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THE MENACE OF HONOUR KILLING THAT STIGMATISES PAKISTAN BEING A MUSLIM STATE

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Abstract
On 4th June 2025, another couple fell victim of honour killing in Pakistan. Ehsanullah Samalani and Bano Satakzai were killed in the cold-blooded manner in the Sanjidi, Degari area of Balochistan on orders of the chief of Satakzai Tribe. However, the news of this double-murder; a heinous act especially according to the Quranic teachings, but staunchly defended by oligarchs as their tribal tradition, did not appear in the supposedly complicit state media. The incident occurred before Eid-ul-Azha but it went viral through social media in late July 2025 (after more than a month). This tragedy has ensued an unending debate augmented by sparking national outrage, thus converting a crystal-clear condemnable act into a chaotic issue, exactly like 405 honour killings which plagued Pakistan in 2024 among whom majority comprised of female category, often killed by blood or close relatives to protect the family honour. Once again, an indiscriminate killing of Bano Satakzai and Ehsanullah Samalani has exposed the colluded helplessness of all tiers of the state machinery in executing national law which is based on the Quran and Sunnah.This research article encompasses two distinct parts; the first is to deliberate on the peculiar aspect of socio-political structure of Pakistani society under which the heinous crimes like honour killings in some way or the other, are determinedly protected and defended by oligarchs aimed at maintaining their political grip over masses while the second is to highlight causes of inability to implement law of the state which contains the Quranic and Sunnah provisions to ensure requisite freedom, protection and security to every citizen sans any category and status.

Introduction

Honour killing (a phenomenon prevalent since the ancient Roman times (Canada, 2021)) is defined as the deliberate murder of a person to be executed by his / her closest blood relatives aimed at restoring prestige within the family / tribal system which is supposedly lost due to victim's actual or perceived immoral conduct or behaviour (Dailey, Singh, & Ray, 2025) (Media, 2000) (Kirti, Kumar, & Yadav, 2011). But there exists an unimaginably boundless world of crimes against the humanity committed by human beings comprising men and women alike. This domain called "honour crimes" has not been popularised like the "honour killing" in order to protect vested interests of almost every nation, state, community, organisation and / or institution around the world. While "honour killing" of female gender is extensively condemned by innumerous international conventions by adopting "legally binding documents" such as the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe, 2011), the spectrum of "honour crimes" is intentionally accorded less attention by human rights

organisations and countless religious and cultural organisations, institutions, groups and communities justifying rather enthusiastically encouraging "honour crimes" among which "honour killing of the female gender" exists in a negligible proportion the worldwide. Yet, the "honour killing" of female gender hailing from the east is accorded more prominence while masking "honour crimes" around the world (Kirti, Kumar, & Yadav, 2011). In fact, majority of anti-honour crimes organisations and groups hail from the west which ruthlessly endeavour to impose their culture and societal way of life on the non-western world. This trend counter-productively, accords unwavering resilience coupled with unflinching mass support to pro-honour crime groups in the affected regions which cultivate strong narrative of preserving their community's traditional way of life stretched over millennia (Coomaraswamy, 2005) (Welchman & Hossain, 2005). Moreover, a great number of these human rights organisations vehemently target Asian, African and predominantly Muslim women under whose garb they defame the religion of Islam (Cryer, 2003) (Fernández, 2012). One of the most crucial aspects of the western campaigning against the "honour killing" of women from the east or more specifically Muslim majority regions while concealing similar crimes committed by the members of western communities (Kakakhel, 2004). These elements resort to propaganda against Islam based on highly controversial rather disowned religious scriptures by a vast majority of the Muslim community with the objective to malign Muslims in general and subsequently, the religion of Islam in particular. And, this process is executed in a sugar-coated form in which Quran is quoted with misinterpretations and dubiety which create doubts even among common Muslims (Ali, 2003). In this context, the most important aspect is the total neglect of Quran as the foundational source of the religion of Islam by the west, an act that authenticates its grudging hypocrisy by certain quarters pursuing their vested interests.

