women should behave in terms of their sexuality. Men may engage in sexual contact with female family members without concern for retaliation or punishment as a result of this power dynamic. Because of this, incestuous relationships can continue and become accepted in patriarchal societies.

Furthermore, patriarchy can foster an atmosphere in which the incest victim is made to feel guilty or shamed for the violence they have endured. Women in patriarchal settings are frequently held accountable for their own sexual behaviour, and any transgression of patriarchal sexual norms can lead to severe social humiliation and ostracism. This might result in a scenario where incest victims are held accountable for their own assault because they are perceived as not having followed patriarchal rules surrounding sexual behaviour.

Additionally, patriarchal civilizations may cultivate an atmosphere of denial and concealment around incest. Patriarchy frequently encourages feelings of guilt and shame toward sexuality, especially female sexuality. Due to their fear of rejection or being held responsible for their own abuse, incest victims may become reluctant to come forward and report the abuse they have endured. This may provide offenders with the freedom to continue having incestuous relationships with family members without worrying about facing consequences.

Finally, patriarchal civilizations can foster a society in which incestuous behaviour is accepted as normal. Any behaviour that jeopardizes the stability of the family might be viewed as taboo or deviant in many patriarchal civilizations because the family unit is highly prized and prioritized. As an admission of abuse could be perceived as a threat to the stability of the family, this could

result in a situation where incestuous behaviour is normalized and tolerated within the family unit.

Methodology

Interviews conducted using the purposive sample method form the basis of the entire study project. The method of sampling known as purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling. In purposive sampling, after deciding the function that you need informants or communities to fulfil, the next step is to go out and look for them. The researcher used a method called purposive sampling in both rounds of the study since there was a predetermined sample frame and the researcher wanted to generate the maximum potential response rate.

In order to reach the targeted nine victims of incestuous abuse for the purpose of gathering their complete and in-depth case study, with the goal of interacting with members of the family, as well as relatives, acquaintances, coworkers, and teachers.

Some of the victims of incestuous relationships were hesitant and reluctant to submit in-depth case studies to the researcher. In fact, they responded aggressively and felt shame and guilt thinking about their past occurrences. As a result, the researcher chose to eliminate them from the study because their case studies were incomplete. The "lived experience" of the individual being studied, as well as their experiences with their imagination, the outside world, and their interactions with

others, are of the utmost importance to the phenomenological researcher. The researcher might decide to investigate the process by which an individual imbues something with meaning or makes sense of the events that occur to them. In the context of our study topic, which is titled "Uncovering Hidden

Realities of Incest Relations in Punjab," a victim may have a different way of thinking about the event than a non-victim person would, or they may experience a shift in their sense of personal identity as a result of the occurrence of an incestuous connection. The phenomenological study helped the researcher to understand the perception of every individual regarding the incident and how they started to perceive their lives and surroundings after facing incestuous relationships. Their reality of life has been shifted according to their own experiences.

Purposive sampling was the method that the researcher employed in both phases of the study. This was due to the fact that there was already an established sample frame, and the researcher wanted to achieve the highest response rate that was feasible.

Many of the respondents were chosen with the assistance of close relatives, acquaintances, and coworkers of the respondents; but, in certain instances, I selected respondents directly from the respondents themselves

The sample size of the study is mentioned below:

Table 1

Research Sample Size

No.	Categories of Respondents	No. of Respondents
1.	Incest Victims	9
2.	Family and Relatives of Victims	10
3.	Teacher of Victim	3
4.	Employee of Victim	2
5.	Peers	5
	Total	29

Source: Field Research

Results and Discussion

This study focused on nine case studies to understand the role and impact of culture and patriarchy on incest relations. 26 participants were selected for in-depth interviews, 9 of whom were victims of incest relations 8 were first-person victims informed about the incidents, and nine were people interviewed in informal ways to gather information and their perspective on the topic.

Incest is a traumatic form of abuse that can have detrimental effects on mental health, including an increased risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviours. To reduce the risk of suicidal ideation and behaviour, victims of incest should receive appropriate mental health support and treatment. In Pakistan, incest is a serious crime that is prohibited by law. Studies of incestuous families indicate a high prevalence of marital discord and sexual estrangement between the parents. Fathers are typically able to compel sexual contact from their wives, even in extremely troubled marriages.

