

HONOR KILLINGS AGAINST WOMEN IN PAKISTAN : CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND WAY FORWARD

Outline.

1. Introduction

Thesis Statement : Honour killing have been threatening women's lives in Pakistan since country's inception. Socio-cultural factors and patriarchal setup are the basis of it. Protection for women in danger and strict laws against honour killings are required to combat the issue.

2. Honour killing in Pakistan : an existential threat to country.

3. Causes of honour killing against women in Pakistan.

- a. Lesser reported cases in country : fear of other women to report for fellow women
- b. Lesser support for women in police stations
- c. Prevalence of jirgah system in country as a law binding body.
- d. Societal honour : the burden of honour on shoulders of women
- e. Patriarchal society : man's decision considered as 'Holy' in tribal societies
- f. The acceptance of killing by society : once term 'honour' is attached to it.
- g. Connecting killing and extremism to Islam : lack of education regarding Islam

4. Consequences of honour killing against women in Pakistan:

- a. Loss of trust on laws in country.
- b. Image of country as an extremist state in world's eyes.

- c. Lesser voice for women : fear of being killed next in line
 - d. Provoking other men and next generation to do the same to women
 - e. Psychological impact on women in Pakistan
 - f. Women labelled as a symbol of deviance from cultural norms in country.
5. Solutions to prevent honour killings against women in Pakistan.
- a. Women protection camps for women in danger.
 - b. Honour killing needs to be labelled killing regardless of cultural deviance by victim
 - c. Compelling Jirgah ruling to be under country's law
 - d. Education to women related to their rights and related laws.
6. Conclusion.

Essay

In 2016, Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy won the Oscar award for the documentary, A Girl in the River, depicting the story of a girl to save herself from being killed by her family in the name of honour killing. This case of honour killing was not the first case of honour killing in the history of Pakistan. Yearly, hundreds of women are killed in the name of honour killing. There are different causes of honour killing in Pakistan against women. The main reason is the lesser percentage of reported cases in the country, out of fear of the community heads and the society. Moreover, the cases reported get lesser

support by the police stations due to the unavailability of female staff in the police stations of country. In addition to it the jirgah system in the tribal areas also give the decisions in several issues related to the killing of women in the name of honour. The burden of the honour of entire family of Pakistani society lies on the shoulders of women while men enjoy the patriarchal setup with dominance in every field of life. Moreover, the society's acceptance of killing of a woman when the word 'honour' is attached to it adds fuel to the fire. The misconception of adding honour killing as the teaching of Islam is also a main cause of the issue. The honour killing of women in Pakistan have several consequences in country. People lose trust in the law making body with each news of honour killing in country. This also impacts the image of the country as an extremist state globally. Moreover, it takes the voice from women as they fear to become the next in line once they talk about the issue. This inturns affect the women psychologically also. Moreover, due to honor killing cases and lack of education about it women are labelled as a symbol of deviance in the country. There are several ways through which the women could be prevented from honour killing in country. There is a dire need of women protection camps where women can reach when in danger of honour killing as they are not safe in their homes. Moreover, the difference between killing a life and

honour killing should be ended from the society. In addition to it, strict rules must be implied to jirgahs to only give rulings in accordance to the laws of the country. Education is also necessary for women to understand their rights and laws of the country. Hence, honour killings have been threatening women's lives in Pakistan since its inception. Socio-cultural factors and patriarchal setup are the basis of it. Protection for women in danger and strict laws against honour killings are required to combat the issue.

The term honour killing is not new in the country. It has been used and originated in the Arab culture and Hindu culture years ago before the creation of Pakistan. The women in a country like Pakistan where the society considers the life of women as their honour are not safe. The Honour killing against women in Pakistan are seen in different ways. Some kill the women when she want to marry beyond the ~~to~~ choice of the family and some when she asks for her right in property or education. In addition to it, many are killed when they wish to give birth to more children due to health or any other issue and some when they work outside the house which somehow is perceived as a dishonour to the family. In each case a single thing is common, Honour. This word has been attached to women since a woman is born and ends when a woman dies. In Pakistan, atleast 405 women were killed in 2024 in the name of honour. (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan,

5

annual report, 2025) This shows that hundreds of women are killed each year due to this issue. As ill luck would have it, out ~~th~~ of these many don't even know about their rights and laws of the country which could save them from the heinous acts.

There are several causes of honour killing against women in Pakistan chief among which is that lesser cases related to honour killing are reported in Pakistan. The act is done by the head or the one in power in family which gives him the authority to command the family to remain quiet about the act.

The family or the society knowing usually does not report the case as it will cause the loss of respect of the family in society. Moreover, in many cases, the family forgives the culprit to save the face of the family. Moreover, in tribal societies the judgement related to honour killing is given by the head of the tribe whose complaint out of fear is not done by the families. This cause the lesser actions taken against honour killing acts in Pakistan as the threat is not seen as an urgency in the country. 57%.

Of the community discourages victim and their families after such occurrences to expose or report the case to the police in Pakistan (Hirani, Unveiling the reality study of honour crimes in Sindh, 2021). Hence, the unreported cases are a major cause of increase in ratio of honor killings in Pakistan.

