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HONOR KILLING: ITS CULTURAL CAUSES AND SOCIO- LEGAL CONTROLLING MECHANISM IN PAKHTUN SOCIETY

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Abstract
The current study examined honor killing, paying special emphasis to its cultural origins and the socio-legal control mechanisms. 291 participants were randomly selected for the study, which was limited to three villages in Union Council Bandagai in District Dir Lower. The results showed a strong and very significant (P=0.000) correlation between honor killing and the propensity to give in to social pressure, demonstrating how communal expectations frequently override individual free will and drive people to commit such crimes. Honor killing was found to be associated with pressure from close social circles that promote aggression in another very significant (P=0.000) way. Emotional reactions are greatly influenced by these proximate networks, which often prompt the concerned relatives to carry out honor killings. Additionally, the research revealed a strong correlation (P=0.000) between honor killing and the pervasive sense of rejection or contempt toward the offender's family. Families are frequently forced to carry out these murders in an attempt to repair their tarnished reputations due to this hostile feeling. Here is the revised version of the passage you gave, with the meaning retained but the resemblance diminished and the language made more natural: Honor killing and the perceived social boycott of the offender's family because of the harm to collective honor were both found to be extremely significant (P=0.000). Such activities were found to be strongly motivated by the experience or threat of exclusion. Family honor concerns were especially noticeable when accusations of infidelity were made, as the reaction frequently became combative. Honor killing and emotions of shame that caused psychological suffering for the accused's family were shown to be significantly correlated (P=0.000). Honor killings were frequently carried out by families in an effort to preserve their reputation and escape such disgrace.

1. INTRODUCTION

A collection of social rules that establish one's role and obligations within a society and govern individual behavior might be characterized as honor. A person's worth, regardless of gender, is mostly

determined by how other people see them in societies where honor is highly prized [1]. Women have historically been closely associated with the concept of honor, which is often associated with defending their sexuality. This required married women to abstain from extramarital encounters and single women to keep their virginity. However, honor is defined differently in different civilizations. Certain customs allow the killing of women in the name of honor if it is believed that actions such as choosing one's own marriage or in cases of sexual assault have harmed the family's reputation [2].

When family members or relatives murder someone because they believe the victim has brought dishonor to the family or community, this is known as honor killing. These killings have mostly targeted women and girls, although they have also happened to men [3]. Honor killing occurs when a woman is murdered by a family member or intimate partner because they believe she has brought shame to the family. The mere suspect or charge of dishonorable behavior is often sufficient justification for such assault [4].

Amnesty International defines honor killing as an unlawful practice wherein family members punish women for suspected sexuality or marriage-related offenses [5]. It is not only a problem for women; in societies where honor killing is still prevalent, men are often targeted. For instance, it is estimated that in 2002, 245 women and 137 men were killed in Pakistan's Sindh province as a result of the Karo Kari custom [6].

Honor killing is when a male relative murders a female relative because he believes she has degraded the family in an attempt to get back the respect he has lost. Women may become victims when they refuse an arranged marriage, have extramarital affairs, talk to unrelated men, or even after being sexually assaulted. Many times, a simple suspicion or accusation is enough justification for murder without any further evidence. The offenders are typically dads, brothers, sons, or uncles, while female family members frequently offer consolation or encouragement. When taken before a court, offenders usually get little penalty after confessing to the offense and arguing that they have protected family honor. Families sometimes intentionally choose a young son to commit the murder in order to receive a lighter sentence [7].

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF), an estimated 5,000 women and girls are killed each year by their relatives in the name of honor. However, several women's rights groups in the Middle East and South Asia believe that the actual number may be nearly four times higher [8].

In Pukhtoon society, the honor code is embodied in *Pushtunwali*, which revolves around a set of abstract values centered on honor. Property, wealth, and related possessions are considered integral to a man's honor, while women are also regarded as a vital element of that honor for the individual, his family, and his tribe. Upon marriage, a woman's guardianship and associated rights shift from her father to her husband. Family honor is deeply tied to the conduct of women, making the preservation of their purity and virginity essential. Any accusation or act deemed "shameful" is viewed as a violation of collective order, as it challenges the ownership rights claimed by men over women's bodies. Women are not to be exchanged outside the prescribed customs established by men, and chastity is treated as the highest virtue. If a woman is believed to have engaged in sexual activity outside accepted norms, she is seen as losing her value as a respectable entity and may consequently be deprived of her right to life [9].

No parallel data are available from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), where honor killing is believed to have originated as a tribal custom (Amnesty International, 1999). However, it is often argued that due to entrenched male dominance, limited state authority in rural regions, and the strict honor codes embodied in *Pushtoonwali* (the Pukhtoon code of honor), such killings occur more frequently and with greater severity than in other parts of the country. Provincial police records indicate that 1,844 women were killed in the name of honor, with the majority of cases—1,383—reported in tribal areas, where influential ethnic groups hold considerable political autonomy [10].

