

HONOUR OF KILLING IN SOUTH PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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Abstract:

Honor killing is a serious social problem that persists in many South Asian countries, particularly in Punjab, Pakistan. It refers to the murder of someone, usually women, by close family members or loved ones who believe the victim's actions have shamed or embarrassed the family. The traditional cultural ideas of Punjab, where social concepts of "respect," and social status are strongly cherished, are firmly rooted in this practice. Honor killings often occur because of perceived violations of cultural norms, such as issues with individual liberty, marriage, or relationships.

killings for honor have been reported in the area even though laws have been taken to stop them, such as Pakistan's 2016 Anti-Honor Killing Law. This illustrates how patriarchal systems endure and how difficult it is to change deeply ingrained cultural attitudes. Murders of honor continues taking place, which shows an imbalance in both change in society and the enforcement of law. The study looks at how societal, cultural, and legal elements contribute to the continuation of honor killings in Pakistan's Punjab. It examines the difficulties victims, particularly women, experience as well as the initiatives taken by civil society and legal reforms to address this problem.

A multifaceted strategy is needed to address the issue, with an emphasis on bolstering the judicial system, questioning gender social norms, and advancing awareness and education to eliminate the fundamental causes of honor-based killing. To guarantee accountability, fairness, and the defense of the rights of people in the area, effective measures are necessary.

1. Introduction:

Honor killing is a type of abuse in which members of the victim's own family kill them, usually women, because they believe the victim has brought shame or dishonor to the family. Honor killings have historically been justified by the idea that when a family member—especially a woman—engages in behavior that deviates from social or cultural norms, the family's reputation and social position are in jeopardy. Honor killing has historical roots in a number of tribes and feudal societies where maintaining respect for the family required strict control over female behavior. In many societies, female obedience and purity were strongly linked to honor, and any defiance was greeted with harsh penalties, frequently including deadly violence.

However, despite extensive legislative changes and mounting international censure, honor killing still occurs in contemporary culture. Some contend that it still has significance in some places where traditional values predominate over contemporary views, while others see it as an outdated custom. Recent events have raised awareness of this problem worldwide, especially in South Asian nations like India and Pakistan. According to academics like Ahmed and Malik (2020), honor killings are not just a holdover from the past but are actively supported by ingrained gender biases, financial pressures, and the inability of judicial systems to safeguard vulnerable groups.

Furthermore, because pictures and accounts of honor killings are widely shared and perhaps even idealized in local narratives, globalization and the proliferation of technology have simultaneously both revealed and, in some circumstances, strengthened these practices. This article aims to investigate the various facets of honor killing, including its historical background, the social and cultural forces that support it, and its expressions in modern society. This article seeks to clarify the intricate relationship between old and new by examining how these murders persist in spite of contemporary judicial systems and evolving cultural norms.

In the end, comprehending why honor killing persists is crucial to creating measures that effectively abolish it and advance a more just and human rights-based system.

2. Understanding Honour Killing:

Honor killing is a prevalent form of murder that mostly targets women and continues to occur in many cultures, particularly in the Middle East and southern Asia. The term "honor killing" in Pakistan refers to the murdering of a family member, typically a woman, in the cause of preserving the family's honor. The actions of women are usually linked to this so-called "esteem," and these behaviors can include choosing her own companion, separation, refusing to be forced into marriage, being sexually assaulted, or even minor infractions like dressing differently or speaking to unrelated males.

The patriarchal idea that a family's status is determined by the behavior of all of her female members and the notion that any deviation from the standard calls for punishment—often death—is the primary premise of these transgressions.

Honor killings have a long history in Pakistan and are closely linked to patriarchal social structures and tribal practices. These killings have been carried out for a long time in rural and feudal societies, where women are seen as the guardians of the family reputation rather than as distinct individuals with rights. Community members, family elders, or traditional organizations like jirgas—tribal councils—which continue to have significant influence in various areas of the country's Sindh, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region—often plot and carry out such murders with their approval. Even while honor killings are prohibited by current Pakistani law, the practice's social acceptance occasionally outweighs the government's denunciation.

Other legal loopholes existed in Pakistan's past, such as the Islamic Qisas and Diyat regulations, which permitted the murderer to be forgiven by the victim's family. Because of a relationship between the innocent victim and the murderer, this occasionally resulted in the criminal escaping away with the crime. Even with these improvements brought forth by the Anti-Honour Crime Legislation of 2016, enforcement remains challenging.

Honor murder instances are quite similar in that they are typically planned, committed by members of the same family, and absolved by suitable types of discipline. A well-known example is the 2016 murder of Baloch, a social media star from Pakistan, by her sibling for "introducing disrespect" to the family. The societal mentality that caused her death persists despite her fame and the public outcry that followed. Five girls are said to have died in another horrific crime in Kohistan Region District in 2012 after a video of them singing and clapping at their marriage ceremony with boys went viral online.

