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Social Acceptance of HONOR KILLING: A Sociological analysis of “PANCHAYAT”[•] in rural Punjab, Pakistan

Abstract

This research carried out to examine the perceptions and views of the members of “PANCHAYAT” about the so-called “honor killings” in rural Pakistan. Trends and patterns in this kind of homicides in Pakistan were also the points of discussion. This study also explores what social acceptance and its extent of honor killing and also pointed out the role of influenced people in Panchayat. This study also analyzes the causes of honor killing and major factors involved in this cruel behavior. This study proceeds mainly under the quantitative method. This study has been conducted in 15 rural union councils out of 49 rural union councils in district Jhang, located in Province Punjab, Pakistan. Respondents were the existing members of Panchayat. Univariate and Bi-variate analysis was applied using SPSS to draw the analysis.

Key Words: Panchayat, Honor Killing, Perceptions

1. Introduction

The idea of honor inside the patriarchal discourse remains predominantly a male attribute. The “terms like honor, patriotism, cowardice, bravery and duty are hard to distinguish as either nationalistic or masculinities, since they seem so thoroughly tied both to the nation and to manliness” (Nagel, 1998). Another definition that explains, “Honor concepts are only another way of understanding the operation of patriarchy which is anchored in the assumption of male authority over women and male definition and expectation of ‘appropriate’ female behavior” (Jafri, 2008).

Women violence has become a major area of concern in recent years all over the world in diverse forms. Many forms of violence are deep-rooted in our social culture which is not recognized as violence by the larger section of our society. These forms may range from domestic violence and sexual harassment to rape and honor killing. Honor killing is one of the most heinous violence against humanity because it ends the life of victim. Killing or murder is defined as “murder is the willful (unlawful) killing of one human being by another” (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2000). Female honor killings can be defined as “a woman is killed for her actual or perceived immoral behavior” (Hassan, 1999).

1.2. Historical explanation of honor killing:

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[•] Local decision making body based on local influential natives

The exercise of honor killings has a long genealogy and it emerged with the appearance of male-controlled (patriarchal) social structures throughout Asia and Europe where the honor of the family is based on sexuality of women. The survival of most of the tribal and agrarian societies was based on, the control over means of productions such as livestock and land and modes of reproductions that is “female”.

In order to confirm the preservation of lineage, form the paternity of offspring and the privileges to possession of property the regulation of a female’s sexuality and the protection of her chastity was imperative. Fundamentally, then, the respect of a family conferred in its property (land) and its female and concepts of honor and shame came to be connected to these belongings: males would murder to guard their property and they would kill to protect their women and they would murder the females if the severe code overriding sexual interactions was violated. The tradition of honor killings hence appeared as key element in the code that organized human associations in communities and it is still exercised in many areas of the world. (Malik, 2001)

In some conservative societies, women are still considering as the way of all evils and men are not declared in any evil doing. “Zan¹, Zar², Zameen³” (Woman, Money, Land) a well-known axiom and supported worldwide were considered as the source of all evil in human societies. In male dominated societies, women’s personality is determined according to the male’s wishes. If she is non-compliant, she is punished through beatings, isolation, and virtual imprisonment and even murdered. (Barohi, 2006)

As Pakistan is an agricultural state and feudalism is existed. Feudal are remained powerful throughout: they are the superior heads of the “biradri” (community), define own structure of justice (jirga and panchayat) lay down their own laws, in which the definition of honor is different from that of formal law. In feudal societies the code of conduct for women is very strict, death occurs in the name of honor when a woman breaks any of these laws. It is significant to understand that females are usually ignorant of social structures, where their lives are controlled by casual laws (both as behavioral code of conduct and as formal system of justice). Movement of women is delimited and prohibited, female is rampant, and where the official language of country different from that of sub state clans, women end up like ‘Frogs in the well (Shaheed, 1998).

Women rights are constructed locally as a result of conflicts which were decided by the local Jirgas. Broadly speaking, from a gender rights perspective, women are made subjects of conflicts before jirgas in two main ways; firstly, as transgressors of social norms, where women’s infidelity and immorality (marriage by choice, illicit relations, seeking of divorce and being raped) are the direct subject matter of the dispute and the aggrieved party - the family of the woman, is seeking a decree against her and her abettor (usually a paramour or husband of choice etc.).