Research Problem amidst Complex Socio-Cultural Environment in Pakistan

Nevertheless, there is no ambiguity that "honour crimes" especially the "honour killing" is a menace which has tormented Pakistan's image as a Muslim welfare state (UN Women, 2016) and, the curse of this un-Islamic culture needs to be combated and subsequently quelled by employing a comprehensive strategy based on the prevalent socio-cultural segment of the society which encompasses the universal code of human rights endorsed by almost every religion in the world including Islam exclusively founded on the Quranic code of human relationship. In this regard, a straightforward and clear approach is required by every segment of the society without being obstructed by foreign / western narratives whose pragmatic angles must be appreciated as, whatever their objectives are, they also pursue the elimination of the curse of honour killing; an aim that coincides with noble endeavours launched by anti-honour killing quarters of the society. The most important factor which must never be ignored that "honour killing" is an exclusively socio-cultural issue (totally out of the Quranic teachings). Presently, under the prevalent environment in Pakistan, there exists no concrete solution to eliminate it. And, this is the gap in research on "honour killing" in Muslim societies, especially in Pakistan. However, the menace "honour killing" can be curtailed by means of employing the universal code of human rights aligned with certain Quranic oriented socio-cultural strategies among which cognitive measures top the order of priority. In the meantime, it is important to mention that anti-Islam segment of the west has caused irreparable damage to the cause of anti-honour killing fora worldwide by singling out Islam as the predominant cause of honour killings. The western media and miscellaneous sources are riddled with Islamophobic material (Laghman , 2011).

Aim of the Study

The aim of this research paper is two-fold; to highlight the actual cause of "honour killing" in

the Pakistani society and, present the socio-cultural strategy based on the universal code of human rights with the aim of battling the curse of "honour crimes" especially "honour killing" of the female gender in Pakistan.

Structure of the Study

The study will unfold in the following sequence;

- Literature Review – Female based gender "Honour Killing"
- Research Methodology
- Theoretical Framework
- Prevalent socio-cultural environment of Pakistan
- The sole cause of "honour killing" in Pakistan
- Conclusion – The Sole Solution to curb "Honour Killing" in Pakistan

Literature Review – Female based gender "Honour Killing"

The dilemma of "honour killing" is not restricted to one specific religion, society, culture, community or geographical region. This particular crime (in the light of every religion in the world) has surged in recent times especially in the United States. Colloquially, it is called "Uxoricide", a term consisting of two Latin words; "*uxor*" (wife) and "-icide" (to chop off, to cut, to slash, to slit, to kill or to murder). Uxoricide is the murder of one's own wife, partner or girlfriend who (supposedly blamed to be) engaged into infidelity thus proving to be disloyal to her spouse / partner or boyfriend. Conversely, the murder of a husband, partner or boyfriend on the same account is termed as mariticide (Rosenfeld , 1997) (Wilson & Daly, 1992). In this context, the most glaring example in the 21st century is the behaviour and conduct of the United States military personnel who, after their tenure in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere, returned to their homes and committed uxoricide. There can be any reasons behind these criminal acts but it is an undeniable fact that female gender emerged as a prime victim in a society which claims to be the most liberal in the tolerance scale (New York Times , 2002) (Kachadourian, Smith, Taft, & Vogt, 2015) (Miller, et al., 2013). Likewise, the curse of "honour killing" in Pakistan is predominantly based on various forms of infidelity committed by the female gender. It is considered a staunch custom in the South Asian tribal / communal society which is based on ancient traditions totally devoid of Quranic principles. The crime of "honour killing" has traversed through ancient times and influenced innumerous historical phases interpreting self-conceived moral code in the name of honour (Ali R. N., 2024). This tradition existed in Babylon civilization when codes of Hammurabi (1780 BC) indicated severe rather at times capital punishments for guilty persons who tarnished the family reputation. This practice continued through spells of every civilization in history (Goldstein, 2002) (Brundage, 1987). Discussing "honour killing" in Pakistan, it has plagued the society since its creation in 1947. It is almost impossible to present an authenticated data comprising incidents of "honour killing" which take place in various social stratums (Lari, 2011). However, it is the uneducated segment of the society in less accessible and developed regions where this crime is fully prevalent. Mostly these incidents are deliberately kept unreported, thus perpetrators remain unpunished. The victims of "honour killing" comprise every gender all ages. However, the majority of victims are young and unmarried individuals. Women victims outnumber men since men are able to escape the wrath of an aggrieved family by fleeing to other parts of the country or finding sanctuary with neighbouring tribes; women, in contrast, have no refuge to resort to.