Regardless of whether it results in the killings of innocent people, the case demonstrated how ingrained the idea of familial respect is, even if government inquiries were delayed for years.

The societal justification for honor-based killings is what distinguishes them from other types of homicide. Honor killings, in contrast to other crimes that could be motivated by egotism, jealousy, or interpersonal strife, are frequently approved by a community or family, which makes them both illegal and legally binding. The offenders frequently show no remorse and may feel good about themselves because they "cleansed" the identity of the victim. Honor killing is particularly deadly and considered acceptable in certain regions of Pakistan because of this moral rotation, because the murderer is viewed as a rescuer rather than a criminal. In other instances, it even plays a role in the absence of accusations, convictions, and reporting.

Statistics further illustrate how serious the problem is. A significant number of victims in the more than 1,000 honor killing cases that occur each year are women, according to the worldwide Supreme Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). Due to underestimation and the normalization of honor killings in some areas, the actual number of honor killings is probably far greater than the 384 that the Human Resources Compliant Program reported in the first 10 months of 2022 alone (HRCP, 2022). Many of these homicides are falsely reported as deaths or accidents in order to avoid legal repercussions, according to studies conducted by organizations such as the Aurat Foundation.

Furthermore, because of inadequate investigations, pressure from society on evidence, and family members withdrawing from giving evidence under pressure or social pressure, verdict rates in these kinds of cases continue to be remarkably low. In conclusion, killing for dignity in Pakistan is a purposeful, socially created act that results from a confluence of cultural tradition, societal control, and misogyny. An act of passion is not illegal. Although laws have been put forth to prevent this behavior, the true struggle is to alter the societal perspective that sees women as the defenders of dignity instead of independent persons. To end the cycle of violence, we need education, the media, law enforcement, and a reexamination of religion. The initial step to effective therapy and societal change is comprehending the unique characteristics and framework of honor.

3. Domestic Violence and Honour Killing:

Although murder for honor and assault in homes are often seen as separate issues, they are closely related forms of gender-based violence in Pakistan. At their core, both are expressions of male dominance, societal control, and patriarchal ideology that seek to suppress women's autonomy. Domestic violence is often a precursor to or even a component of honor-based crimes.

Domestic violence escalates to psychological or emotional assault when a woman is perceived to have crossed a social or cultural threshold, such as choosing her life partner, refusing an arranged marriage, divorcing, or just expressing her independence. By defending assault as a moral need "to safeguard relatives esteem," rather than as a form of personal retaliation, these circumstances transform personal trauma into a public demonstration of authority and punishment.

Women in Pakistan are particularly vulnerable to both widespread domestic violence and serious honor-related violence since they are frequently viewed as the protectors of family honor. In contrast to other types of murders where the driving force may be disagreement or financial gain, honor killings are driven by the pervasive belief that a woman's claimed disobedience dishonors the entire family. As a result of this belief, women are punished not just by their husbands but also by their fathers, brothers, and even mothers, which feeds the cycle of domestic abuse. Even while domestic violence is not criminal, there are instances in which families and communities accept it as usual, even encourage it, or ignore it.

34% of women who were previously married reported having experienced spousal violence, and many stated that abuse was often perceived as a family issue rather than a legal one, reported to a 2017 Pakistan demographic information and Hygiene Poll (PDHS) (PDHS, 2017).

Every domestic assault and murder depends on the role that men's power and influence play. Men are seen as the defenders of family values, particularly in rural and male-dominated settings, and are tasked with upholding the subservience or "cleansing" of female relatives. Every variety of a woman, whether real or imagined, is seen as a threat to social norms and a challenge to power. Male social status, belonging, and self-importance are frequently linked to his capacity to control the women in his family. It is regarded as decreasing if a person does not put up the effort to do so.

In the end, some men resort to abuse in order to regain control, either through commonplace damage or, in extreme cases, through honor killing. According to Amnesty International (2019), in addition to being tolerated in many parts of Pakistan, this kind of violence is also encouraged by customary laws and indirect legal structures like jirgas that and governing bodies, which frequently rule in favor of the perpetrators. Many survivors who attempt to flee are forced to return to violent homes because they lack housing, financial support, or legal counsel.

Ending this loop requires a recognition that honorable murders and domestic assault are on a range of severity and that accepting one often makes the other worse. To stop honor killings, a more thorough commitment to addressing domestic assault on every levels—household, society as a

whole legal, and institutional—is required. This include providing survivors with psychological treatment, assisting women's shelters, educating authorities on gender equality, and improving the implementation of laws like the Domestic Violence (Most importantly, in order to end the silence surrounding honor-based violence, the testimonies of survivors, human rights advocates, and religious scholars who maintain that such crimes have no legal relevance for faith or mankind must be heard.