¹ Women

² Money

³ Land

Secondly, women are considered a commodity by the members of the jirga to be traded at the time of sentencing as compensation, regardless of the nature of the dispute. (Irfan, 2008)

1.3. Sociological Significance:

This issue of honor killing is today's reality in which we are living. And due to this practice Pakistan has been recipient heavy criticism from all over the world. The present study is also related with the same problem and has its own sociological importance. The research shows that the rate of honor killing is increasing. It is affecting the population because of its severity. The family institution is considered very important in Pakistani society. It is the violation of human rights due to the honor killing family has become stigmatized and its survival becomes difficult in the community. It creates the problem of prestige and marriage for other member of the family. *"Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person. Men and women of full age without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry or to have a family. They entitled to equal rights as to marriage and its dissolution. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the attending spouses. The family is the natural and fundamental group, unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and state"* (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 Article 3&16). In Pakistan there has been little research on honor killing especially in central Punjab. This study will fill the gap about the knowledge of honor killing. It is a social phenomenon that is affecting the society socially and physically. This study will give the information about societal and cultural norms of central Punjab regarding honor killing.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.
2. To explore the factors behind the honor killing.
3. To find out the notions that honor killing is socially approved phenomenon.
4. To find out whether this practice is being utilized for other purposes.
5. To suggest some suitable remedies to overcome this inhuman justice system.

2. Review of Literature

Literature review is a critical summary, assessment and understanding in a given fields. Its purpose is to locate the research to from its context or background and provide insights.

Dawn news (2009) a consultation meeting "Call to Plug Legal Loopholes in Cases of Honor Killing" conducted by Lala Hassan, in this meeting. Different speakers from different fields of life speak on this issue as; speakers said honor killing was not considered to be a serious crime due to socio-cultural practices, and that in some cases it was even considered necessary to maintain the honor of a family or tribe. SSP Abdul Khaliq Shaikh said that honor killings were mostly stage dramas that are scripted well before the crime is committed, as it is decided

beforehand who would be the complainant in the FIR, who would be witnesses, and who would be the accused. He added that most of these would normally be 'close relatives'. SSP Shaikh pointed out that in many cases a jirga was held to decide what was to become of an honor killing case, Aurat foundation, speakers said honor killing was not considered to be a serious crime due to socio-cultural practices, and that in some cases it was even considered necessary to maintain the honor of a family or tribe.

Nasrullah *et al* (2009) reported in their study "The Epidemiological Patterns of Honor Killing of Women In Pakistan" and concluded that majority of the women were married who killed in the name of honor. The main reason behind honor killing was the extramarital relation. All the women were killed by their husbands, brothers and other close relatives. The weapons which used for killing were firearms, stabbing, axe, edged tool and strangulation.

Akmal (2008) conducted a study on "Socio-Cultural Causes of Murders, A Focus on the Motivational Aspects" and formulated the theoretical framework which includes the concepts and ideas of Sutherland's theory of Differential Association. He concluded that there are three types of reasons; 1st-Basic reasons or reasons before the reasons those reasons which cause the main reasons for example ambiguous explanation of matters, conservative customs and traditions lack of justice, lack of religious control etc. 2nd-Main reasons such as family, marriage, land disputes emotional disturbances, illicit relations, sectarianism etc. It is fact that about all the individuals in the society are facing these problems related to former described reasons but few of them commit the murder it is due to the 3rd-Decidery reasons which are as, there are two forces acting upon each individual before he makes his decision on any issue. First is motivating force and second is defending force. Murder is result of excess of motivational forces towards the (deviant behavior) murder.

[Tandon](#) (2008) said in article "Interviewing Partition Survivors" that at the time of the 1947 Partition men of Singh's family decided it was better to kill the women than have them fall into the hands of Muslim mobs. These 'honor killings', where women were killed by male members of their families to prevent them being raped by communal mobs and in the Sikh community thousands of women killed due to this reason. The men were not facing certain death, even if those women who survived after being raped their families could face ostracism.