The evolutionary viewpoint on incest provides a framework for understanding the origins and purpose of the prohibition, while the social constructionist viewpoint emphasizes the cultural and social factors that influence our understanding of incest. The psychoanalytic theory emphasizes the importance of addressing the underlying psychological conflicts and traumas that may be motivating abusive behaviour, as well as the possibility of behaviour modification through psychoanalytic intervention. Attachment-based interventions and trauma-focused therapy may be especially effective at treating the psychological effects of incest. Research suggests that perpetrators of incestuous behaviour may have experienced maltreatment, suggesting that the behaviour may be learned through socialization. Interventions that focus on altering abusive behaviour patterns and fostering healthy relationships may be effective in preventing the commission of incest.

During the study, the researcher noticed that the victims did not receive sufficient moral and emotional support from their families and other acquaintances. The majority of victims were not persuaded to report their incestuous relationships to the police or visit their gynaecologists for a checkup. The researcher maintained a positive and optimistic outlook on the behaviour of the victim's family, relatives, and acquaintances, and posed identical questions to both victims and those who could be counted on.

Families from rural areas or lower social strata reacted differently in Lahore and Islamabad. The study found that families who adhered to their traditional and cultural conventions were less likely to disclose instances of incestuous rape. Victims from respectable families did not believe it was appropriate to discuss the traumatic experiences they endured as children with their relatives, especially their parents. The only distinguishing feature was their mother's passive or nonexistent involvement in family issues and the incessant recall of the victim's traumatic experience due to the callous and malevolent actions of sympathizers. The researcher believes that it would have been possible for the victims to have exhibited a different pattern of behaviour if they had access to therapeutic procedures and medical treatments.

Victims felt most comfortable discussing their case with a trusted individual, such as the owner of a beauty salon or the house helper of a house helper. One male victim said he had the ability to stop incestuous acts but chose to participate in them himself.

Initially, the researcher noted that some of the respondents were rowdy and impolite during the entirety of the conversation. However, via participant observation, it was established that they desired to have empathy listening to them as they shared their experiences.

Because of the individual nature of each person's reaction to traumatic experiences, the victims of the incestuous relationships

responded in a variety of ways after the traumatic events took place. Anxiety, stress (psychological, physical, and emotional), rage, shock, dread, and grief are some of the more common feelings experienced by victims of crime. The natural world carries with it all of these feelings and tensions by its very nature.

Researchers believe that the most crucial elements in developing and extending the harmful psychological impacts of incest relationships are public stigma and the honour of the family.

Throughout the duration of the research, the researcher kept an optimistic and positive view regarding the behaviour of the victim's family, relatives, and friends. This helped the researcher stay on track with his or her goals. In order for the researchers to determine the nature of this trend, they posed the same questions to both the people who had been victimized and the people who could be relied upon in their lives. Observing the behaviours of close friends and family members was one of the strategies used in the following studies.

The researcher observed that victims of incest were more likely to receive assistance and compassion from nonrelatives than from their own family members. Deep Dive Interviews were conducted to capture the necessary information. Nine respondents had been involved in incestuous relationships, while eight were the first to receive information. An interview guide was developed for victims and one for those providing support.

The one unique characteristic that was detected in every victim's narrative was their mother's passive or nonexistent engagement in home problems. This was the only aspect that stood out as being particularly odd. This was the one feature that stuck out as being really strange to me, especially the absence of a robust relationship with the progeny. It came as a surprise to find out that mothers who lived in the same house and, in some cases, the same room were oblivious to the terrible experience that their child had gone through or the incident that had taken place.

Another significant insight was that the callous and vindictive actions of sympathizers continually brought the victim's traumatic experience back to mind. This was an extremely crucial realization. This turned out to be a highly significant discovery.

The researcher believes that it would have been conceivable for the victims to have demonstrated a different pattern of behaviour if they had timely access to therapeutic procedures and medical remedies and that this access would have been available to them.

Victims who, after being raped or molested in an incestuous relationship, blamed themselves and remained silent had a dramatically different personality than victims whose friends and relatives supported them and took a position for them by severing links with them. These victims' personalities were significantly different because they blamed themselves and because they remained silent. This was due to the fact that the previous organization had advocated on behalf of the victims.

When the researcher asked the respondents whom they trusted most, their responses led me to conclude that the selection of the key informant was appropriate for this study.

Through observation, it was determined that the victims were most at ease and felt most comfortable discussing their case with a trusted individual, whether it was the only family member to whom they disclosed their trauma or a friend or employee who was also the case's key informant.