To sum up, the link between killings of honor and domestic violence is alarming and reflects the cultural norms that continue to oppress Pakistani women. Until society confronts the acceptance of violence in families and dismantles the patriarchal mindset that sees women as property, honor killings will continue to be seen as acceptable extensions of domestic control. This situation calls for a societal awakening where laws are enforced, victims are protected, and silence is replaced with action and unity.

Prevention or Protection) Act.

4. Cultural Norms and Honour-Based Violence:

In Pakistan, social norms and traditional beliefs have a significant impact on attitudes on honor-based violence, particularly in rural and tribal communities. The concept of "izzat" (esteem) is deeply embedded in South Asian societies, where family dignity is often seen as dependent on the behavior and assumed virginity of women. In rural and tribal areas of provinces like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Balochistan and interior Sindh, many groups think that restricting a female's choices—such as who she marries, how she clothes, or whether she follows education—is essential to maintaining family dignity.

If a woman is believed to have violated these standards, the family or community may respond brutally, often on the pretext of recovering dignity. These concepts are socially and culturally reinforced by individuals as well as by the collective thinking of seniors, loved ones, and community leaders. Honor-based sanctions are commonly approved or even required by the panchayat and traditional local courts known as jirga, which operate in tandem with the official legal system. Women are usually not seen as independent actors in these situations, but rather as manifestations of the family's reputation.

Families may be discouraged from seeking justice in order to avoid social disgrace, or they may feel pressured by the broader community to react violently in order to "protect their face" following a so-called honor crime. Honor crimes are particularly challenging to investigate and bring to justice due of this societal acceptance, as families often choose to cover up the crime or protect the perpetrator. The community's sometimes passive, complicit, or even supportive reaction to the violence serves to further normalize it. Even with initiatives to strengthen Pakistan's legal system, such the 2016 law which rendered murders for honor non-compoundable, cultural resistance endures.

According to UN Women and the Pakistani Committee on Human Rights, laws alone won't stop such violations unless cultural attitudes shift. True transformation requires information, education, and the abolition of harmful traditions that confuse honor with violence. Instead of using force or punishment, communities must be motivated to redefine honor through justice, respect for all individuals, and dignity.

5. Traditional and Tribal Influences:

The continuation of honor killings in Pakistan is closely linked to social norms and traditional and tribal legal systems, especially in remote and conservative areas where customary practices frequently take precedence over state law. These areas are governed by panchayats and jirgas, which are unofficial, all-male tribal groups that serve as alternative legal systems. These organizations continue to hold enormous authority despite being prohibited by the Pakistani

Constitution and they're frequently challenged in court, particularly in regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the Balochistan southern the Punjab, and rural Sindh. Honor killings are not only accepted in these regions, but they are frequently justified by these systems as a way to "restore family or community honor," which upholds tribal laws and patriarchal authority over fundamental rights.

Tribal fairness, which is founded on communal punishment, retaliation, and patriarchal ideals instead of freedom of speech or due process, is upheld by the jirga system. Jirgas usually decide to punish or execute the lady in order to clear the family's name when there is perceived dishonor, such as when a woman marries without consent or is spotted with a man. Families frequently look to these tribal groups for approval rather than pursuing judicial action, and frequently, murders are pre-approved or agreed in jirga sessions. According to a report from the Human Rights Committee of Pakistan research (HRC, 2022), jirgas frequently issue "karo-kari" (darkened man and woman) rulings that declare the victims guilty without a trial or supporting documentation, and they are involved in hundreds of honor killings annually.

This harmful culture is also maintained by customs in rural regions. Because of societal conformity, considerable illiteracy, and little government monitoring, these customs are rarely challenged and are passed down through the generations. Even while Islam expressly prohibits extrajudicial executions, honor killings are viewed in certain contexts as socially required acts of fairness or religious obligation rather than as crimes. The Qisas or Diyat laws, which permit households to "forgive" the killer—who is frequently a family member—are two examples of legal loopholes that many rural families either ignore or take advantage of when reporting these homicides to the authorities. Honor killings are carried out, settled inside the circle of relatives or tribe, and remain unpunished as a result of this vicious cycle.

Honor killings are carried out, settled within the circle of relatives or tribe, and remain unpunished as a result of this vicious cycle. Amnesty International said in its 2019 report that over 500 women were killed in Pakistan during that time in the name of honor, with the majority of these cases resulting in compromise or the dropping of charges.