Foregoing in view, in Pakistan, it is precisely the patriarchal social structure in which the male gender exercises unprecedented powers as a final authority in the entire spectrum of socio-political life comprising of each and every matter related to personal and / or professional lives of family members (Niaz, 2003). It is a society in which ancient rather pre-Islamic customs and traditions still prevail (Patel & Gadit, 2008). The female gender in the society remains under the dilemma of degradation despite clear orders by Quran to accord respect and dignity to women instead of treating her as a subject (Campbell, Pracha, &

Mace, 2025). The prevalence of contradictions in Islamic teachings propagated by a number of sects and their sub-sects compound the situation by masking the Quranic teachings (Wasti, 2010) (Niaz, 2003) (Hajjar, 2008). Mental torture coupled with physical violence, though varies in its intensity, but a common phenomenon amidst the state of acceptability as a cultural norm which outrightly defies Quran (Hajjar, 2008).

Research Methodology

The research question pertaining to the curse of "honour killing" in Pakistani society possesses worldwide condemnation. Considering it a complex dilemma is irrational. Therefore, the research methodology employed in this study is predominantly qualitative in nature which focuses on detailed analysis aimed at exploring socio-political coupled with socio-cultural conflicts within the society of Pakistan. This methodology is effective in collecting, collating and interpreting multiple sources especially the descriptive data which highlight core issues especially gender discrimination, cultural manipulative practices and mistreatment of the female gender augmented by the permissibility of violence. This particular method encompasses in-depth data analysis of primary sources, thus allowing an understanding of the cultural and gender dynamics in the society of Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The theoretical framework of this study is exclusively based on the prevalence of, in some way, the legitimised violence against the female gender allowed under the umbrella of culture and religion. This research exposes the cultural criminology in the society (Hayward, K. J., & Young, J. , 2004), a theory which evaluates the nature of relationship between the traditional culture and criminal mindset. It incorporates concepts from labeling theory, interactionism, and constructionism, which elaborate how societal labels and interactions shape individuals' conduct and behaviours and identities as divergent or in other words, criminal. This framework amply highlights socio-political narratives in constructing socio-cultural perceptions of crime in the society.

Prevalent socio-cultural environment of Pakistan; A Sanctuary for "Honour Killing"

In the socio-cultural environment prevalent in Pakistan, the male gender is groomed as a dominant segment as compared to his female counterpart while claiming more power, perks and privileges. The male component is indoctrinated on ground that their "honour" is hinged at the family reputation which is ultimately based on modesty and spotless character of female members (Sakallı & Akbaş, 2013). A male member of the family is raised with a sense of superiority to exercise control over female member's behaviour and conduct with regard to her relationship within as well as out the family structure within which he is bestowed upon inherent responsibility of maintaining and restoring the honour and pride of the family in case the family prestige runs the risk of being tarnished especially due to unacceptable behaviour and conduct of a female member (Sakallı & Akbaş, 2013). This false sense of honour and pride that outrightly defies the Quranic verdicts, cultivates a mindset of stringent nature under which "total elimination" of the culprit (declared black) is the exclusive mean to restore the family reputation and pride (Welden, 2010). In this regard, typical reasons for "honour killing" encompass a relationship (though morally correct but disapproved by males of the family), establishing and maintaining associations with people from social groups outside the family. This social connectivity may result into the social exclusion of the family from the tribe / community. This phenomenon is called "stigma by association", prominently caused by pre-marital, extra-marital, or post-marital relations. Moreover, a family confronts stigma if any of its female member declines to enter into a marriage arranged or forced upon her by her family elders. A married woman seeking divorce or marital separation from her husband even on moral grounds is considered black thus to be subjected to "honour killing". A girl engaging into inter-faith, inter-communal, inter-racial, inter-ethnic relationship is marked as

black thus becoming a target of "honour killing". The most horrendous example pertains to a female member of the family who being a victim of rape due to none of her fault is also recognised as black. A woman or a girl dressing herself in attire, ornament or other accessories associated with sexual deviance also becomes a target for "honour killing" (Grzyb, 2016).