The researcher has seen that victims of incest were more likely to obtain assistance and empathy from friends and other individuals who were not related to them than from members of their own families. This was a finding that was supported by the findings of other researchers who have found related results. The researcher believes that this may have been the result of the participants' familial cultural backgrounds as well as their ties with both the abuser and the victim, which influenced the participants'

perspectives and attitudes regarding the event that was being discussed.

Table 2

Age-Wise Incest Victim Targeted in Research

Age (In years)	No. of Incest Victims
16-20	3
21-30	4
30-35	2

Source: Researcher

Table 3

Psycho-Social Response of Victims

Symptoms	Response of the Incest Victims
Anxiety/ Stress	In all case studies
Fear of being abused again	In 4/9 cases
Depression/ Grief	In all case studies
Hopelessness/ Helplessness	In the majority of the case studies

Source: Field Research

Table 4

Moral Support to Incest Victims

Moral Support	Incest Victims
Family/Relatives	Ignored the need for medical assistance and therapy sessions for the victim's betterment and forced the victim to stay quiet in most cases.
Friends	Kept the reality hidden from their friends and provided emotional support.
Teachers	Adopted empathic behaviour toward the victims
Employees	Supported the victims emotionally and financially also helped the victims to become independent.

Source: Field Research

Table 5

Stages of Incest Cases

No.	Stages of Incest	Number of Cases
1	Attempt	9
2	Unsuccessful	4
3	Successful	5
4	Blackmail	8
5	Exploitation	9

Table 6*Types of Incest Cases*

No.	Type of Incest	Number of Cases
1	Non-Consensual	7
2	Consensual	2

Table 7*Attempts of Incestuous Abuse*

No.	Attempts of Incestuous Abuse	Number of Cases
1	Repeated Episodes	7
2	Single Episode	2

Decision Maker of the Family

The question about the decision maker was asked by both the victim and the family member/ key informant of the case. The majority answered that their father was the sole decision-maker of their families but only in the case where the father was absent, i.e., died, lived abroad, or was an alcoholic, the mothers took the decisions.

In the case of Marukh, she answered "When I was a child I saw my foster mother taking all important decisions in the family but when I came to my birthparent's home it was my father who took all decisions but after my marriage, I have seen my mother in law who is a widow to take all important decisions for my husband whereas my brothers-in-law who earn a good amount of money are allowed to make decisions for themselves and their families." However, she has witnessed both types of families where the fathers are the decision-makers and then where females make all the decisions of the household. Due to the death of Bisma's father, the decision maker of her home was her mother and due to alcohol addiction, the decision of Maria's and M1's household were all taken by her mother. These were the cases where fathers were absent but in the case of Yahya, the sole decision maker was her mother in the presence of his father and elder brothers, every decision regarding internal and all external family issues was taken by his mother thus Yahya, Bisma and Maria lived in a matriarchal household.

In the household of Naima, Rabia, M2 and Qasim the sole decision maker was their fathers or other male figures of their family.

The right to decision-making makes it clear that children in patriarchal households experience sexual abuse within their households whereas, in the cases of matriarchal family systems to enhance and increase the sense of control the perpetrators abuse and control the vulnerable individuals in their households which could be seen as denying the control of a female figure upon them.

Leading factors to strengthen the abuser toward incest

The provoking factors towards incestuous relationships vary in every case but one factor which was highlighted by every victim was the patriarchal edge to men and superiority given to men in their cultures.

In Marukh's case, she was scared to talk about her trauma to even her foster mother due to the influence of patriarchal culture and knowing that she would be the only one blamed for everything even for hiding her trauma for a long time. On the other side in Bisma's case, she was traumatized and tortured by her brother to the limit where she stopped talking to people. As finding reveals that when she was asked about the leading factor she said,

"He is a boy that's why! He is not accountable for anything, and he knew that

very well.” She also added, “If my father would be alive, he would never think of even touching me and now he can do whatever he wants due to the trust he has gained from my mother.” Thus, her statements made this clear that in her case, her brother knew that living in a patriarchally controlled culture, he can rape and torture her sister to every limit and even get away with this at the end. He controlled her sister and blackmailed her while living under the same roof as their mother and still, she never doubted her son for abusing her daughter even after the prominent bruises on her body. Stepping towards Maria’s case, she was being accused of the incestuous trauma she faced just because she came from a background where people think that women working in beauty salons are not as good as other women in the context of their character. She was not only a victim of the patriarchal society but also the culture where an alcoholic man was more reliable than a girl working in a beauty salon. She was traumatized to the end where she never bothered to tell anyone in her family anything and then she was shocked when her mother forgave her paternal uncle and agreed on staying in the same house because in their culture women were not allowed to live alone but unfortunately, they were allowed to live with an alcoholic and men who tried to rape his own niece.