Another significant barrier to justice is the cultural approval and silence surrounding honor killings. In highly patriarchal societies, honor is not only a personal issue but also a public assessment that influences social relationships, marriage opportunities, and family standing. Norm-challenging women are viewed as symbols of family pride rather than as unique individuals with rights, and their behavior, no matter how small, is viewed as treacherous. Instead of being condemned, men who carry out honor killings are frequently viewed as martyrs or heroes and are given support and sympathy. Bystanders, law police, and even survivors are deterred from speaking out by this prevailing mindset. Those who do frequently encounter criticism, threats, or expulsion. In these situations, justice becomes a byproduct of cultural preservation, and silence becomes a defense mechanism.

In certain tribes and rural locations, killing for honor is not merely condoned but considered as "defended" or even "mandatory". The concept that a man must murder a female relative in order to restore his family's respect is so deeply rooted in the cultural fabric that some of the legal changes of current years—such as that of the year 2016, Anti-Honour The murder of legislation, that has made it harder to forgiving these crimes—have observed limited success on the ground. A research by Shahid & Husain (2019) in the Annals of Gender Research indicated that despite legislative improvements, over sixty percent of murders for honor still went undetected in certain parts of Balochistan and Sindh, where tribal practices dominate institutional law enforcement.

In some areas, customary law governs day-to-day affairs while constitutional law is ambiguous or unavailable, creating a situation known as "legal duality."

The state has to invest in school change, public education campaigns, and rural community empowerment in addition to passing legislation in order to weaken the influence of these tribal traditions and informal judicial systems. Protections for survivors and whistleblowers must be ensured, and law enforcement organizations must be educated to operate without regard to tribal influences.

Crucially, in order to challenge the cultural rationales that enable honor killings to continue, religious leaders and intellectuals must openly condemn them as unfair and un-Islamic. In Pakistan, where the perilous customs of tribal honor continue to take lives in silence, the battle against honor killings must be fought in communities, homes, and minds rather than just in courtrooms.

6. Logical and Psychological Factors:

Honor killing in Pakistan stems from a complex network of psychological anxieties, social self-worth, unstable emotions, and logical fallacies that justify murder in the name of honor. It is not just the product of cultural custom or legal loopholes. In actuality, these crimes stem from irrational anxiety, enviousness, wounded egos, and a skewed belief in ethics within a patriarchal structure, despite the fact that they are frequently presented as acts of defense or necessity. The psychological underpinning of many honor killings is the conviction that the male family members need to continue to exert control over the actions and decisions of the women in their household.

Male relatives may experience deep-seated feelings of humiliation, jealousy, and emasculation when this control is thought to be endangered, as could happen when a woman marries for her own sake, engages with non-mahram males, or pursues education or work. Social expectations, which gauge a man's honor not by his own deeds but rather by the alleged "chastity" and subservience of the women in his household, frequently make these sentiments worse.

Particularly when a woman wants autonomy in areas of love or marriage, jealousy is a major factor. When their authority is questioned, a father or brother may feel manipulated or "disrespected," but not because they have been harmed. Excessive acts of assault under the guise of honor might result from this injured ego as well as peer and family pressure. A study in the International Magazine of Law and Justice Science (Ijaz & Khalid, 2020) found that narcissistic traits, strict gender role views, and an emotional desire for control and affirmation are common among those who commit honor crimes.

Since Pakistan lacks extensive psychiatric treatments, particularly in rural and traditional communities where honor crimes are most prevalent, these emotional and psychological vulnerabilities are rarely treated.

Incorrect family pride, where honor is seen as a material possession that may be lost or restored through violence, is another motivating reason. Generation after generation perpetuates the idea that a family needs to exact "revenge" in order to improve its reputation in the minds of the public. Murder is mistakenly perceived as a means of regaining respect, and family honor turns into a public commodity. Local traditions and unofficial legal systems such as *jirgas*, which frequently put pressure on relatives to "get rid of" the shame rather than pursue justice or reconciliation, support this fallacious reasoning.

This reasoning is not based on any religious teaching—Islam firmly prohibits murder and protects the right to existence yet on the basis of an ethnic and cultural norm that puts the good of the group before the rights of the individual.

Another major cause of these logical and psychological fallacies is a lack of knowledge and awareness. Perpetrators are frequently brought up in cultures that view women as inferior creatures who need to be "kept in line," dependents, or naturally dishonorable. In the absence of formalized schooling and an introduction to intellectual curiosity, people absorb outdated notions of honor,

shame, and gender. Over 22 million children, mostly girls, are not attending school, according to the Pakistani Ministry of Federal Education's Pakistan Statistics on Education Report (2021). Communities are kept in a circle of ignorance by this lack of access to education, particularly for women, which makes it difficult for them to distinguish between justice and violence, morality and misogyny, and culture and religion.

