

Role of Tribal Family Institutions in the Promotion of Honour Killing

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Abstract

This study is carried out in tribal district Kurram, Pakistan under positivistic methodology with the aim to investigate the role of family institution in honour killing. The results of the study concluded that honour killing is family oriented act that threatens social status and reputation of family.

Key Words

Honour Killing, Kurram Agency, Maliks, Lungi Holders, Spingiri

This barbaric act is carried out inside home as well as in public places by the male family members to restore the lost honour. Mostly women become easy victims of such killings while family members of the male offender usually try to avoid his killing by providing him with protection. Creating awareness among tribal people about direction and magnitude of human loss, promotion of the teachings of Islam about human life and liberty and replacing the concept of bravery with cowardice regarding honour killing were presented as some of the recommendations.

Introduction

Various concepts like respect, high esteem, reputation, reverence and good name etc., come under the domain of honour (The Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). Honour could be viewed as a value system that is mainly associated with the normative orders and traditions which are based on communal rules of ethical principles to run the system in a manner that nobody can break or abuse the trust (Ahmad & Din, 2013; Gill, Begikhani & Hauge, 2012). However, killing in the name of honour is a planned murder of women either for actual or perceived illegitimate sexual behaviours and relationship (Hassan, 1999; Roberts, Campbell & Lloyd, 2013). In such killing, mostly the male family members or relatives are involved due to the reason of women's refusal of an arranged or forced marriage, desires for seeking employment, extra marital affairs, fallen victim to a sexual assault and rape (Gill, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2004; Joseph & Nagmabadi, 2003; Kogacioglu, 2004; Onal, 2008 & The Free Dictionary, 2007). Such killing is not limited to the present but it can be traced back to Pre-Islamic epoch and ancient desert tribal cultures (Hussain, 2006).

The occurrences of honour killing are found across the globe with variation in its nature and intensity (Amnesty International, 2008; Eck, 2003; Faqir, 2001; Kakakhel, 2005). According to the estimated statistics of United Nations Population Fund (2000), every year almost 5000 women are killed in the name of honour across the globe while Pakistani society is marked with the highest incidence rate of such killings as one-fifth (almost 1000) of the total cases took place in the country (Ullah, 2010). Greiff (2010) also proclaimed that the highest rate of honour killing is found in Pakistan as women in Pakistan are severely disadvantaged, discriminated and subjected to marital violence, honour killing, parental suppression and other barbaric customs (Bennett, 2007). Several socio-cultural factors

motivate honour based murders and among these desires for preservation of family or communal honour is one of them (Almosaed, 2004). The historical roots of honour killing is also attached to the ancient family institution as illustrated in a Report on Combating Honour Crimes in Europe (2012) that elaborates that honour crimes were found in the Babylonian times (1750 B.C), where women's virginity was considered as the property of the entire family. Moreover, Gill (2006) stated that honour crimes took place within the domain of familial frame work and traditionally it is used in the private context as a pretext for non-intervention which is outside the scope of legislative reforms. Familial honour is highly valued and must be preserved at all costs,

which relies on the behaviour of women. Turner (1995) examined that honour crimes are the feelings of shame by the family members and these feelings arises when men's control over women is threatened. Thus this act of honour killing is not an individual act but a collective crime where family and community participate in killing of the offenders to restore the family or communal honour (Mojab, 2004).

Honour killing of a woman is also associated with the concept of purification and restoration of family honour in case of violation of the established norms related honour (Campbell, 1964). Sev'er and Yurdakul (2001) and Korteweg (2012) stated that honour based violence is primarily initiated by family in response to the perception that women has violated the honour of her family by crossing a boundary of sexual modesty. Similarly, Jafar (2005) maintained that honour killing is most often a response to the belief that when a woman or girl violates her family honour usually because of sexual impropriety which brings shame to the entire family members and thus its penalty would be no more a personal or private matter. Moreover, majority cultures and societies endorsed violence against women which predominantly happens in domestic premises and especially in Arab world mostly honour killing is carried out with family collaboration (Chesler, 2010). Honour killing is a worldwide exercise in which two-thirds of the victims were killed by their families of origin. El Saadawi (1998) explained that honour killing is a practice that divulges the double standards of male dominated society, where killing of a girl is an acceptable norm that tarnishes her family's reputation.

