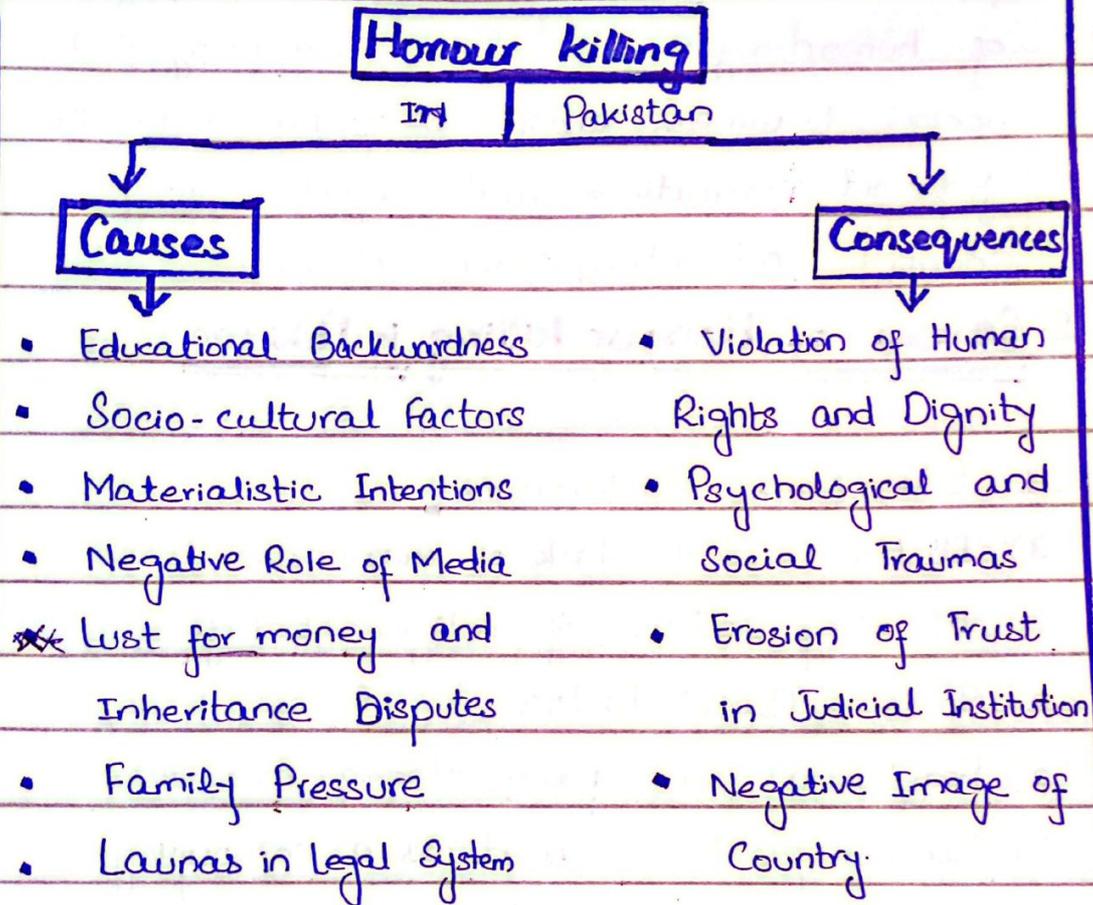


Brainstorm

Honour killing: Causes and Consequences



Outline

1. Introduction

a) Hook

b) Background

c) Thesis statement: Honour killing, often treated as a socially sanctioned "license to kill," stems from deep-rooted factors such as educational backwardness, regressive cultural norms, materialistic motives behind murder,

family pressure, and irresponsible role of media in reinforcing harmful narratives. This practice has serious consequences, including violation of human rights and dignity, psychological and social traumas, erosion of public trust in judicial institutions, and negative image of country and international criticism.

2. Causes of Honour killing in Pakistan

2.1 Educational Backwardness

- a) Illiteracy and lack of awareness
- b) Misinterpretation of religious beliefs

2.2 Socio-cultural Factors

- a) Traditional and patriarchal values
- b) Cultural practices used as a camouflage to justify murder

2.3 Materialistic Motives behind Murder

- a) Commodification of women as property and honour symbol
- b) Lust for money and inheritance disputes

2.4 Negative Role of Media

- a) Sensational portrayal of gender relations and coeducation
- b) Glorification of jirga system in dramas
- c) Depiction of honour killing as a routine matter.