The media also has a complicated and conflicting role in supporting or opposing certain ways of thinking. On the one hand, local news sources, movies, and television plays have a history of romanticizing forced marriages, portraying women in subordinate roles, or defending male authority as a sign of strength. These representations have the potential to subtly support negative social attitudes and actions. Progressive media initiatives have started to question these conventions in recent years, nevertheless. Dramas that tackle crimes against honor and women's rights, such as *Udaari* and *Baaghi* (which is based on the life of Qandeel Baloch), have sparked debate and prompted critical thought. Those who survived, activists, and journalists now use social media in particular to highlight injustice and rally solidarity.

However, decades of regressive propaganda still require a widespread change in public perception brought about by responsible media. In conclusion, murders of honor in Pakistan are rooted in behavioral traits and faulty reasoning motivated by pride, ego, jealousy, and ignorance; they are not just an ethical or cultural problem. Emotional immaturity, a lack of sympathy, societal pressure, and deeply ingrained gender bias all contribute to these homicides. Addressing the mentality that normalizes honor-based violence requires schooling, psychological awareness, and appropriate media narratives. We can only start to undermine the honor standard and replace it with ideals of equality, compassion, and dignity when society starts to acknowledge the illogical psychological foundations of such acts.

7. Religious Interpretations and Misconceptions:

The pervasive abuse of religion to excuse these heinous crimes is among the most alarming features of honor killings in Pakistan. Even though Islam, the most common religion in Pakistan, upholds the importance of life, justice, and mercy, many of its offenders and even some sections of society try to justify honor-based violence by claiming it is religiously justified. This abuse results from long-standing cultural customs that are mistakenly confused with religious doctrine, enabling societies to condone or ignore violent crimes carried out in an act of honor. Although Islamic doctrines do not advocate or condone honor murders, the cultural narrative frequently portrays them as being under Shariah law, which makes reform and justice attempts even more difficult.

Islam has a clear position on the value of human life. According to Surah Al-Ma'idah, "Whoever kills an individual [unfairly]... it is thought that he had murdered all mankind," the Quran unequivocally denounces murder. According to Quran 5:32, "whoever saves a life is as though he had rescued all mankind." Additionally, Surah An-Nur states that false allegations are a serious sin and that strict evidence standards (such as four eyewitnesses) must be met to justify punitive action in cases of suspected sexual misconduct (Quran 24:4). Islam supports due process, judicial justice, and the defense of individual rights, according to these beliefs. In reply to perceived dishonor, there is no clause that permits relatives or community members to enforce the law themselves.

Regardless of the reason, extrajudicial executions are strictly prohibited in Islam. Distinguished Islamic scholars from all around the world have condemned honor killings in fatwas (religious decisions), making it clear that Islamic law does not support such practices. Leading Pakistani scholar Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani has categorically denounced honor killings, calling them un-Islamic and comparing them to *qatl-e-nafs* (the unlawful slaughter of a soul). Scholars associated with Darul Uloom Deoband within India and the University of Al-Azhar in

Egypt have also condemned honor killings as acts of bid'ah (innovation) and jahalat (ignorance), reaffirming that these practices are rooted in cultural traditions rather than religious beliefs (Zia, 2009).

These Islamic rulings highlight how Islam values due process and personal responsibility over mob justice or familial revenge. In many regions of Pakistan, however, cultural customs still take precedence over religious beliefs. Honor is viewed as a shared value associated with a woman's submissiveness and modesty in the tribal, feudal, and agricultural civilizations. It is considered a breach of family honor when a woman selects her spouse, files for separation, or faces allegations of unethical behavior—often without proof.

The erroneous notion that the household is protecting its moral purity thus serves as justification for the ensuing violence. Jirgas, or tribal councils, which function outside of the framework of law and contravene Islamic due process, frequently approve of these customs that have been carried down through the years. Honor-based violence is maintained by this cultural hegemony rather than by religion (Ali & Gavino, 2008).

Therefore, the difficulty is in distinguishing religious teaching from cultural traditions. Many Pakistanis rely on inherited norms or local elders for moral advice since they lack access to proper religious information, particularly in rural or undereducated populations. Because of this, they are susceptible to confusing harmful behaviors with Islamic principles. Religious literacy programs run by certified Islamic experts who can speak the local languages and explicitly address these misconceptions are desperately needed to counteract this. Teachings that support justice, denounce extrajudicial killings, and uphold the authentic Islamic perspective on the sanctity of life must be incorporated into Friday speeches (khutbas), religious television shows, and school curriculum.

Furthermore, in order to strengthen academic voices against honor killings, the media, civic society, and religious organizations must work together. Public opinion can start to change when campaigns highlight reputable ulema (religious experts) and provide unambiguous textual evidence against these crimes. This strategy has already proven effective in campaigns against domestic abuse and child marriage, when religious experts were instrumental in advancing change. In conclusion, despite the pervasive cultural practice of portraying honor killings as religiously justifiable, Islam does not condone them in Pakistan. Honor-based violence violates Islamic law's demands for justice, equal treatment, and the preservation of life. Deep cultural misunderstandings, not religious mandates, are the cause of these atrocities' ongoing prevalence. Therefore, it is crucial to debunk the myth that Islam supports honor killings by raising religious consciousness, aiding reformist academics, and teaching people to discern between religion and culture. The attitude that encourages honor-based crimes can only be challenged and eventually eradicated by Pakistani society through this distinct division.