The Sole Cause of "Honour Killing" in Pakistan – The Prevalent Social System

Giuseppe Prezzolini states, "Representative government is artifice, a political myth, designed to conceal from the masses the dominance of a self-selected, self-perpetuating and self-serving traditional ruling class."

A Unique Social System. In 1880, a landmark book, "Our Scientific Frontier" written by Sir William Patrick Andrew was published in London which meticulously highlighted the social structure since millennia in the geographical strip in the north-western region of the Indian empire which is today's Pakistan. The British refined this "blessed social system" prevalent in local tribes of Pathans and Punjabis for their grand strategic designs against their arch rivals in the sub-continent; specifically, Russia and France. This particular piece of India was to be separated from the mainland with the aim of defending the British Indian empire against probable invasion from the northwest (Russia) or the west (France) (Andrew , 1880).

Military at the Helm of Affairs – The British Design. In chapter one (Our North Western Frontier), the author writes, *"It is true that many elements come up for consideration before defining a hard and fast boundary line: the political cannot be separated from the military, and yet to subordinate the latter to the former would be in the highest degree in judicious"* (Andrew , 1880). Sir Andrew envisioned that north-western region named as the "Scientific Frontier" to thwart any invasion of India would be separated from the mainland having the military component at the helm of all military and non-military (administrative) affairs. He further specified the strategic landmarks and terrain features which would form parts of this particular defensive region (Andrew, 1880).

British Strategy to Exploit Religious Bigoted Fanaticism. Yet another salient aspect of Sir Andrew's plan was the socio-cultural nature of people of this region. He stated, "Our knowledge of these ranges is slight; we know that they are for the most part wild and inaccessible, peopled by tribes more or less warlike, with but rude forms of government, jealous of internal interference, full of bigoted fanaticism, and whether Moslem or Buddhist, endowed with a violent hatred to all Christians, which impels to throw every obstacle in the way of travellers" *(Andrew , 1880)*. It was the colonial design to retain rather train people of this region "bigoted fanatics" who would fight against the Christian infidels; Russians and / or French armies poised to invade India.

Character Traits of Our Ancestors – Sir Richard Temple's Assessment. In 1866 Sir Richard Temple wrote of Punjabi and Pathan tribes of this region which constitutes Pakistan, "Now these tribes are savages, perhaps, and not without some mixture of virtue and generosity, still absolutely barbarians nevertheless. They have nothing approaching to government or civil institutions. They have for the most part no education. They have nominally a religion; but Mahomedanism, as understood by them, is no better, or perhaps is actually worse, than the creeds of the wildest race on earth. In their eyes the one great commandment is blood for blood, and fire and sword for all infidels, that is, for all people not Mahomedans. They are superstitious and priest-ridden. But the priests are as ignorant as they are bigoted, and use their influence simply for preaching crusades against unbelievers, and inculcate the doctrine of rapine and bloodshed against the people of the plains. They are very avaricious; for gold they will do almost anything. They are thievish and predatory to the last degree. The Pathan mother often prays that her son may be a successful robber. They are utterly faithless to their public engagements, and it would never occur to them that an oath on the Koran was binding if against their interests. They