Research Methods and Procedures

This study was conducted in Tribal District Kurram, Pakistan with the aim to investigate the role of family institution with respect to honour killing. The researcher adopted quantitative tools of data collection and used Likert scale based questionnaire ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree to collect information from the respondents. A sample size of 377 respondents from 'Maliks/Lungi holders/Spingiri' (Tribal Leaders) were proportionally selected from three tehsils of the study universe i.e. Satta, Alizai and Parachinar while using simple random sampling technique. The collected data was further analyzed and presented at univariate and bivariate levels of analysis. At univariate level, the data was presented with the help of frequency and percentage distribution, while at bivariate level an association between dependent variable (honour killing) and independent variable (Family Institution) was determined with the help of Chi-Square test statistics.

Study Results

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Chi-square statistics
Threat to family social status	262(69.5)	65 (17.2)	31 (8.2)	16 (4.2)	3 (0.8)	P=0.005
Restoration of family honour	268(71.1)	89 (23.6)	10 (2.7)	9 (2.4)	1 (0.3)	P=0.05
Family reputation	29 (7.7)	45 (11.9)	86 (22.8)	82 (21.8)	135(35.8)	P=0.012
Explicit teaching of honour related norms	280(74.3)	30 (8.0)	31 (8.2)	33 (8.8)	3 (0.8)	P=0.390
Elimination of violator inside the home	39 (10.3)	136(36.1)	177 (46.9)	20 (5.30)	5 (1.3)	P=0.164
Elimination of violator publically	31 (8.2)	126(33.4)	200 (53.1)	20 (5.3)	00 (0.0)	P=0.100
Perpetrator is directly related to victim	271(71.9)	78 (20.7)	28 (7.4)	00 (0.0)	00 (0.0)	P=0.010
Safe guarding male violator by family	49 (13.0)	203(53.8)	79 (21.0)	27 (7.2)	19 (5.0)	P=0.000

Discussion

The study results disclosed that majority of the respondents i.e. 262 (69.5%) strongly endorsed that honour killing is a threat to family's social status as honour killing is a family oriented act. Honour killing is a visible and latent act of brutality, carried out both hidden and publicly mostly by the male members. Its only aim is the restoration of the lost honour, which a family believes to have been lost due to the shameful act on part of that family's

woman. This act is conspicuously meant for fading away the shame, which was associated to the family due to sinful act (adultery) of a woman with a man outside the wedlock. The main aim of exercising it is based on the restoration of a family honour (Siddiqi, 2005; Wikan, 2008). The table further disclosed a significant relationship ($P=0.005$) between threat to family's social status and honour killing. It might be the reason that in tribal society, dishonouring threatens the family reputation in either way. Making the dishonouring act public forces a family to take revenge of the dishonour and if the offender is left free, makes that particular family more vulnerable in terms of enjoying prestige. It could be concluded that honour is a very sensitized issue and the relative social standing of a family is always at stake. *Pakhtun* tribal culture is completely enshrined with the concept of taking to kills the offender, specially having found in an illicit relationship. Putting to task the offender is prime and utmost responsibility as it contains the resurgence of lost social standing. These findings were in line to the conclusion of Sheri and Stritof (2006) and Warraich (2005) who disclosed that violation of honour norms by a woman brings dishonour not only to the family but also to the whole tribe or clan. Family status is truly maintained through show of force. Family harmony is embodied in family reputation, having no space for dishonour in its social and cultural dynamics (Siddiqi, 2005; Weiss, 1998).