Zahid (2008) conducted study on "A Sociological Investigation into the Behavior of the Murderers in District Jail Faisalabad" she concluded that majority of the respondents were illiterate, living in joint family system and belong to rural areas. She found that major causes of murder were old malignancy, rage of revenge, self-defense and the honor matters.

Shafaullah (2001) conducted a study on "Socio-Economic Causes of Murders" and concluded that majority of murders took place in rural areas due to land, water and family disputes while honor and revenge were the dominant factors leading to murders. The majority of the murderers did not have the criminal background. The motivation from the local community played a vital role in committing murders. As for as the murder of honor is concerned the murderers justify their act of murder. They stated that it was required by their family and local norms prevailing

in local areas. In some cases the respondents told that they were not being rightly involved, some declared that they were innocent and committed murder because they were forced to do it.

Rizvi (2000), “Honor Killing Rises in Pakistan despite State and Religious Opposition” said that mostly women are killed by their brother, father, husband and other close relatives because the women had been talking to men other than their relatives. He said that this tradition, seen in rural areas for centuries and now it is becoming more and more visible in urban centers also. He also concluded that it is not an approved act by the religious leaders.

Akram (1997) reported in his study entitled “A Sociological Investigation into the Reasons for Murders in Punjab” that gain (Zar, Zan, and Zameen), revenge and enmity, sudden quarrel and self-defense were the major causes of murder in rural Punjab, while the gain (Zar, Zan, Zameen) was dominant.

Hassan (1995) stated that the practice of men murdering their enemies subsequently killing one of the women in their family, to disguise it as an honor killing is also common.

3. Materials and Methods

Present research was designed to expose the perception of panchayat members regarding honor killing in rural Punjab. The quantitative research design was adopted to see the relationship between different variables and the data was collected from the scientifically selected sample with the help of semi structured interview schedule. The present study aims to know the perception of panchayat members regarding the Honour killing in rural Punjab. For this research study, panchayati of the rural area of Tehsil Jhang⁴ were taken as a unit. The universe for the present study was the rural areas of Jhang. The rural area of Tehsil Jhang was selected for this study. There are total 61 union councils in Tehsil Jhang. From which urban area is consist of 12 union councils, while 49 union councils have rural catchment’s area. For the present study 15 union councils out of 49 rural union councils were selected randomly. These union councils were the universe of the study. Almost every union council consists of about ten to fifteen villages (Local body system, Devolution Plan 2002). For the current study 15 union councils, out of 49 from rural areas, were selected randomly. From these union councils, researcher interviewed all the 50 respondents who were panchayat members, through purposive sampling technique. And this was the sample out of total 49 union council’s panchayat members. The interview schedule consisted of structured and unstructured questions used as a data collection tool and prepared in English but at the time of interview the local language was also be used to ask the questions from the respondents. The data was collected in face-to-face situation. Uni-variate and Bi-variate analysis was done through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). On the basis of this analysis researcher made some valuable remedies.

3.1. Testing of Hypotheses

⁴ A district of Province Punjab, Pakistan

Hypothesis 1: If the panchayat members themselves believe in the act of the honor killing then this practice will continue.

Table 1: Association between the beliefs of Panchayat members in the act of honor killing then the practice of honor killing will continue.

Beliefs of the Panchayat members	Practice of honor killing will continue				Total	
	Yes		No		F	%
	F	%	F	%		
Strongly believe	23	88.5%	3	11.5%	26	100%
Believe to a less extent	2	28.6%	5	71.4%	7	100%
Strongly do not believe	1	11.1%	8	88.9%	9	100%
Do not believe	1	12.5%	7	87.5%	8	100%
Total	26	52%	24	48%	50	100%

Chi square=30.139 Significance= .000 Gamma=.914

Analysis

The chi-square value (30.139) shows a highly significant association (P=.00) between the beliefs of the respondents in the act of honor killing, and their opinion that the practice of honor killing will continue. The gamma value shows a positive relationship between the variables. The table shows that if the mature, reputed and dominant personalities are in the favor of honor killer then it will be difficult to control this practice. So the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 2: If the honor killing is approved by society as a social phenomenon, then this practice will continue.

