

# Can Legislation Alone End Honour Killings in Pakistan

## Outline

### 1 Introduction

1.1 Attention Grabber

1.2 Background Information

1.3 Thesis Statement ✓

While legislation is crucial, it cannot alone eradicate honour killings in Pakistan because the root lie in deep patriarchy, social pressure Gender inequality, childhood restrictions, cultural traditions, social media influence, misinterpretation of religious teachings and illiterate society. Therefore, not only legal reforms but also education, social media awareness, women empowerment and religious scholars role in combating honour killings can address this problem. ✓

2. Understanding the concept and nature of honour killings

3. Role of legislation on honour killings in Pakistan

4. Can Legislation alone end honour killings?

4.1. Deep rooted Patriarchal mindset

- a) Male dominance and control of women's choices
- b) Perceptions of women as bearers of family honour

4.2 Social pressure

- a) Family honor is seen as collective responsibility rather than an individual concern.
- b) Community enforce conformity especially on women

4.3 Cultural traditions and tribal codes

- a) Honor Killings justified by customs like Pastunwali, Jirga or local laws.



b) Karo kari shows honor as death sentence for women

#### 4.4. Misinterpretation of religious teachings

a) Use of religion as a tool to justify patriarchal control

b) Customs not religion drive honour crimes

#### 4.5 Social media

a) Impact of public exposure on conservative honor norms

b) Social media trigger honor based violence c) Qandeel Baloch murder case

#### 4.6 Childhood Restrictions

a) Girls are subject to strict rules

b) This create a sense of revolt in an individual

#### 4.7: Poverty

a) Poverty indirectly fuels honor killings limiting facilities and honor the paramount social capital for the poor trigger action of honor killing



## **S. Solutions except legislation**

Legislation is not enough to end honor killings. It needs more efforts as well.

### **S.1. Role of religious scholars**

- a) Promoting accurate Islamic teachings on justice
- b) Give counterarguments against cultural practices

### **S.2. Media and Storytelling**

- a) Start public campaigns to promote awareness
- b) Changing societal attitudes through narration and representation

### **S.3 Education**

- a) curriculum reforms
- b) Community level behavior change initiatives

## **6. Conclusion**

Thesis restated



# The Essay

Picture a young man daring to follow his heart, a young woman choosing the person she loves, only to discover that their boldest acts of freedom are considered the greatest betrayals of family pride. In the blink of an eye, their lives are destroyed not by fate but by traditions a brutal reminder that in some societies, honour is measured in blood not humanity. Honor Killings are a global issue occurring across many cultures and communities. They are mostly reported in third world countries Pakistan remains one of the most affected countries with hundreds of victim each year. while legislation is



indispensable, it can not alone eradicate honour killings because the roots lie in deep patriarchy, social pressure, cultural traditions, gender inequality, social media influence, misinterpretation of religious teachings, poverty and childhood restriction.

Therefore, not only legislation but also, education, social media awareness, women empowerment and religious scholars role in combating honour killings can address this problem.

Honour killing also referred as honor killing or karo kari is the murder of a family member often women who are accused of bringing shame



or dishonor upon the family. This dishonor may arise from various actions including marrying without family consent, seeking divorce, rejecting a proposal, dressing inappropriately or engaging in relationships perceived as illicit. According to the Human rights commission of Pakistan, there were at least 405 honor killings in Pakistan 2024, a marked increase from 226 in 2023. This statistics reveals not only the persistence of the practice but also suggests that the real number may be significantly higher due to underreporting and misclassification.

Pakistan's legal framework has evolved over



time on honour killings. Before 1990, honor killings were considered as ordinary murder under Pakistan Penal code. However, with the introduction of Qisas and Diyat laws in the early 1990s, honour killings gained a loophole where the victim's legal heirs could forgive the killer. After the murder of Qandeel Baloch in 2016, Criminal law Act was passed which removes the right of perpetrators to pardon themselves under Qisas and Diyat if the victim's family forgive. This act introduce strict punishment including the death penalty.

Patriarchy lies at the core of honour killings



where women are treated as symbols of family reputation rather than autonomous individual.

A woman's choice of marriage, friendship, mobility or online presences become a marker of collective honour. In patriarchal societies, men are seen as the custodians of family honor, while women are viewed as symbols or vessels of that honor. Any perceived deviation from gender norms triggers violent responses. Patriarchy dictates that male authority must remain unquestioned while a woman expressing desire for her educational or marital life is interpreted as a threat to male control.

