



## KARO KARI-THE MURDER OF HONOUR IN SINDH PAKISTAN: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper aims to discuss the wider context, in which honour murders occur, the social structures which contribute to the occurrence and perpetuation of the practice of honour murders. An ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in Jacobabad Sindh, Pakistan. The study found that honour murders were not solely driven by customs and traditions, but also by a feudal culture, male-dominated social structures, the complicit role of state institutions and law enforcement agencies and a web of vested interests. Therefore, honour murders may be prevented by reducing the influence and interference of feudal lords on state institutions, in particular law enforcement agencies, and by promoting education that challenges a patriarchal and feudal mind-set in the community.*

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**Keywords:** Honour murder, Honor killing, Feudal structure, Male dominancy, Sindh Pakistan.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Scope And Size of Honour Murders

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that at least 5000 women and girls worldwide are murdered each year in the name of so-called honour (United Nations Population Fund, 2000). However, many women's groups in the Middle East and South Asia and researchers

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suspect these figures and believe that the victims are at least four times this (Fisk, 2010). The homicide of women and girls in the name of so-called honour by their male family members or community is no longer limited to any national borders.

It is happening worldwide but some regions are very much affected, such as South Asia and the Middle East (Mayell, 2002) (United Nations Population Fund, 2000). In the South Asia region, Pakistan is infamous for violence against women and honour murders (HMs) have become increasingly common practice. A survey placed Pakistan at number three in the world's most dangerous countries for women (Thomson Reuters Foundation Trust, 2011). 1000 women and girls are victims of HMs every year in Pakistan (The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan HRCP (2012).

In 2012 at least 913 women and girls were murdered in the name of honour in Pakistan, which constitutes seventeen HMs every week (HRCP, 2013), 943 cases of HMs were reported during 2011 (HRCP, 2012). A report by a local organisation claims 714 persons, including 571 women and 143 men, were killed during 2012, under the pretext of so-called honour and domestic violence across Sindh province of Pakistan (Research and Development for Human Resources RDHR (2013)). RDHR report 2012 stated that 605 women and 115 men were murdered in the name of honour and domestic disputes during 2011 in Sindh.

Across Pakistan hundreds of women of all ages are murdered for a variety of reasons linked to different interpretations of 'honour' (Jasam, 2001). The reasons include the tribal customs, allegedly committing adultery, avenging opponents, marriage without will of family, refusing to enter into an arranged marriage, seeking a divorce, religious misinterpretations, taunting (*taano*) by community members, settling debts, family or tribal enmity, masking murder as 'honour killings' to receive light punishment under statutory law; and the deteriorating judicial system (Ali, 2001; Shah, 2007; Patel and Gadit, 2008).

Murders in the name of so-called honour are prevalent across Pakistan. However, some districts of Sindh province of Pakistan (Jacobabad, Shikarpur, Kashmor, Sukkur, Ghotki and Khairpur) are infamous for such crimes. A conservative estimate puts the number of HMs in Jacobabad at 55 to 60 a month, approximately two a day (Shah, 1998).

In Pakistan this crime is known by its regional names such as *kala-kali* (Punjab), *karo-kari* (Sindh), *tor-tora* (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and *siyakari* (Balochistan). In English the term 'honour killing' is overwhelmingly used in the literature and mass media to represent such murders. However, in this article we use the term 'honour murders' (HMs) since the term 'honour killing' gives the act a legitimacy that is not deserved.

## 1.2. Evidence for Under-reporting

The statistics on HMs are difficult to obtain and are inaccurate due to under-reporting of such incidents. The reasons for the under-reporting of HMs include the unwillingness of victims' family members to come forward; the criminality of these murders is not recognised within the social and cultural contexts in which they occur Goldstein (2002); HMs have a high level of support in Pakistan's society in general and rural society in particular (Taipei, 2004); HMs are masked as suicides or accidents (Hassan, 1999); and a lack of a government-initiated system to document HM cases (Amnesty International, 1999a).

However, all the reports so far referenced stated that a significant number of such incidents still go unreported (HRCP, 2012; HRCP, 2013). The figures in reports are compiled from media coverage and volunteer reports; the numbers could well be higher if systematically documented independently (Amnesty International, 1999a; HRCP, 2012).