8. Legal and Governmental Response:

There has been a combination of advancements and enduring difficulties in Pakistan's judicial and administrative reaction to honor killing. For many years, the Qisas and Diyat laws considered honor killings as private family affairs, allowing the victim's family—which is sometimes the exact same as the perpetrator's—to forgive the murderer. Due to extensive abuse, this legal provision allowed murderers to get away with their crimes by using families' "forgiveness." The amendment to the Criminal Law, 2016 was passed by Pakistan in order to address the gap by making sure that honor killings would be considered murder regardless of forgiveness. Notwithstanding this encouraging development, justice is still hampered by flaws in the legal system.

The accused are frequently acquitted or given lighter sentences as a result of inadequate investigation techniques, inadequate evidence gathering, and witness pressure (HRC, 2022). Although there are still obstacles to overcome, law enforcement, courts, and legislation play a

crucial role in the efficient application of anti-honor killing laws. Rural police are frequently hesitant to file formal complaints, particularly when social pressure or collusion with powerful local leaders is involved. Slow judicial procedures and a lack of witness protection present problems for courts as well. Due to cultural conventions or a lack of reliable evidence, many judges are lenient in situations involving honor.

Even while laws have improved, enforcement is still patchy and frequently symbolic rather than substantive. A mixed picture emerges from the achievements and shortcomings of state initiatives. On the one hand, Pakistan's legal reform efforts have received international acclaim, and convictions have resulted from a number of high-profile cases. However, honor killings continue to occur at a startlingly high rate, particularly in isolated regions with limited state power. Stronger enforcement of current laws is necessary for sustainable change, but so are community involvement, police reform, and extensive awareness programs aimed at dispelling a cultural perspective that condones this kind of abuse (Amnesty Worldwide, 2021; UN Women the nation of Pakistan, 2020).

9. Role of NGOs and Civil Society:

Organizations and civil society have played an important and significant role in the battle against honor killing in Pakistan. Organizations that promote human rights and public education campaigns have been essential in opposing the social and cultural acceptance of honor-based violence, even though state systems have frequently had difficulty with awareness and enforcement. Shirkat Gah, the Aurat Foundation, and the Human Rights Council of Pakistan (HRCP) are just a few of the groups that have continuously brought attention to honor killing instances, compiled data, and pushed the government for legislative changes. National discussions on the subject have been triggered by campaigns such as "righteousness for Qandeel Baloch" and "Honor is Not in Murder" (the Human Resources Compliance Program, 2022.; Shirkat Gah, 2021). NGOs support survivors and the families of victims in addition to advocating on their behalf. This include financial aid, shelter homes, psychological counseling, and legal aid. To provide protection and rehabilitation, groups like SACH (Struggle for Change) and the Acid Survivors Foundation collaborate closely with impacted women and their families. In remote and tribal regions, where victims are frequently abandoned or subjected to more abuse by their own groups, these support networks are extremely important. The role of civil society also includes engagement in advocacy and education.

NGOs conduct community discussions, workshops, and school programs with the goal of altering perceptions about violence, gender roles, and honor. They spread messages of justice, equality, and tolerance through grassroots activism and media participation. In order to bridge the divide between religion and human rights, several projects also involve religious scholars to elucidate Islamic perspectives against honor murders (UN Women the nation of Pakistan, 2020). In the larger endeavor to end honor killings, civil society's activity continues to represent a ray of hope despite scarce resources and security issues. To guarantee long-term, sustainable change, non-governmental organizations, politicians, and international partners must continue to work together.

10. Findings and Discussion:

With its roots in cultural customs and skewed views on morality and social standing, honor killing is still one of the most heinous forms of violence against women in Pakistan. Despite increased awareness and legislative changes, the problem is nevertheless complicated and persistent; hundreds of incidents are reported annually, but countless more are not because of social complicity, shame, or fear. Though the true number is thought to be significantly higher due to inadequate reporting and incorrectly classifying such murders as suicides or accidents, the Human Rights Council of Pakistan (HRCP) reports that over 1,000 cases of honor killings are reported each year (HRCP, 2022).

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Especially in the countryside and feudal areas of Pakistan like Punjab, Sindh, and KP, where women are viewed as the carriers of family honor and where societal influence over what they do is reinforced, the confusion results from the blending of tribal practices. According to Ali and Gavino (2008), these customs precede Islam and are maintained by cultural structures like as "jirgas" or tribe councils, which frequently support or encourage violence based on honor.