Social pressure plays



plays a crucial role in enforcing conformity particularly for women. Families are constantly monitored by their community and any deviation from accepted norms such as marrying without consent, rejecting suitor or engaging in relationship can be perceived as dishonoring the family. The fear of stigmatization often drives families to extreme measures including honor killing to restore their perceived reputation.

Gossips, rumours and societal judgement amplify this pressure as communities reward compliance and punish defiance. Research from the International Journal of Sociology shows that lower income families are more



vulnerable to public scrutiny and therefore more likely to resort to violence to maintain status.

Many honour killings are justified through traditional customs or tribal codes such as Pashtunwali in Pakistan, Jirga practices, Shariah misinterpretations, or local customary laws. These codes revolve around notions of ghairat, izzat or namus (honor). Such norms are often older than modern states and legal systems reflecting an era where collective identity mattered more than individual rights. Karo kari is the most extreme form where so called honor becomes a death sentence. Vani a banned tribal



practice in rural Pakistan forces young girls into marriage to settle family disputes showing how cultural traditions perpetuates honor based violence. cultural acceptance makes families believe that murder will cleanse dishonor and restore status. In some cases, families openly admitted the killing and even celebrated it as fulfilling a moral duty.

Although no major religion endorses honor killing misinterpretations and selective readings of religious traditions often provide families with a false moral justifications. Perpetrators often claim that killing a



a family relative for dishonoring the family is a moral or religious duty.

This misinterpretation arises from a combination of ignorance, lack of education and reliance on biased local religious authorities. In Islam, murder is unequivocally prohibited without strict legal procedures, yet patriarchal communities manipulate religious language to justify murder as a moral duty. Religion is not the root cause, its manipulation becomes a powerful driver enabling families to justify their crimes without remorse.

Social media is not the root cause of



honour killing but it can act as indirect trigger. Careers in acting, modelling or entertainment are often associated with glamour, public exposure and interactions with men which traditional families interpret as dishonorable. When individuals emulate the lifestyle of influencers or celebrities it may be seen as disrespectful or inappropriate behavior. Qandeel Baloch, a Pakistani social media personality gained fame for her bold posts challenging social norms. Her online presence provoked harsh criticism. Ultimately, her brother murdered her in 2016 citing "family honor" highlighting social media role



in triggering honour based violence

Childhood restrictions especially on girls lay the foundation for honour based thinking. From an early age, children are socialized into strict rules about behavior, dress, mobility and interpretation. Girls are taught that their actions directly affect family honor while boys are trained to protect it. This psychological conditioning creates internalized norms where any perceived deviation from strict boundaries is a threat. It discourages independent thought, emotional expression and negotiations leaving individuals ill.



prepared to challenges and create a sense of rebellion in them. These restrictions reinforcing a culture where honor killings are seen as an acceptable way to maintain social order.

Poverty can significantly trigger honor killing by creating social and psychological factors. Families lacking basic facilities often feel insecure and low in status. Seeing wealthier people's lifestyle can create jealousy or feeling of inadequacy. Any perceived deviation by a family member such as adopting modern behavior can be interpreted as dishonourable. Poverty exacerbate the fear of



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social judgement pushing families to enforce strict behavioral controls. This combination of insecurity and limited exposure to progressive ideas can escalate minor actions into perceived threats to family honor, indirectly increasing the risk of honor based violence.

Religious scholars can play a transformative role by openly declaring honor killing as an un-Islamic and differentiating cultural practices from religious teachings. Their sermons, community engagement and media presence can correct misconceptions, counter patriarchal interpretation



and guide society towards  
justice, compassion and  
lawful conflict resolution  
rooted in authentic  
Islamic principles.

Media has a crucial  
role in reshaping narratives  
story telling humanizes  
victims and challenges  
entrenched stereotypes.

Education is the best  
powerful tool for educating  
honor killing. Curriculum  
reforms promoting gender  
equality respect for  
autonomy and values  
are essential.

Legislation is  
crucial but it is not  
a stand alone solution.  
Honor Killings are deeply  
rooted in patriarchy, social



pressure , cultural norms,  
poverty , social media  
and misinterpretation of  
religious teaching. To end  
honor killings ~~in~~ Pakistan,  
must adopt a holistic  
approach combining  
law enforcement with  
media, education and  
religious scholars.

Conclusion

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