In addition to lesser reported cases, when cases are reported, there is lesser support at the police stations for women in country. The police stations in many districts of Pakistan lack the female staff which makes it difficult for the women to communicate their issues. Moreover, when women reach the police stations many a times they are sent back to their houses and asked to sort the matter with the family external/internally. This shows the lesser security available for the women in danger in the society. The women police strength in Pakistan is only 3.2%. (Defence journal, Gender disparity in Pak Police, 2024) This shows that the lack of female staff at police stations and lesser security provided to women play a role in the honour killings against women in Pakistan.

Other than lesser availability of female police staff, the prevalence of jirgah system in the tribal communities are also the cause of the issue. The jirgah is considered as a law binding body by the community of tribal areas. The decision made by the tribal head 'Sardar' is considered as the last word and holy. Most of times, the decision made by the sardars are extreme and not according to the laws of the country. For instance, in case of a murder done by the male of the family is compensated by giving off their underage daughter or sister to marry the victims family. Hence, the tribal jirgahs are the

major cause of honour killings in Pakistan.

Along with the jirgah system, the society itself has been a major cause of the issue. Society has dumped the burden of the honour of the family onto the shoulders of the women. Women's acts are linked to the family. When this occurs, women are killed more in order to save the honour of the family. For instance, in the documentary the girl in the river by Sharmen Obaid Chinoy, the victim was given the ruling to be killed by the family in order to save the honour of the family as she wanted to marry man of her choice. This shows that the burden of the honour on the shoulders of women in Pakistani society is a leading cause of the honour killings in country.

As the societal honour is attached to the women in Pakistan, the patriarchal system of the society also play a major role in the honor killings in Pakistan. In most of the under-developed ~~for~~ areas of the country, men are the solely bread winner of the family and females are uneducated and completely dependent on men for their whole life. In this case when they show deviance in any way to the men, they are subjected to being killed or harmed by the men. This causes the increase in the honor killing as any decision made by men ~~are~~ is considered as 'Holy' in the society. ~~For~~ In most cases the wives are being targeted for honour

Killings in country. 37% of the honour killings are done against the wives in Pakistan (Nabi Baksh, study of causes of honour killings in district Sukkur, 2010). Hence, the patriarchal setup of the society gives a medium for the increase in ratio of honour killing in Pakistan.

In addition to the patriarchal setup of the society, the concept of society related to the honour of family is also the cause of the issue. The killing of any individual regardless of any reason is a crime. However, in Pakistan when the term 'honour' is attached to the phrase the killing crime becomes justifiable. This is not only the issue of the men of the society but also the women. Due to this reason, lesser cases are reported and not considered an issue in a country like Pakistan. This is completely objectionable according to the UDHR as it says that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. (United Nations Declaration of Human Right, Article 5). This shows that the problem is deeply rooted in Pakistan.

Apart from the societal factor, the misconception of teachings of Islam is also a cause of the honour killings in country. The women are killed when they are found guilty for deviating from the teachings of Islam in any way. However, in Islam, the killing of human due to any

reason is not permitted. The criminals take the name of Islam for their extremist activities against women and name it as honour killing. However, this is the right of women to live the life they wish to live in accordance to the law of the country. The right to life of women in Pakistan is conditional on their obeying social norms and tradition. (Amnesty international, Violence against women in the name of honour, 2022). In short, the crimes are done in the name of Islam, this misconception is found in many underdeveloped ~~count~~ areas of the country.

All these factors causing the increase in honour killings sum up to several consequences in Pakistan. With each new case of honor killing, the public lose the trust in the ~~law~~ legal systems of the country. The women in danger of the honor killing lose the trust in the law enforcement agencies and do not approach when they are in danger. This make the society more in danger where the public itself takes laws in their hands and create havoc in the society. For instance, in many case the victims for this reason move to jirgah heads for the case hearing who give the judgement in an ~~exte~~ extreme way. Hence, honor killings in Pakistan cause the loss of public trust in laws and law enforcement agencies.

In addition to the loss of trust in the law agencies, honour killing also affects the image of the country in the global world. The world which

10
It shapes Islam as extremist religion, due to honour killing also call Pakistan as an extremist state. Due to these ~~few~~ cases, the image of the country is highly affected. Each high profile case of honour killing sparks international outrage, reinforcing the perception that Pakistan tolerates the violence against women. Global media coverage and human rights reports frequently classify these incidents as evidence of extremist social attitude within the country. For instance, global news outlets like Reuters and Guardian repeatedly link these killings with cultural impunity and extremist social attitudes. Therefore, honour killing highly contribute to Pakistan's portrayal as an extremist state.

The honor killing in addition to affecting country's image, severely impact women in the country. Women in country lose their voice due to the fear regarding the honour killing in Pakistan. Due to this reason, the women fear to demand their right to education, marriage and property share in the country. Moreover, the women who ask for these rights also get the warnings of honour killings against them. This also causes the ~~imp~~ lesser percentage of honour killings in the country. As only 470 cases were reported in 2020 while the actual number exceeds from 1000 which remain unreported. Hence, honour killing have majorly suppressed women's voice in Pakistan.