The patriarchal mentality that views women as ownership and inferior to males is a significant contributing cause to honor killings. A woman's actions are seen as reflecting on the entire family, especially the male members, in many Pakistani neighborhoods, particularly in remote and conservative areas. It is considered an insult to masculine honor if she is thought to have violated the law, even if it was through legally sanctioned means like a court marriage. Under the guise of regaining lost honor, this belief system permits and even justifies violence. Women who exercise their autonomy are frequently punished, especially when it comes to choices on marriage, attire, mobility, and social engagement.

In contrast, men are rarely held to identical standards, underscoring the gender-based nature of honor (Shah, 2017).

Gaps in the law and institutions also reflect the institutionalization of this violence. While Pakistani approved the Anti-Honour Murder Law in 2016, which stipulates that offenders must be imprisoned for life, regardless of whether their families pardon them, implementation of the law is still lax. Families are under pressure to "settle" the issue in private, and police frequently hesitant to file prosecutions. The killer is frequently a close relative, and the murder is not considered a crime but rather a private matter. Reduced penalties or acquittals are frequently the result of judicial delays, a lack of protection for witnesses, and public sympathy for the perpetrator.

The belief that honor murders are not only acceptable but also rare to have major repercussions is reinforced by this climate of impunity (Warraich, 2016).

Education and the media have a big part in both promoting and opposing honor-based violence. On the one hand, certain regional dramas and movies have long glorified men's dominance over women, implicitly endorsing ideas of honor. However, in recent years, there have been an increasing number of media initiatives that question these narratives and draw attention to the suffering of victims. However, the scope of these initiatives is still constrained in the absence of a more comprehensive cultural change, which is aided by public awareness campaigns, gender-responsive training, and educational reform.

In conclusion, honor killings in Pakistan are caused by ingrained cultural norms, patriarchal attitudes, and legal flaws rather than being the product of isolated acts of violence. Although religion is regularly mentioned, the true motivation is social, and spiritual principles are commonly misunderstood or exploited to support activities that are essentially contrary to Islam. Laws alone won't be enough to break this cycle; society as a whole must change to view women as independent individuals rather than as symbols of family honor. The only way for Pakistan to start destroying the mentality that keeps defending such horrible crimes is via concerted permitted, educational, and social reform.

11. Recommendations and Solutions:

In Pakistan, honor killing is still a pervasive problem that necessitates over time religious, cultural, and educational changes in addition to legislative action. Because of patriarchal systems, lax legal enforcement, and societal acceptance, the crime continues to occur despite increased awareness and national condemnation. Therefore, in order to address the underlying reasons and guarantee women's protection and dignity, an integrated strategy is necessary.

To guarantee that honor killings are punished without compromise, legislative changes must be reinforced first and foremost. The infamous "forgiveness loophole," which allowed family members to pardon the murderer—typically a relative—was eliminated by the 2016 Anti-Honour Violence Bill, but it still has to be implemented more strictly. Even if the loved one forgives the crime, the law still requires the offender to serve a life sentence in jail (Warraich, 2016). However, underreporting, faulty investigations, and forced settlements are frequently the result of inadequate regulation and local power relations. Enforcing accountability for carelessness, protecting witnesses and victims' families, and educating police officers and court personnel on how to handle cases involving gender-based violence are all essential to overcoming this. To further guarantee prompt justice, rapid-track courts and dedicated prosecutors for honor killing cases should be established.

In order to change public views, spiritual and educational awareness are equally crucial. Despite Islam's severe prohibition against taking a life without following the proper legal procedures, honor killings are frequently fraudulently rationalized in the context of religion. To openly condemn honor killings and address the misreading of religious scriptures, renowned Islamic scholars and spiritual figures ought to be enlisted. Islamic study groups, Islamic media programming, and mosque sermons can all be effective means of disproving the erroneous theological defense of such atrocities (Zia, 2009). At the same time, equality for women and men, human rights, and critical thinking should be incorporated into formal education. The social underpinnings of honor killings can start to shift when students are instructed to challenge detrimental customs and regard all human life equally.

It is equally important to change culture through the media and public conversation. Digital, cinema, and television media from Pakistan have a huge audience and have the power to change people's minds. Dramas that tackle themes of women's rights and gender-based violence, such as *Udaari* and *Baaghi*, have demonstrated how narrative can promote humanity and social change. Media sources should be urged to celebrate equality between men and women as a national value, tell survivor experiences, and spread messages against honor-based violence. Radio, television, and social media public service announcements should oppose the exaltation of "honour" and advance the notion that genuine honour is found in treating everyone with fairness, empathy, and dignity (Aslam, 2012).