Table 2: Association between the opinions that ‘honor killing’ is approved by society, and the continuity of the practice of honor killing.

Approved by society	Practice of honor killing will continue				Total	
	Yes		No		F	%
	F	%	F	%		
Approved	24	64.9%	13	35.1%	37	100%
Not Approved	2	15.4%	11	84.6%	13	100%

Total	26	52%	24	48%	50	100%
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Chi square=9.43 Significance= .002 Gamma=.821

Analysis

The chi-square value (9.43) shows a highly significant association ($P=.00$) between the opinion that ‘honor killing’ is approved by society, and the continuity of the practice of honor killing, and the gamma value shows a positive relationship between the variables. The table shows that if the people believe that the honor killing is approved by society then it will continue, because it has got approval from the society. So the hypothesis is accepted.

3.2. Major Findings

- Major proportion i.e. 34.0 percent of the panchayati belonged to age group of 51-60 years and 16.0 percent of the respondents were in the age group of 71-80 years. From the above findings we can say that panchayati are always mature and experienced people.
- All the respondents said that honor killing was practicing in their areas. It means that it was a serious issue.
- The majority of the respondents i.e. 70.0 percent said that honor killing had taken as ordinary murder in their area.
- Majority of the respondents i.e. 54.0 percent said that females were killed for the cause of honor. But 28.0 percent understood that both male and female were equally killed at the name of honor.
- Majority of the respondents i.e. 58.0 percent believed that a person commit honor killing due to high social pressure.
- Majority of the respondents i.e. 44.0 percent believed that the difference was found to a great extent between educated and illiterate families regarding the concept of honor killing.
- Greater part of the respondents i.e. 78.0 percent said that community had the sympathetic behavior towards honor killer.
- The mostly respondents i.e. 74.0 percent said that the practice of honor killing was approved by the society.
- Majority of the respondents i.e. 60.0 percent suggested that education should be promoted to eliminate the practice of honor killing.

3.2. Conclusions:

The following results can be drawn from the bivariate analysis given above. Honor killing will continue because it is an approved act by the society and has become traditionally and socially accepted norm of the society. As an Islamic state our formal laws as well as Islamic laws strongly oppose the concept of honor killing. In spite of this it is raising higher in our society because this concept is favored by

the well-known, reputed and leading people of the society. They believe that honor killing is a justified act for the honor killer in the certain situation and honor killers always gets sympathetic behavior from the society. Community considered honor killing as socially approved norm. The findings of the present research are in line with that of Akhter et al (2001). They conducted a study on “Honor Killing as Socially Approved Murder” and revealed that honor killing is socially approved norm in southern Punjab. People are instigated and pressurized to commit this practice in our society. Honor killing is also treated as cultural norm and custom which is socially approved.

The findings of the present research are also in line with that of Shafaullah (2001). He conducted a study on “Socio-Economic Causes of Murders” and concluded that as far as the murder of honour is concerned the murderers justify their act of murder. They stated that it was required by their family and local norms prevailing in local areas. While Mayell (2002) in his article “Thousands of Women Killed for Family Honor” revealed that the concept of family honor justifies the act in the eyes of some societies. Most honor killings occur in countries where the concept of women as a vessel of the family reputation predominates.

There is also another misconception that the people believe that it leaves the positive impact on the society, because it creates a fear among the rest of people who indulge in certain unethical activities. All these things promote and support the honor killing and hinder the way of all those policies which are made to stop it.

3.3. Recommendations:

- Law making and law enforcing agencies should take step regarding honor killing.
- Sever laws should be enforced to control this practice.
- Religious and formal education should be provided to each one in the all areas. If the education is increased that there would be change in the misconception about honor killing.
- Reforms should be brought in the Pakistan penal code regarding criminal justice system.
- Religion should be reinforced as a factor of social control.
- To conduct the more studies to find out why the honor killing is legally right but morally wrong.
- Young generation is aware of the legal rights of female but they did not avail them due to culture and patriarchy system. Bad old and new customs should be replaced or rooted out from the society.
- Justice should be assured at each level socially and legally, and with in the families by the heads and sardars.

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