Yahya’s case is a little different because he belongs to a pure matriarchal family where his mother was on hold of every important internal and external decision of their house, and no one was allowed to go against her. He was abused by his elder sister but later it changed into a consensual incest relationship. But due to the patriarchal society he lived in, and the lack of power and control over women in his family, his anger and trauma provoked him to use his power of being a man on his younger sister.

Naima, in the name of the family’s honour, was married and sent to the village after she got pregnant with her maternal uncle. Her case along with Yahya’s youngest sister’s case tells us how much family honour matters in

the culture of Punjabi families they were ready to get rid of their daughters or sisters, but they were not ready to live with the rumours about their incestuous relationships.

M2 clearly said that her abuser was so confident even after raping her just because of the cultural and patriarchal support he has because he was a man. He was never questioned even when he sold his wife just for some rupees. He never got arrested and M2 blames her mother for that, she says that her mother forced her to remain silent which gave him courage. Her mother was scared that if people would know what happened to her and that she was raped at the age of nine, she would not be accepted in society, and no one will marry her. This was the only reason her mother forced her to marry his rapist’s son.

The strange cultural setting was seen in the case study of Qasim, where he was not allowed to say anything about his elders and he knew that no one would believe him and instead, he would be considered as a person who is rude, disrespectful towards elders or who shows inappropriate behaviour himself.

He was scared that everyone would cut off their family ties with his parents and even after this he would not be believed, that’s what kept him quiet. It was the societal pressure that changed him as a person and his abuser knew that he could get away with everything easily with the help of their cultural practices and beliefs.

Victim’s resistance and reason for victimizing them

Every victim tried to resist the abuse but there were few who got fortunate enough to get away due to their resistance others were forced into rape or sexual intimacy.

Marukh, Maria, and Rabia were fortunate even that they got away before being raped whereas Bisma, Naima, M1, and M2 got raped by their intermediate family member.

The majority of the victims gave the same response when asked why they were sexually assaulted and not someone else around them,

most of the respondents thought they were the easier and more vulnerable target than most of the other girls around them.

In the case of Yahya, he said "Because I was the younger brother, and my sister knew that no one would believe me when she would shout that I forced myself on her and she used to blackmail me for the same reason." These were the things that Yahya's elder sister told her when she forced herself on him.

Abuser over Victim

As finding reveals that when respondents were asked about their opinion of who would have been believed by the family majority said that without any doubt the abuser would have gone clean, and everyone would blame them.

In the case of Marukh and Rabia, their abuser was caught and that's according to them the only reason for them being believed.

In the rest of the cases, abusers were confident enough to blackmail them, by saying that they would blame them for the abuse and make them guilty for what they didn't commit

Qasim knew that his paternal uncle would let everyone believe his story and everyone would blame him, the same was the case with Marukh who kept them quiet.

Incest in different cultural backgrounds

As the finding reveals that the answer of the majority of the victims was "Yes", they said that the cultures and societies which are patriarchal in their nature give the same power and control to men. According to most of the respondents, their abusers were Muslims and if being Muslim they didn't fear their God then no culture or law could scare them.

Qasim said that he believes that no culture would be as cruel to children as his culture, he has seen his peers being able to share every kind of incident and discuss everything with their parents.

Yahya has seen two different settings around him, according to his experience, he

was molested by a woman and to take revenge he abused another woman, both were his sisters. He says, "No woman is so courageous or confident enough like my elder sister due to the influence of the matriarchal house setting." He also said, "I never felt like a man due to being inferior in all household matters but after the marriage of my elder sister and by-passing years of my mother's hold on the house, I was old enough to change my family settings to patriarchal settings and having control over the woman." He says men of patriarchal societies are less frustrated and mentally tortured compared to men living as inferior beings under the superiority of women.

M2 is of the view that her culture was cruel enough to support and give courage to her abuser which made him fearless. But she has seen that cultural backgrounds matter when we talk about a gentleman and an abuser. She worked as a housemaid in two houses in Islamabad, one man belonged from a village near her village and the other one was from Islamabad, she never feared or got molested by the family whose background was solely in Islamabad whereas, on the other hand, the person who was from the village forced her for sexual activities which were according to M2 even prohibited in religion.