In Pakistan, it has been argued that police officers and judges have at times supported honor killings under the pretext of family honor. In many instances, authorities have failed to take action against perpetrators, even in cases where the killings were openly admitted. Judicial responses have also been criticized for reinforcing gender discrimination

rather than ensuring equality, with several rulings effectively endorsing the murder of women deemed "dishonorable" (Amnesty International, 1999). Most alleged honor killing cases do not reach the courts, and when they do, the accused often escape conviction or receive minimal sentences, typically three to four years of imprisonment. A review of 150 reported cases revealed that judges dismissed claims of honor-related motives in all but eight cases, resulting in light penalties for the majority of perpetrators [11].

Materials and Methods

The scope of the study was confined to Union Council Bandagai of Tehsil Timergara, with data specifically gathered from three selected villages: Shagokas, Bandagai, and Bajawaro. The respondents consisted of members of the general population residing in these areas. Secondary data indicated that the study area contained approximately 1,200 households. Since the research addressed multiple variables, the sample size was determined following Sekaran (2003), which suggests that a sample of 291 respondents is adequate for a population of this size.

In order to gather primary data, a well-organized questionnaire was created, to cover every variable in the research. To make sure it was pertinent to the study's goals, the instrument was pre-tested and revised where necessary. Data were gathered directly by the researcher using an investigative approach. For analysis, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed. To enhance clarity, the findings are presented in the form of percentages and frequencies.

The Chi-square (χ^2) test was applied to examine the association between dependent and independent variables. The calculation followed the procedure described by Tai (1978: 353).

$$(\chi 2) \quad = x^2 = \sum_{j=1}^{j}\sum_{j=1}^{k} \frac{(oij - eij)^2}{eij}$$

Where

($\chi 2$) represents Chi-square analysis for two variables in a category

oij is the observed frequencies at the ith row and jth column in the cross-classified category

eij shows the anticipated frequency for the same category, presuming that the variables being studied do not correlate

Results and Discussions

Respondents' perceptions regarding the role of social pressure in honor killing are presented in Table 10. The findings indicate that 87.3% believed individuals commit honor killings to satisfy societal expectations. Likewise, 87.6% acknowledged the influence of close social networks in exerting pressure for such acts, while 86.6% stated that communities tend to show disrespect toward families accused of adultery. In addition, 69.1% reported that families associated with dishonor are often excluded from mainstream society. Furthermore, 89.7% agreed that negative discussions within the community push such families toward social marginalization, sometimes leading to suicidal tendencies. A large majority, 90.7%, also confirmed that male relatives of the accused are labeled as cowards if they fail to punish or act against the alleged offender.

In conclusion, prevailing social pressures rooted in established norms and values regulate the conduct of individuals and groups, and honor killing is one manifestation of this control. Deviation from cultural expectations often leads to severe outcomes, including social and economic exclusion of the violators and a loss of status within the community. Under such circumstances, families associated with adultery frequently perceive the act of killing the accused as the only means of restoring their social standing and dignity.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Their Perceptions of Social Pressure

S.No	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
1	People carry out honor killings in accordance with societal norms.	254(87.3)	5(1.7)	32(11.0)
2	A person's social circle, family, clan, and village force them	255(87.6)	24(8.2)	12(4.1)

	to execute the criminal.			
3	The rest of the community ignores or despises the adulterer family.	252(86.6)	23(7.9)	16(5.5)
4	Businesses and shops might be boycotted by the community if they feel that their honor is being damaged.	201(69.1)	70(24.1)	20(6.9)
5	The offender's family loses social standing and clout.	269(92.4)	8(2.7)	14(4.8)
6	Family members experience depression or suicidal thoughts as a result of social shame and gossip.	261(89.7)	14(4.8)	16(5.5)
7	If a male member of the adultery family does not commit a major deed to kill the offender, the community views him as a coward.	264(90.7)	18(6.2)	9(3.1)