Further, a majority of the respondents i.e. 268 (71.1%) strongly agreed with the restoration of family honour through killing in the name of honour. These could be attributed to the prevalence of killing psyche, whose only objective was restoring the honour at the cost of human lives, especially the woman life. Any woman, who violate the familial and tribal norms, by presenting their chastity and virginity to an alien male, are subjected to killing. Such violence could only be observed in practice, where patriarchal norms are prevalent (Campbell, 1964; Knudsen, 2004). Similarly, a significant relationship ($P=0.05$) has been observed between restoration of family honour and honour killing. These results suggested that honour of the family may be restored by taking actions in line with the excepted customary norms. Such agreed upon customary principles in majority cases end with the killing of the offenders. The nature and dynamics of tribal society represent close inter-personal interaction and relationships. The most prominent ideals inside the tribal *Pakhtun* culture are linked with the concept of chivalry and bravery, which in return generate the staunchest and uncompromising worldviews of tribal people, especially in dealing matters related with respect and honour. If someone loses these high ideals which are closely tied with honour and respect of a person or family, they need to be restored at any cost. Moreover, if a person challenges these highest societal ideals in terms of defaming or keeping at stake the honour and reputation of a family must be re-compensated in terms of killing the offenders. Secondly, the structural dynamics of tribal society denote extreme complete superiority over the marginalized segments of the women folk. By and large, the conception of honour might be easily correlated with the women body through which male considers himself as the custodian of her honour. These findings were in conformity to Campbell (1964) who contended that honour killing of a woman may be considered as a practice of purification and restoration of honour. Hence, such practice is followed repeatedly without attaching any observation or questions by the community members. Moreover, victims of honour violence are subjected to target killings, as their behaviour is in total negation to behavioural and societal norms (Bishara, 2003; Mansur et al., 2009).

In contrast, the study results emanate that 135 (35.8%) respondents strongly discarded the statement that family reputation promotes honour killing. It was discovered that honour killing was based in family honour restoration. However, the religion of Islam, which was a predominant religion in the study area, had no preaching towards restoring family honour through such act (Shapiro, 2010). But honour killing had a deep root in family reputation as it is strongly associated to a girl (s) reputation (Mernissi, 2003). Although at univariate the respondents' responses discarded the notion, however; at bivariate level a significant relationship ($P=0.012$) was extracted between family reputation and honour killing. These results suggested that families with high reputation in the tribal society were more bound to observe the customs and traditions in its entirety. They were expected to be strictly adhering to the pure tribal culture as these cultural traits are identified and recognized as symbols of high morality and status. In response to their family reputation and fellow tribesmen's expectations, they practice these emblems to observe honour related norms. It could further be inferred that the family reputation is the utmost priority and compromising it is tantamount to putting the reputation at stake. Forcing to integrate the family reputation at all stakes is emblem of bravery in *Pakhtun* culture (Saddiqi, 2005).

Moreover, majority of the respondents i.e. 280 (74.3%) strongly agreed with explicit teachings of honour related norms in the study universe. These findings emanated that act of carrying out honour killing had direct and explicit bearing upon human behaviour and social life in the study area. Contrary to univariate results, a non-significant association ($P=0.390$) observed between explicit teaching of honour related norms and honour killing. It might be the reason that teaching of honour related norms was not explicit in the families as it was considered inappropriate to make it an issue of public debate. Furthermore, it was generally observed that parents, especially the fathers keep distance from their children. This approach was believed to be appropriate in tribal setup under the prevailing gerontocracy. This could also be attributed to strong authoritative structure of tribal society, where

both children and women are treated equally in terms of subordination. However, these results were repugnant to Wikan (2008) who contended that families teach honour norms to their children from early age. Moreover, the rigid social stratification with lesser freedom of expression usually lands the people into extreme violence and killing (Sever & Yurdakul, 2001; Solomon, 1992).

Further, the results showed that majority of the respondents i.e. 177 (46.9%) and 200 (53.1%) remained undecided about the elimination of violator inside the home and publically respectively. It could be assumed from these findings that elimination of violators is essential, no matter how it is to be carried out either in public or inside the four walls of a house etc. These findings are in consonance with the inferences of Davies, et.al. (2007) who concluded that there is no any particular point which is chosen for honour killing, rather its only purpose is putting the offenders to task. Similarly, a non-significant association ($P=0.164$ and $P=0.100$) extracted between elimination of violator inside the home and elimination of violator publically with honour killing respectively. These results suggested that practicing honour killing was neither limited to home nor public places but it occurs both inside and outside of the home. Honour killing in tribal areas is not carried out with the intentions to make it latent or publicize the same for awareness of the outsiders regarding the defamation of the family status and reputation. Rather it is believed to be the fulfilment of a cultural obligation. These findings were similar to the conclusions of Bourdieu (1977) who stated that honour killing is a live phenomenon taking place in public. It is a sign of masculinity to have control over their women through aggression and recklessness (Connel & Messerschmidt, 2004).