Matriarchal society or Patriarchal society for less or no Violence

Marukh and Yahya have seen matriarchal societies in their childhood still they faced incestuous trauma and became the victims in their teenage. While Maria, Rabia, M1, and M2 remained silent due to the pressure on them from their mothers to forget what happened and move on without telling anyone about their traumas.

Blaming patriarchal society is easy but accepting that mothers play a vital role in the acceptance or resistance of incestuous relationships is important and less discussed.

According to Yahya, Marukh, Bisma, and Maria, Matriarchal societies, or family settings where the decision-making is under the

influence of women create more problems and frustrated and anxious men than in other societies. When men are not given their power and position as the head of the family or are not considered superior being, their frustration and anxiety force them to prove their power which is common in matriarchal societies hence violence is more prevailed and accepted in settings where women are in charge of all family matters, i.e., internal and external.

Victim's Opinion about Men and Society

All the female victims have mainly the same opinion about men and society, they see men as beings who are untouchable and fearless whereas they blame their society and surroundings for the different upbringing of males and females.

Marukh in her interview said, "I don't want to even say a word about them. They all are the same, dirty, ill-mannered, and self-centred individuals. We are living in a jungle with dogs and wolves all around us"

The harshness in her heart and words was due to all the incidents she had faced in her childhood and even in her adult life.

During the interview, Maria stated, "They are the cruellest creatures of God and this society has always and will always work in the favor of men and the way they want."

Reason for Conducting Incest Relationships

There is no major reason which could be quoted as the sole reason for men to act in such a way but in interviews with victims, they all agreed that it's the lust in some cases and mental issues with the abuser himself which provoke him to conduct such immoral act with the consent of the victims. Yahaya says, "It's easier for women to conduct incestuous activities because no one will ever doubt them and if they were doubted, they blame the men included in the incestuous act for forcing their selves on them."

A strange reason was given by M2, she said in her interview, "The reason why I was the victim of an incest rape by my father-in-law who was also the husband of my paternal aunt took revenge from my father along with his lust and sexual hunger for a female body."

Additionally, Maria said, "I don't know why they do so. I think so it is convenient for them, or they think they can get away from it that's why."

When I asked Marukh about the same question she replied, "Lust maybe".

Childhood of Victims and Memories of Their Teenage

In many cases, it was not only the incest relationship that victims wanted to forget but they agreed on erasing all the memories of their abuser in their childhood and present life.

None of the victims, unfortunately, have seen a normal childhood because all victims were assaulted or raped in their teenage or in M2's case even before their teenage. M2 said, "I hope my childhood can come back but I blame my mother for everything she destroyed it by keeping me quiet and I can't forget it till my grave.

In Qasim's case, he is still confused about how he should deal with his paternal uncle and erase the memories of sexual assault.

The interviews concluded that due to a lack of therapies, none of the respondents were able to forget and wanted to erase their childhood for their entire life.

Factors Towards Incest Acceptance

There are many factors that play a vital role in incest acceptance other than patriarchal society and cultural settings.

Marukh said, "Ignorance, trusting them blindly and letting children live without parents for long period at any place whether it's grandparents' house or any other relatives house. Cultural acceptance of marrying sons in their late 20s or 30s makes them sexually

vulnerable which causes abuses around and sometimes within the household.”

Marukh’s statement makes a valid point that our social practice of marrying men of the house in their late 20s or 30s after they start earning a good amount makes them sexually impatient and active to the limit that they forget the boundaries between their family and incest cases appear.

While interviewing Rabia answered the question regarding acceptance of incest and said, “The only factor in my opinion is the avoiding, ignoring and careless behavior of our parents and the people around us towards the incest cases of their own children. It is the reason for an increased number of incest cases and the stress or depression women and also some boys face due to incest.”

She has faced extreme molestation from her maternal uncle, but no action was taken against him, the same was the case with Maria where her paternal uncle was forgiven by her mother and that is why Maria thinks that incest was accepted in the form of ignoring it in her household.

Qasim says, “In my opinion, the only way of accepting an act is by ignoring its causes and effects and that’s what happens in case of incest and so I think the factors are all related to our cultural practices.”