Bi-variate analysis

Association of the Perception of Social Pressure and Honor killing

The results further indicate a highly significant relationship (P=0.000) between honor killing and the perceived boycott of an offender's family due to damaged collective honor. Both actual exclusion and the fear of social isolation were identified as strong forces driving such acts. Another significant association (P=0.000) was found between honor killing and the fear of losing prestige or influence within the community. Concerns over family honor were particularly evident in cases linked to adultery, where aggression was often seen as the harsh but expected response. Likewise, a significant correlation (P=0.000) was found between honor killing and humiliation, which often resulted in melancholy and, in certain situations, suicidal thoughts in the offender's relatives. Many believed that the only way to deal with this load was to commit honor killing. Lastly, the study found a highly significant correlation (P=0.000) between honor killing and the fear of social rejection as a coward. Family members frequently felt pressured to carry out honor killings in order to protect their reputation and prevent such disgrace. The relationship between honor killing and social pressure is seen in Table 2. According to the analysis, honor killing and the belief that people behave in accordance with social norms are very significant (P=0.000), suggesting that social will frequently triumphs over individual preference and forces such action. Honor killing and pressure from close social circles, which are important in forming attitudes and might push impacted families toward violence, were found to be similarly strongly associated (P=0.000). The findings also show a strong correlation (P=0.000) between honor killing and pervasive sentiments of rejection or hatred toward the offender's family. Families are frequently under tremendous pressure from this animosity, which drives them to commit honor-related murders in an attempt to repair their ruined reputation.

Table 2. Relationship between Honor Killing and the Perception of Social Pressure

Attitude	Honor Killing	Chi square $\chi 2$(p value
Honor killings occur as a result of societal pressure.		$\chi 2$=45.49 (P=0.000)
	Honor Killing	
A person is forced to execute the criminal by their social circle, family, clan, and community.		$\chi 2$=90.09 (P=0.000)
	Honor Killing	
The rest of the community either ignores or despises		$\chi 2$=81.46 (P=0.000)
	Honor Killing	

the adulterer family.		
Businesses and shops that the community feels have damaged their honor can be boycotted.	Honor Killing	$\chi 2$=57.26 (P=0.000)
The family of the criminal loses social standing and power.	Honor Killing	$\chi 2$=82.55 (P=0.000)
Family members experience depression or suicidal thoughts as a result of social shame and gossip.	Honor Killing	$\chi 2$=138.88 (P=0.000)
If a male member of the adultery family does not commit a major deed to kill the offender, the community views him as a coward.	Honor Killing	$\chi 2$=81.98 (P=0.000)

The results show that the concept of family honor in the study area is strongly related to women's dignity and behavior, as they are frequently considered to be the guardians of family honor under the authority of male relatives. Any perceived dishonor especially when it manifests as extramarital affairs is seen as bringing shame to the family. To restore their lost respect, male family members frequently resort to homicide in these circumstances. These opinions are supported by social norms that place males in positions of power and leave women defenseless. The ancient legal systems in these societies are harsh and unfairly harsh to women, often breaching their basic human rights. Fear of social exclusion and the disintegration of family power further push households to drastic steps, believing that the only option to restore status is to carry out an adulterous act. Due to the state's formal legal system's flaws and the power of traditional institutions, parallel systems like panchayats and jirgas are able to make important decisions in cases involving honor killing. By mediating post-killing agreements between disputing parties, these organizations not only decide the accused's destiny but also assist families in avoiding formal prosecution.

Conclusions Recommendations

Honor killing in Pashtoon society is not just about one person doing something wrong, but it's a big, deep problem that comes from old traditions and values called Pashtunwali. As this article shows, the problem happens because there are strict rules that put the family's reputation above the rights of individuals, especially women. When there are accusations like cheating or making personal choices, women's actions and bodies are seen as important symbols that affect how the whole family is viewed in the community. The fear of being shunned and the need to stay respected often make people choose violence over fairness or the law. To stop this serious human rights issue, we need a careful and thoughtful plan that takes the culture into account but also clearly supports basic human rights and the rule of law. We must make sure the legal system is stronger and better. This includes using the law as it is, improving it where needed, and making sure that people who harm others are caught and punished. Also, judges need to see "honor" not as a reason to excuse bad actions, but as something that makes the harm worse. But changing the law alone isn't enough. We also need a long-term plan to change how people think. This means working with leaders,

religious figures, and respected community members to rethink what honor and shame mean, so they don't control how women are treated. Teaching kids about equality from an early age and giving women opportunities to be financially independent is key to changing power dynamics in families and society. It's also important to have safe places for victims and programs that protect people who might be targeted. The real solution is to change how society sees honor. Real honor should be about fairness, kindness, and protecting those who can't help themselves. It shouldn't be about using violence, fear, or limiting people's basic rights. Though this is a hard journey, with strict legal actions, brave community leaders, and a strong effort to change people's beliefs, we can build a society where everyone's dignity is respected and honor is truly meaningful.

- The government, the media, political personalities, and religious leaders should all actively participate in large-scale awareness efforts that emphasize basic human rights and the illegality of crimes connected to honor.
- To guarantee its conformity with basic human rights, rationality in decision-making, and accountability to the state's formal legal framework, significant reforms are needed in the traditional legal system.
- In order to combat social pressure and victims of honor crimes' fear of wrongful isolation, the mass media must be actively mobilized to promptly expose such instances and give the state's executive authorities the authority to respond forcefully.

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