2.5 Family Pressure

- a) Marriage by choice
- b) Seeking divorce
- c) Rape and victim blaming attitudes

2.6 Lawns in legal System

- a) Dominance of tribal decisions (Panchayat) over law
- b) Inequality before law

3. Consequences of Honour killing

3.1 Violation of Human Rights and Dignity

- a) Increasing cases of suicide among women
- b) Biased treatment on the basis of gender rather than humanitarian ground

3.2 Psychological and Social Traumas

- a) Perpetuation of violence and fear in society
- b) Hinderance to gender equality and women empowerment

3.3 Damage to the Country's Global Image

- a) Negative impact on socio-economic development

3.4 Erosion of Trust in Judicial Institutions

4. Conclusion

Essay

"Honour killing is a cocktail made of prejudice, hate and misogyny to which the colour red is contributed by religion, caste, father or brother as the occasion may demand."

This quote of Ravish Kumar truly reflects the complex social psychology behind honour killing. It is never the result of a single factor; rather, it emerges from toxic blend of deep-rooted prejudice, hatred, and misinterpretation of religious beliefs. In Pakistan, honour killing is locally known as "karo-kari". An honour killing is the murder of a member of a social group by other members, due to the beliefs the victim has brought dishonour upon the family or community. In majority of cases, the victim of the attacks is female who faces death penalty, announced by male members of her family or community. This practice can be traced back to rigid tribal codes such as Pashtunwali, Baloch riwaj, and feudal traditions in parts of Sindh and South Punjab, where a family's "izzat" (honour) is strictly tied with women. In rural and tribal areas, the customary laws have been overshadowed over formal law. Hence, this

immoral act is considered as a routine matter, even in ^{*}Islamic Republic country, the foundation of which is based on golden principles of Islam rather than typical patriarchal views. According to Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, over 470 cases of honour killings were reported in Pakistan in 2021. But human rights defenders are murdered in the name of honour every year. It is stemmed from various factors such as educational backwardness, regressive cultural norms, materialistic motives, family pressure, and negative role of media that usually results in damaging the global image of the country, violation of human rights and erosion of trust in judicial institutions.

The first and foremost ~~cause~~ cause of honour killing is educational backwardness. Illiteracy creates fertile ground for misguided traditions to follow. This practice is mostly common in the areas where education is limited, and individuals prioritize rigid cultural thoughts over their intellect. In tribal areas, the word "honour" has several biased interpretations. It is mostly tied with women who are supposed to protect it for the sake

of their male members' ego. Lack of awareness also defends the violation of women's legal and constitutional rights. For instance, on July 08, 2008, five women were murdered by tribesmen of Umrani Tribe in Baba Kot, Balochistan. They were kidnapped, beaten, shot, and then buried alive because they refused the tribal leader's marriage arrangements and wanted to marry men of their own choosing. As this practice is ^{also} common in other Muslim-majority countries such as in the Middle East, it is often mistakenly believed as an Islamic practice. Rather, Islam, a complete code of life truly condemns the murder of any human being. Infact, it gives honour to a woman and right to take the decision of her life. But unfortunately, in Pakistan's extremist group, without the knowledge of religion use it as a weapon to defend their ignorant beliefs.

Secondly, socio-cultural factors play the role of a significant contributor in exercising it (honour killing). In Pakistan, women have to face a patriarchal mindsets which treat them as something worthless. In rural

Communities or tribal areas, women have no separate identity, rather they are ^{just} considered as just honour symbol for that community. They are bound to their relations in such a way that they forget to think and live as independent human beings. And whenever, they try to take a breath by breaking the stereotypes they get captured by the predators who are lurking everywhere. Ultimately, they become the victim of norms of this male-dominating society. Furthermore, this patriarchal fabric of society has distorted the perceptions so deeply that these immoral practices are ^{seen} as camouflage to justify the murder. It is basically recognized as a legitimized act in order to take revenge or acquire property. There are number of reported cases in Pakistan, according to which women have faced dreadful consequences of being a weaker section of society. They have ^{not} been portrayed as protectors of family's honour, ~~but~~ rather as its potential violators whose choices and autonomy are tightly controlled by regressive cultural mindsets.