Perhaps the most long-term approach is to empower women and include communities. Access to high-quality education, skill-development initiatives, and financial independence must be provided to women. Women who are economically empowered are better equipped to make decisions, fight abuse, and stand up for their rights. The range of support services offered by governmental and non-governmental groups, including as women's shelters, legal assistance, and psychiatric counseling, should be increased. Programs for community outreach should engage men and women in discussions on gender equality and non-violence, particularly in rural and tribal communities where honor killings are more prevalent.

To promote change and oppose detrimental customs, local leaders, educators, and personalities must be enlisted. Initiatives such as the Acid Survivors Foundation and the Aurat Foundation have

demonstrated efficacy in empowering the grassroots, and their ideas can be modified and extended to prevent honor killings. Men and boys must also be included in community and educational initiatives. Boys need to be trained early on to respect women's autonomy and to avoid violence because patriarchal views are inherited. An entire generation that promotes equity and denounces honor-based violence can be produced through gender-sensitization conferences, father-son mentorship initiatives, and school-based interventions.

In summary, murder for honor within Pakistan is a complicated, multidimensional problem that is amenable to change. The current quo can be challenged by a mix of tougher law enforcement, religious dismantling of false misconceptions, improvements in education, media-driven transformation of culture, and grassroots empowerment. In order to end honor killings and guarantee equality and respect for all of its inhabitants, Pakistan needs political determination, social fortitude, and a continuous public commitment. The country already has legal structure and civil society capability.

12. Conclusion:

One of among the most unsettling types of violence stemming from cultural misunderstandings, religious doctrine distortion, and patriarchal domination is honor killing. As discussed throughout this conversation, honor killing is a widespread societal and moral issue in Pakistan rather than just a legal one. It mostly targets women and girls over behaviors deemed to be against family honor, like getting married against their will, picking a spouse of their own, dressing a specific way, or just expressing their independence. In many regions of the nation, this type of violence is frequently planned, socially acceptable, and collectively justified. The continuation of honor killings in spite of legal changes and increased awareness emphasizes the necessity of a multifaceted strategy that incorporates community-level initiatives, cultural change, legal action, and religious clarity.

The article's findings show that cultural customs, rather than any theological belief, are the main justification for honor killings. The majority of Pakistanis' religion, Islam, places a strong emphasis on justice, due process, and the sanctity of life while outright prohibiting murder. However, societies continue to be misled by the misconception that Islam supports honor killings since cultural customs are sometimes portrayed as religious duties. Scholars throughout the Muslim worldwide, including those in Pakistan, have categorically denounced honor-based violence as being against Shariah and un-Islamic.

To dispel the widespread misunderstandings, such interpretations must be promoted through official educational programs, sermons at mosques, and media efforts. The severity of the situation is further supported by statistical data. The Human Rights Commissioner of Pakistan (HRCP) claims that hundreds of cases are recorded annually, but many remain unreported because of institutional failure, embarrassment, or fear. Most of these kinds of offenses are carried out by family members, frequently with the help of local authorities like jirgas and the community.

Even though the Anti-Honour Murder Law of 2016 removed the legal gap that previously permitted offenders to go free following "forgiveness" from the victim's family, victims are still not receiving justice because of poor implementation, a lack of police training, court delays, and social pressures. Efforts must go beyond the judicial system in order to completely eradicate honor killings. To break the mentality that links women's behavior to family reputation, a significant social awakening is needed. To assist young brains unlearn the harmful notions that support gender-based violence, educational institutions must implement gender awareness and human rights education.

The media must keep developing as a potent medium for promoting knowledge, dispelling damaging preconceptions, and presenting women as respected and autonomous citizens of community rather than defenders of male honor. It is morally required of religious leaders to denounce the exploitation of Islam as a justification for violence. They must impart lessons to their communities that are based on justice, compassion, and the truth. Furthermore, ending a pattern of silence and obedience requires empowering women via education, economic autonomy, and legal knowledge. For women who are at risk, community-based organizations should offer safe spaces, hotlines, and legal support. Through focused advertising campaigns and mentorship initiatives that support mutual respect and healthy masculinity, men and boys need to be included in these initiatives.

Honor killing is an offense that has an impact on society as a whole; it is not a personal problem. A loss to mankind and a mark on the public conscience result from every life lost in a moment of honor. The entire country, not just the authorities or the courts, must take a strong, united stance against this savage practice. Together, families, schools, clergy, legislators, and members of the media must establish a society in which honor is characterized by equality, justice, and dignity rather than by power and violence.

In conclusion, a concerted, persistent, and calculated campaign at all levels—legal, societal, religious, and personal—is necessary to end honor killing in Pakistan. It calls for a mental change, the guts to defy convention, and the empathy to regard each and every person's existence equally. Pakistan can only become a truly equitable and humane society when its citizens reject violence committed in a place of honor and show support for the victims. In the end, the battle against honor killing is a battle for justice, human rights, and the nation's soul.

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