Each Union Council (the smallest administrative unit of district government) has to maintain a birth, death and marriage register (National Reconstruction Bureau, 2001), but these registers are not up to date and figures are misleading. A column in the death register is required to contain information about the cause of death; the cause of most deaths registered was documented as natural death, whether they were murders or not. Official statistics are, therefore, not reliable.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature search was conducted into electronic databases Web of science, CINHALL, PsycInfo and Scopus, using key words karo-kari, honour killing, honour murder, honour-based violence, violence against women and gender-based violence with various combinations. A large number of documents were found which discussed nature and extent of gender-based violence in Pakistan. However, the social epidemiology of HMs is studied in a small number of empirical studies in Pakistan revealing the profile of victims and perpetrators of HMs and the reasons for perpetuation of this practice.

The majority of primary studies in Pakistan have investigated the issue of 'honour killing' as a customary practice and their analyses are confined to particular approaches to understand the practice: for example, it is considered as a cultural practice intertwined with tribal, feudal and patriarchal norms, values and domination (Bhatti *et al.*, 2011; Phulpoto *et al.*, 2012) or a tool of political manipulation (Khalil and Sheikh, 2010) and result of deteriorating economic and social conditions (Raza, 2006). Shah (2007) analysed honour murders phenomenon from an economic perspective and stated that honour accusations draw huge penalties and an exchange economy flourishes within politics of honour killing.

Therefore, pretext of honour is used to capture the resources of the weak and to exact protection money from the rich. One study examined the issue from a public health perspective (Nasrullah *et al.*, 2009).

This study was reinforced in a short report published in the Lancet along with a story of a 30-year old Pakistani woman, who managed to escape being killed by her family on the pretext of so-called family honour (Solberg, 2009). A literature review was undertaken on karo-kari, a form of 'honour killing' in Pakistan in relation to mental health problems and concluded that better understanding of socio-cultural context in which HMs occur would allow mental health practitioners to intervene early when patients at risk for a murder present with domestic dispute (Patel and Gadit, 2008).

A paper examined honour killing from Islamic perspective in light of Quran and Hadees (saying of Prophet Muhammad SAW), which claims that Islam supports to veil the sexual relations of man and woman rather to make them public and do not permit to kill someone in the name of honour (Muhammad *et al.*, 2012). Hussain (2006) did a contextual analysis of legislation around honour crimes in Pakistan, which concluded that in order to condemn and acknowledge the severity of violence against women legislation exists in Pakistan, however, enforcement of laws and

comprehensive strategies are required to combat the factors leading to honour crimes. The existing literature indicates that HM is not the punishment for violating a code of honour, rather it has been subverted into a practice of murdering women to gain compensation, settle personal dispute, avenge someone and many motives other than female infidelity (Patel and Gadit, 2008; Phulpoto *et al.*, 2012).

### 2.1. A Theoretical Framework for Patriarchy and Honour Murders

HM has roots in patriarchy and it is considered one of the severe manifestations of a patriarchal system (Johnson and Johnson, 2001). bell hooks defined patriarchy as 'a socio-political system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence'. According to (Ahmed *et al.*, 2004) patriarchy is an ideological system of ideas and beliefs that rationalise domination of males over females in society.

The patriarchal social norms and values refer to customs and practices rooted in the familial social organisation headed by man (Ahmed *et al.*, 2004). The patriarchal social structures give power and authority to male heads of household (Mann, 1986), community, clan and tribe (Wassan, 2012) because male has control on material and social resources (Kulwicki, 2002). This indicates the violence against women is engrained in wider social organisation and patriarchy is a key feature of it (Hunnicut, 2009), in which male decides what is right or wrong and whether or not an action deserves punishment.

In order to protect and promote this outdated patriarchal system, men have formed different self-serving tools and institutionalised extremely restrictive codes of behaviour for females (Moghadam, 1992) such as gender-based arrangements to restrict women's mobility, speech and sexuality, specific forms of family and kinship, exchange marriages, *Jirga* (council), and a powerful ideology linking family honour to female virtue, which provide pretext for killing a female in the name of so-called honour.