Thirdly, materialistic and economic motives are considered as major causes of honour killing in Pakistan. In ancient times, the sale of a woman for monetary gain was a common practice. Unfortunately, it is still prevalent in some areas of Pakistan, like in Punjab. In South Punjab, if someone is tilling other's land and wants to take it away, the best way, ironically, is to brand a woman. Nafeesa Shah says that "the honour killing industry turns the honour upside down and indicates its degeneration. Women have monetary worth in themselves in various societies and can be exchanged for money, but to knowingly kill them on false charges of sexual activity for monetary purposes is equivalent to prostituting them. As in the honour system to use a woman to make money would be a dishonourable act." In Pakistan, there is a famous proverb, "Zar, Zar, Zameen" meaning women, money, and land are considered ~~the~~ main sources of evil, clearly shows how women are treated in this country. They are dealt with as commodities that can be valuable for their men, but only to get benefits.

In land or property disputes, women are often targeted to stop them from claiming their rightful shares. For instance, in many villages, women are labelled as threat to family's honour, just to take away their inheritance.

In addition, the media in Pakistan, particularly dramas and ^{some} news channels, often plays a problematic role in shaping societal attitudes that indirectly fuels honour-based violence. Many dramas revolve around romanticized portrayals of college and university students, frequently using terms like "bhag kay shadi" and "marasims", which reinforce conservative fears regarding women's mobility. As a result, families, especially in tribal and rural areas become reluctant to allow their daughters to pursue education and jobs outside their villages. They restrict their women with fear that exposure to such influence may bring dishonour. Ultimately any rumor about a woman becomes the reason ~~of~~ her murder by male members of her family. This is because they believe what they see. Moreover, scandal within the media ^{du} industry have intensified the

perception that women in public spaces or modern professions are morally vulnerable. For example, in July 2016, popular Pakistani social media celebrity Gandeel Baloch was ~~murdered~~^{strangled} by her brother in an act of honour killing in Multan. The media had reportedly raised controversy by posting her controversial pictures on different platforms. She got manipulated by so-called fame of this industry which became the reason of her death. The worst point in that case was that her brother openly admitted by saying that she was bringing disrepute to their family and he could not tolerate that. Similarly, the media highlights gender-based violence on one hand, and glamorizes the jirga system and exposes the weaknesses of law-enforcement institutions, on other hand. It reduces the deterrent effect of legal consequences as 'perpetrators perceive the justice system as ineffective.

Another major cause of honour killing is family pressure that a woman faces in Pakistan. In tribal communities, women are called men's possession and are

bound to fulfill their will. It seems quite difficult for a tribeswoman to take the decisions of her life such as marriage. They ^{she} ~~are~~ ^{been} told to say 'yes' to decisions of male members of her family, since childhood. There are number of ^{such} reported cases in different parts of Pakistan, where women were killed in the name of honour. In 2025, Balochistan witnessed a shocking honour killing incident of a young couple, Bano Saitakzai and Ehsanullah Samalani. The couple has married of their own choice, defying tribal traditions and at the end, they were shot down on the orders of a tribe leader. In addition, a woman is not allowed ^{even} to seek divorce from a person who tortures her, as it is considered as dishonourable act. "Amnesty International" reported such a case on 27th April, 2009, in Peshawar, where Ayman Udas, a Pashtun singer was shot to death apparently by her two brothers. They viewed her divorce, remarriage and artistic career as damaging to family honour. In many cases, even victims of rape are punished instead of protected under the influence of

victim blaming culture. When a girl faces harassment, her family prioritises social reputation over individual rights, leading to tragic consequences. There^{is} a common thought that prevails in Pakistan, if any ^{such} incident happens with a girl, it is her fault, whether it can be her attire or her presence in wrong place. Such conservative thoughts lead to gender-based violence that ultimately takes the shape of honour killing.

Finally, the key contributing factor is failures of law-making institutions that lack effective measures to end this practice.

In Pakistan, particularly in rural areas, jirga system still prevails. It is most common in the areas where the power is in the hands of landlords and feudals. They are considered as major decision makers of their areas, whether the decision is according to law or not.