are fierce and bloodthirsty, and are never without weapons. When grazing their cattle, when driving beasts of burden, when tilling the soil, they are still armed. They are perpetually at war with each other. Every tribe and tribal section of a tribe has its internecine wars; every family its hereditary blood feuds; and every individual his personal foes. There is hardly a man whose hands are unstained with blood. Each tribe has a debtor and creditor account with its neighbours, life for life. Reckless of the lives of others, they are not sparing of their own. They possess gallantry and courage themselves, and admire such qualities in others. To their mind hospitality is the first of virtues; any person who can make his way to their dwellings will not only be safe but will be kindly treated; but as soon as he has left the roof of his entertainer, he may be robbed and killed. They are not averse to civilisation, and are fond of trading, as also of cultivating, but they are too fickle and excitable to be industrious in agriculture or in anything else. They will take military service, and, when commanded by men who understand their character, make admirable soldiers. Such briefly is their character, with that mixture of vices and virtues belonging only to savages." (Andrew, 1880) The aforementioned social system totally devoid of Quranic values was closely guarded rather sponsored by British through their subjects who fought their own countrymen and risked their lives for British during the Great Revolt of 1857.

Raising an Oligarchy. This segment of the indigenous society was subsequently raised as an oligarchy which is, in fact, the ruling class of Pakistan. Children of highly selected class (for instance, Panjabi Sirdars and others of the same social status who which remained loyal to British during the revolt of 1857) were imparted British style education (Thorburn , 1875).

Supremacy of Military over Civilian Bureaucracy. Sir Walter Miller Thorburn's words are self-explanatory while suggesting the grooming of a local cadre loyal to British, *"It would do still better in similarly setting apart four or five Woolwich cadetships, and 15 or 20 other appointments to commissions in the Queen's army. The ability and ambition of the Sikhs, Muslims, and Rajputs are almost entirely military, and to lay open an honourable military career would do far more than any bestowal of civil offices to conciliate those who are now the most dangerous, and may be made the most useful of the inhabitants. At present the natives are entirely excluded from military honours"* (Thorburn, 1875). According to Sir Thorburn, military service is more honourable than civil services. This trend of 1870s still prevails.

The Nation under the Clutches through Oligarchy. After the World War II (1945), the British Empire was replaced by the United States which claimed the British possessions, though during the decolonization process (the Cold War era). Oligarchy in Pakistan was already towed to British and subsequently to the United States. In this regard, Pakistan is not at all, different from a number of praetorian states in the world where the military hierarchy (exclusively) considers itself as nation's saviour (Haqqani, 2019). It is the darkest reality with regard to Quaid-e-Azam's vision about Pakistan as an Islamic, democratic welfare state. It's all political parties without even the slightest exception exemplify unchallenged and unaccountable oligarchy. The present system strengthens elitists' power to rule through the dynastic politics controlled by a selected class under the foreign patronage. The system, by design flourishes charisma-influenced leadership which stifles democratic culture even within the party, rationalistic decision making, realistic policy debates leading to sound decisions and merit-based selections and options for efficient governance (Sabzwari, 2025). This is how the nation is being kept in a truncated state under whose patronage, crimes in the society especially honour killing are encouraged to flourish by innumerous means among which traditional mindset couple with cumbersome legal / judicial system indirectly encourage this murderous act (Nawaz & Khan, 2020).

Conclusion – The Sole Solution to curb "Honour Killing" in Pakistan. According to Quran honour killing of anyone especially the female genders is an unpardonable sin. The burning someone (especially a female even declared black) alive, in the name of so-called honour, for marrying a person of their choice is absolutely desecrating to Quran that says *"When you divorce women, and they have reached their term, do not debar them from marrying their husbands, when they have agreed together honourably. That is an admonition for whoso of you believes in God and the Last Day; that is cleaner and purer for you; God knows, and you know not"* (Arberry, 1996). Quran is absolutely clear on deliberate killing. *"And whoso slays a believer willfully, his recompense is Gehenna, therein dwelling forever, and God will be wroth with him and will curse him, and prepare for him a mighty chastisement"* (Arberry, 1996). The Quranic teachings are the most viable solution to battle the menace of honour killing in Pakistan which are precise and unambiguous. There has to be an indigenous campaign to be launched by apolitical segment which, presently is non-existent. It must not be ignored that almost every non=governmental organisation financed by the west is, in fact, supporting the oligarchy for whom "honour killing" is one of the potent instruments to control public within their domain.

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