These all devices created and managed by men to treat women as objects (Nussbaum, 1995) to use for their own purposes. Hence, if a women's behaviour or action is seen to threaten the patriarchal order, then she is punished and that punishment could be her murder.

Many parts of Pakistan, in particular upper Sindh, are stalled with the interplay between feudal, tribal and patriarchal values governing all aspects of the lives of women and treating them as objects.

The customs, traditions and practices are often an expression of these values; women are treated as objects, used for one's own purpose such as provided as compensation to enemy to settle disputes, sold, bought, exchanged, damaged and killed. This objectification is further manifested in the form of association of females to the honour of men, family and community. In the South Asian region there is a well-known proverb *zan, zar, zameen* (woman, wealth and land) and it is generally believed that the honour of a man is associated to these three 'things'. These things can become a bone of contention and a man can kill or to be killed for them. Women are placed in this trio with two other 'objects', wealth and land; so, by association, women are considered as objects like wealth and land. In the case of HMs, the female body is considered as an 'object', which holds

family honour, when that body is seen to a threat to so-called honour then it is punished with beating, burning, sexually abuse and murder.

## 2.2. How Feudalism has Adapted Through Local Elites

The feudal system has been slowly abolished in many countries but in some ways it still exists powerfully in Pakistan, particularly in Sindh, though not in its original form. The feudal lords do not maintain private armies or collect taxes, but they have large landholdings, huge number of private guards (who can kill or to be killed for them) and the complete dependence of farmers, tenants or farm labourers and common people from their tribal group, in return for social, economic and political support and personal protection. Consequently, there is a very strong influence of local elites in all parts of Sindh, in particular upper Sindh, and these have a direct influence on all aspects of the lives of common people.

They also enjoy control over government institutions such as the police, courts, district administrations, education and health. In the local language there are many terms for rural elite (feudal lord), such as *Wadero*, *Sardar*, *Raees*, *Bhotar* and *Pir*. The terms *wadero* and *sardar* are most common term among them and throughout this paper these two terms *wadero/wedera* (singular/plural) and *sardar/sardars* (singular/plural) will be used. Local elites enjoy power in all sort of governments whether it is democracy or dictatorship; one way or another they are part of the government, though more permeable in some societies than others. They are members of legislative assemblies, ministers and government advisors.

It is in their interest to keep the people backward, uneducated, and economically dependent; to rule them through official government machinery and private bandits. Due to the massive power base of the 'feudal' no one dare raise his/her voice against the landlord for fear of being socially excluded, economically crippled or facing terror. The existing undistributed feudal power and cruel exercise of that power by feudal lords is a major factor that supports honour related crimes.

The local police station is fully controlled by a local *wadero*. If a buffalo is stolen from a poor person he will not be able to register a first information report (FIR) until the local *wadero* instructs the police station to do so. In many cases the local elites have got their own men appointed in civil administration to secure their hold over the lives of people (Alavi, 1976).

State institutions and policies support and enhance the influence and power feudal lords. For example, in the previous government Sindh province was carved up into private feudal estates and fiefdoms for handpicked feudal lords in rural areas and particular political parties in urban areas. The existing districts were broken into two or more parts, such as Jacobabad carved into Kashmore, and handed over to one or more feudal lords who were mayors of the district (Bhutto, 2005).

## 2.3. Structures that Maintain Honour Murders (Jirga System)

The *Jirga* system is one of the major structures that maintain HMs in Sindh. The *Jirga* is a decision making assembly or tribal council. This is a tribal system of justice which is actively practiced in Pakistan to settle legal cases and disputes, despite being banned by the government. Such councils are managed by local elites and are composed only of men, particularly those who already are influential and inherited power within the *braderi* (shared community) clan or tribe (Hussain, 2006). The *Jirga* is headed by a *sardar* [tribal chief] or a *wadero* [landlord] who is

unanimously agreed by both *warring* parties. Each party nominates two or more representatives, commonly known as advisors, to lead their case in the *Jirga*. The main objective of *Jirga* is to restore the balance by compensation for damage and not to find truth and punish the perpetrator. For example, if a *Jirga* is arranged to resolve the case of an HM, the nominated advisors already identify numbers of murders or other damage from each party and announce these in the *Jirga*. The head of the privately discusses with those advisors and then announces the verdict publicly.