Such parallel justice systems of 'jirga' and 'panchayat' continue to issue illegal orders that have been overshadowed legal authorities. There are

Several cases reported in Pakistan, where the decision of killing in the name of honour was taken by local jirga system such as the case of Bano and Ehsanullah in Balochistan. Such unlawful actions show the weakness of legal systems. Where ^{there} is no rule or law in the country, the culprits are more encouraged to do this evil practice. This is because the history reveals the fact that there is no equality in this country; if a murderer belong to high class, no one can damage his reputation.

In one of the most publicized honour killing cases of such type committed in Pakistan, Samia Sarwar was murdered by her family in the Lahore office of well-known human rights activists Aasma Jahangir and Hina Jilil in 1999. The police did not make any arrests as her family was highly well-known in political circle.

Therefore, such incidents lead to severe consequences.

One of the gravest consequences of honour killing is the violation of human rights and dignity. Gender-based violation rooted in patriarchal norms deprives women's funda-

mental rights to life, liberty, and security. Persistent threats and violence have driven women towards self-harm or suicide. This disturbing trend known as "honour suicide" compels women to take their own lives under the pressure of their families that would not want to risk sending their males to prisons. Amongst other violent manifestation of patriarchal power over women are the practice of suttee, acid-attacks or other forms of defacing.

All these immoral actions collectively reinforce a culture where women are treated as a weak and subordinate section of society, facing discrimination at every stage.

In many regions of Pakistan, women are treated as something worthless and their basic rights are blatantly violated by labelling them as men's possession.

Therefore, this biased treatment on the basis of gender rather than humanitarian grounds constitutes a severe breach of internationally recognized human rights standards in Pakistan.

Secondly, honour killing generates deep psychological and social traumas within

Communities in Pakistan by creating a climate of fear and violence. As these incidents continue to occur more frequently in different parts of Pakistan, they normalize brutality and discourage victims from seeking protection due to the fear of bringing dishonour to the family. The culture of silence creates in such a way that it suppresses the voices of victims and perpetuates lasting traumas and social isolation. It also enhances long-lasting emotional distress, including anxiety, shame and feelings of withdrawal from society. Moreover, these crimes generate gender inequality by restricting women's access to education and employment, creating hinderance to women's empowerment. As per Global Gender Gap Index 2025, Pakistan is ranked as first worst country in the world for women in gender inequality. Consequently, honour killing and gender-based violence do not only harm individuals but also weaken families and communities by sustaining cycles of oppression and fear.

Thirdly, honour killing severely affects Pakistan's global image by portraying

the country as a society where women's fundamental rights are violated more openly. There are number of reported cases of such incidents in international media that highlight gender-based violence and weak rule of law in Pakistan. The NGO White Ribbon Pakistan reports that over 15,000 cases of honour crimes were registered between 2004 and 2016. This negative perception badly damages the country's diplomatic standings and its credibility on global forum. In addition, such crimes also discourage foreign investors and tourists who view the country as socially unstable and unsafe. Economically, it slows the socio-economic development by limiting women's participation in professional fields. Fear of violence restricts women's access to education and employment, negatively impacts economic growth of the country.

Finally, the frequent incidents of honour killing and illegal decisions of local jirgas have consequently resulted in erosion of public trust in judicial institutions. Though, several laws have been passed in the country, but failures in implementation

of these laws have created distrust among public. The history unveils several dreadful incidents where perpetrators easily got escape due to weak investigations and their influential family background. Therefore, victims ^{usually} feel reluctant to approach law-making institutions for justice by viewing in the surroundings, where thousands of cases are pending due to several reasons. In this country, it is a common perception that the poor cannot raise their voices against the powerful figures as the rule of might is right prevails in every institution. Hence, in many cases, due to this negative belief; victims remain silent under societal pressure on their families, slow pace of trials and biased decisions, that further erode public confidence in impartial justice system.

In conclusion, honour killing in Pakistan is a complex issue rooted in deep educational, socio-cultural, economic and institutional factors. It has dreadful consequences such as violation of human rights and dignity of women,

perpetuation of traumas and fear in society, negative impact on the country's global image and erosion of public confidence in impartial judicial system. Combating this crime requires rigorous implementation of laws, public awareness and sustained reforms to uphold constitutional promise and gender equality in the country. As Asma Jahangir, a famous human rights activist said, "Tradition, when divorced from justice, becomes a weapon of oppression." Therefore, ensurance of impartial and strong judicial system to enforce justice would be the first step to stop such crimes in Pakistan.