Punishment for Incest Perpetrators according to the victim

As finding reveals that when respondents were asked about what punishment they would give to their abusers if it was up to them, this question was asked to see if they still hold grudges in their hearts and how much they are towards accepting their incestuous relationship.

As finding reveals that when Marukh was asked about punishing her paternal uncle and told her that there is no separate section that deals with only incest-related cases she said, “Even if it was up to me, I cannot punish him the way I wanted because of the relationship

he had with my birth father and foster mother.”

When the researcher asked Maria about the punishment, she would give to her abuser she replied, “To be honest, if it was up to me, I would have given him only and only capital punishment, in the way that every single person of the area would see what he has done within his household which can prevent other men from doing this.” While interviewing Rabia, she said that she doesn’t want any punishment for him because now he has his own family, and she wants to move on in her life too.

When the researcher asked Qasim and Yahya about the punishment, they both were confused and said they wouldn’t want any kind of punishment or to discuss this topic in public.

M2 was confident enough that she said, “Not only my uncle but my mother should also be punished because she kept me quiet.” She also added, “The one who says to keep quiet should also be punished in the same way as the abuser.”

This question helped to make a conclusion that in cases of incest acceptance and forgiveness are easier no one was interested in punishing their abusers.

Difference Between Rape by a Stranger and Incestuous Relationship/Abuse

This was the question raised to observe if the victims see their abusers as their perpetrators only or do they have any kindness towards them due to the relation they have by blood and by birth.

When Bisma was questioned during her interview she said, “ You don't know the difference are you serious, the one who got raped doesn't have to see his or her abuser every day in front of their eyes but I have to see him every day in front of my eyes when he smiles and when he laughs in a taunting way seeing at me and when he gives me that gazing look is the worst thing which could ever happen to me in my own house.” As the

finding reveals that when M2 was questioned about the difference, she said, "I don't think that there is much difference except that I as an incest victim had to see my abuser often without reacting which is a mental stress that could not be explained in words. But on the other hand, I think people don't say to forgive our rapist who is a stranger or a stranger who has harassed an individual the way everyone says to forget and forgive the abuse it in the case of incest."

As finding reveals that when Rabia was asked the same question during her interview, she said that it's easier to forgive when you don't know your abuser but when you know the person it is harder to forgive the urge to know about the abuser and why they wronged you in case of strangers is much more than in my case of incest.

Conclusion

Incest is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon in Pakistan that requires a multidisciplinary approach involving researchers, healthcare professionals, policymakers, and community leaders. Culture plays a significant role in shaping our comprehension of incest and how it influences the prevalence of incest in a

given society. Incest is more prevalent in patriarchal societies with high rates of gender inequality and control over female sexuality. Religion has significantly influenced attitudes towards incest and the regulation of intimate relationships. Religious doctrines and practices can influence attitudes towards incest, but they are not the only factor.

In forming attitudes towards incest, social and cultural factors also play a significant role. Incestuous relationships should be discouraged and prohibited in all societies. The Islamic prohibition on incest is grounded in the explicit teachings of the Quran and Hadiths and has significant ramifications for Muslim societies. In Pakistan, the incidence of incest is heavily influenced by cultural norms

and values, family dysfunction and conflict, and individual psychological factors such as trauma, melancholy, and anxiety. Incest can have severe psychological and social effects on victims and their families, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and substance misuse.

This study focused on nine case studies to understand the role and impact of culture and patriarchy on incest relations. 26 participants were selected for in-depth interviews, 9 of whom were victims of incest relations 8 were first-person victims informed about the incidents, and nine were people interviewed in informal ways to gather information and their perspective on the topic.

Incest is a traumatic form of abuse that can have detrimental effects on mental health, including an increased risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviours. To reduce the risk of suicidal ideation and behaviour, victims of incest should receive appropriate mental health support and treatment. In Pakistan, incest is a serious crime that is prohibited by law. Studies of incestuous families indicate a high prevalence of marital discord and sexual estrangement between the parents. Fathers are typically able to compel sexual contact from their wives, even in extremely troubled marriages.

Victims felt most comfortable discussing their case with a trusted individual, such as the owner of a beauty salon or the house helper of a house helper. One male victim said he had the ability to stop incestuous acts but chose to participate in them himself. The researcher observed that victims of incest were more likely to receive assistance and compassion from non-relatives than from their own family members. Deep Dive Interviews were conducted to capture the necessary information. Nine respondents had been involved in incestuous relationships, while eight were the first to receive information. An interview guide was developed for victims and one for those providing support.

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