In addition to the suppression of female voices, in country, honour killing is also preaching to

next generations. ~~The~~ When the cases of honour killing remain unreported the fear from men is lessened and they think they can easily do any sort of harm activity to the women. This not only give the teaching to the other men but also to the young boys of the young generation of the country who ~~that~~ are brought up under these incidents.

This has caused the prevalence of honour killing in Pakistan since its inception in the country. For instance, The acceptancy of wife beating has increased from 2012 to 2018 in Pakistan especially among the male population. (Fiza Raza, attitude towards wife beating, 2024) This shows that how young minds have also accepted gender based violence against women in Pakistan.

Other than ~~the~~ provoking other men and young generation regarding acceptance of honour killing, the issue is severely impacting the psychological health of the women in Pakistan. The women losing their family women due to honour killing usually spend their whole life scared and depressed. This leads to severe psychological issues among women in society. In addition to this, the warnings given to women by the men related to honour killing also impact on psychological health of the women. According to Nadia Miller, "One insidious thing about honour killings is that their purpose is to destroy not just the body but ~~&~~ also the soul. (Nadia Miller, The public health crisis of honour killings, 2024) Hence this shows that the honour killings have the worst impact

on women's psychology.

In addition to the impact on women's psychology, the issue also impacts the character of the women in society. The acceptance of honor killings causes the acceptance that women are more often indulged in deviant behaviour in the society. When society listens to the cause of the honor killing, they often blame the victim for ~~their~~ her deviant behavior rather than the crime-committing criminal. Hence more and more women are marked and seen as the deviant individuals who need to be controlled through force. For instance, when in a family a crime case of honor killing occurs, the other women especially their sisters are seen the same as the victim and their are more chances that honor killing will be done to them also. Hence, ~~the~~ honor killing causes the labelling of women as the deviant individuals of the society.

All these consequences sum up together and suggest to find impactable solutions to prevent women from honor killing. There is a dire need of women safety camps in the country. The women who are in danger of honor killing usually do not have the place to escape. In this regard the most important need in the society is to have safe places for women. When women reach to get help usually they are not accommodated for the sake of ~~sex~~ security and returned back to home. The protection camps should also be connected to the police so that the culprits of honor killings are taken under arrest before their action. ~~in~~ Therefore in this way women will be

protected before the incident to be happen.

In addition to this, the cases of honour killing should also be considered as a murder and should not be justified with the honour concept attached to it. In many cases, honor killing is suggested to be solved outside the police station within the family. In this way there are lesser cases reported also. The honour killings as well as any action in the name of honour done against women should be treated as any other crime of the country.

This will help control the cases of honor killing and will also help the reporting of honor killing crimes in the country. Hence by classifying honor killings strictly as murders, Pakistan can eliminate cultural loopholes in its justice system and take a decisive step towards ending this practice.

In addition to considering honour killing as murder, laws must also compel jirgah systems to only give judgement according to the laws of the country. In many tribal areas, the judgements given by jirgah sardars increase the rate of honour killings, forced marriages and rapes in country. This can only be controlled if the jirgah only control the tribal areas according to the laws of the country.

Moreover in many cases the police arrest jirgah Sardars for their heinous judgements, they are forgiven by the victim's family. This needs an action as these are not only the culprit for the crime against victim but to the society.

For instance, several child marriages are done in the tribal areas as a punishment to the family. This needs an action from the law making agencies of the country.

Other than controlling the jirgah rulings, women also need to be educated regarding their rights in the country. There are hundreds of women in the underdeveloped areas of Pakistan who are unaware of their rights and the legal system of the country. This makes them easy to be controlled by the men of the society. ~~As~~ Women ~~from~~ need to understand their rights and laws of the country. For this, education campaigns, adding topics in text books, television public service message can help women to understand. Hence, in order to enhance and strengthen the laws against honour killing women ~~are~~ need to be educated for their rights and laws of the country.

In summation, honour killing has been threatening women's lives in Pakistan since its inception. The crime originated in the Arab world and Hindu culture, however, its roots persist in today's world. There are several causes of honour killing, such as lesser reporting of cases and the lesser support for women in the police stations. Moreover, the jirgah ruling against the laws of the country add fuel to the fire. The women are burdened by the honour of their families living in the patriarchal setup. In addition to it, the society's way of accepting the crime once the

concept of honour is attached to it and connecting extremism and Islam also causes the loss of hundreds of women lives in the name of honour killing in the country. All this leads to severe consequences, such as loss in the law agencies and impacts the image of the country in the global world. Moreover, it also impacts the psychological health of women. In addition to it, it also gives teaching to the young generation to follow the same route as their elders. The ways to save women is by considering the honour killing as a murder and compelling the jirgah ruling to be in accordance with the laws of the country. Moreover, shelter homes must be made for women. Education is also required for women regarding their rights and related laws regarding honour killing in the country. If Pakistan continues to work in favour of women to prevent honour killings in the country, the nation will one day become a society completely free from this ruthless crime.