Moreover, majority of the respondents i.e. 271 (71.9%) strongly agreed with the notion that perpetrator is directly related to victim. These findings disclosed that all members, irrespective of their relation with the victim, had to carry out honour killing. Every member, including close kin like parents and brothers etc. were directly involved in honour killing. These members may also include the support of female members as well (Hadidi, Kulwicki & Jahshan, 2001; Sever & Yurdakul, 2001). Similarly, a significant relationship ($P=0.010$) was found between direct relation of the perpetrators with victim and honour killing. It could be inferred that the perpetrators of honour killing were directly related to the offenders. *Pakhtun* tribal structure is highly integrated, leaving little fissures for an outsider to creep in. In most of the cases involvement in honour related issue as perpetrator is not one but belonging to their own social system. In such a situation, it is the responsibility of the family members to restore their honour by putting to task the perpetrator along with the offenders. Similar findings were also derived by Mojab (2002) while concluding that honour killing takes place within the family by close relatives (Bedell, 2004; Ahmetbeyzade, 2008).

Further, most of the respondents i.e. 203 (53.8%) had agreement with the statement that male violators are protected by their relative family members. In consonance to these results, a highly significant association ($P=0.000$) explored between safeguarding male violator by their own family members and honour killing. These results portrayed an interesting picture of tribal society in this specific context. Family members of the male offender usually try to avoid his killing by providing him with protection. The possibility of providing protection to male offender could be due to the chances of later reconciliation through '*Jirga*' by invoking the only mechanism such as '*Swara*' (a woman marriage in compensation to resolve the feud). Furthermore, the foundation of *Pakhtun* tribal organization depicted strong dominance of males over females. In this type of social foundation, the women have very restricted role and responsibilities. Thus male is less observable and accountable than women in tribal society. In matters of honour, more social pressure and social regulation of the society rests on the female family members to maintain their lost honour. The family members of the male offender largely endeavouring to provide shield to the offender and they never wish to get him punished so striving for his absolving from punishment. *Pakhtun* culture considers man superior over woman in the pretext of prevailing patriarchy. Moreover, they are also considered a force of deterrence and attack to prevent family related honour (Gill, Begikhani, Hauge, 2012).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that family in tribal society with regard to high social status and reputation were more bound to observe customs and traditions in its entirety and its members are expected to strictly adhere tribal culture, identified and recognized as symbols of high morality and status. Although, honour killing threatens a family's social standing within the society and it is generally believed that such shameful act on part of the women beyond the established codes of honour degrades family reputation. However, its only aim is the restoration of the lost honour and to maintain the relative social standing of a family embodied in its reputation in the socio-cultural dynamics in line with the expected customary norms. Further by and large, the conception of honour is easily correlated with the women body through which male considers himself as the custodian of her honour. Most of the victims of honour killing are women and the offenders of killing are male family members and relatives as it is the responsibility of the male family members to restore their honour by putting to task the perpetrator along with the offenders. Moreover, there is no any particular point which is chosen for honour killing, rather its only purpose

is putting the offenders to task. The same brutal act of killing was neither limited to home nor public places but it occurs both inside and outside of the home focusing on killing of the perpetrators and not the place. The male violators are protected by their relative family members by avoiding his killing and providing him with protection. The family members of the male offender largely endeavouring to provide shield to the offender and they never wish to get him punished so strive for his absolving from punishment. Tribal people need to be educated over the direction and magnitude of human loss and this ultra-judicial killing should be dealt with in light of the teachings of Islam and state constitution. The concept of bravery needs to be revisited by replacing it with the virtues of decency and forgiveness, and to revitalize the social life of a family on the grounds of social equality. Gender indiscrimination could ensure the women to gain their long desired plight.

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