*Karo-kari* [HM] is not considered as a crime by the *Jirga* but a legitimate action of the man whose family was dishonoured (Participatory Development Initiative PDI (2005)). The man who kills to restore the honour is morally and legally supported by the *Jirga* and considered as a holder of honour. While settling the case of honour murder by *Jirga*, women who are killed or freed are not considered victims but the guilty party.

The man to whom a woman (wife, daughter or sister) belongs has to murder to repair his honour. In *Jirga* he is considered the victim as he has suffered loss, first to his honour and then of the woman he has to kill. In case of *Jirga* both warring parties are bound to accept the verdict of the *Jirga*. A study conducted by PDI to examine the role of tribal *Jirga* in violence against women concluded that in the case of *karo-kari* [HM] the *Jirga* has a negative impact in that the *Jirga* not only protects perpetrators but even encourages them to kill women in the name of honour (PDI, 2005).

#### **2.4. The Jirga System Embedded in Formal Structures of Government - Local and National**

*Jirga* is illegal in Pakistan, but the rule of tradition is often more powerful than the rule of law (Asian Human Rights Commission, 2010). Generally, the attitude of the state towards the *Jirga* system has been supportive (AI, 1999b).

The government of Pakistan has failed to exercise due diligence in protecting these rights when *Jirga* violates the right to a fair trial. *Jirga* dispenses with the presumption of innocence, does not recognize the right of a defendant to assistance by a legal counsel nor to a tribunal composed of competent, independent and impartial jurists. The *Jirga* is held by feudal lords with unchallenged authority and most of them are part of legislatures of Pakistan, therefore the state is not willing to take action against them.

The *Jirga* is mainly held in government circuit houses and local district administration and the police also participate in *Jirga*. At the national level, the Pakistani government held *Jirga* with the Afghan government and the Taliban (The National, 2011). In upper Sindh the district administration has been increasingly using the services of local elites and the *Jirga* system to resolve the problems facing the government, including tribal conflicts, disputes over land and irrigation water that may have been costing many lives in inter- and intra-tribal feuds (AI, 1999b). In this practice the formal judicial system has been sidestepped on the grounds that the tribal system provides faster, cheaper and more lasting solutions. Conversely, this approach has also conveyed the impression that the rule of law as enshrined in the constitution and statutory law is dispensable and replaceable by alternate systems such as the *Jirga* system.

### 3. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY - DEARTH OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

There are multiple reasons which make this study imperative including a dearth of empirical research, lack of systematic official information, over-reliance on secondary materials, the apparent increase of such violent crimes, and misuse of HM system to encompass personal vendettas.

Due to the sensitive nature of this issue a majority of researchers preferred to use secondary sources and did not do fieldwork largely because of the potential risk posed by those who feel HM is a sacred cultural practice that should not be tampered with (Malik *et al.*, 2001; Patel and Gadit, 2008). Further, over-use of secondary information has implications for reliability because the available information is extracted from newspapers and electronic media reports, which is incomplete and of limited value (Nasrullah *et al.*, 2009).

In upper Sindh there is a rise in the incidents of HMs. This area alone accounts for more than one quarter of the documented cases of HMs. It is perceived that in the majority of cases it has been used as a camouflage by perpetrators to settle personal disputes and rivalries with opponent individuals or tribal groups or the motives were completely different than restoring the honour of family (Actionaid, 2012).

Besides, the poor understanding of the context behind honour related crimes such as social, religious, cultural and class structures, could contribute to unreliable assessment and analysis. Similarly the previous studies have recognised a need for empirical research to study HM in wider socio-cultural contextual, which could help to formulate preventive strategies and specific policies to address the issue (Patel and Gadit, 2008; Nasrullah *et al.*, 2009).

### 4. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The methodical aim was to examine and understand the whole context and relationship between people, cultural, social, economic and political arrangements and institutions in which incidents of HMs occur.

Considering the aim of this study is to describe the wider context of HMs, the interpretive approach was deemed appropriate. Interpretive methodology aims to provide understanding of meanings, which people create as they interact with the world around them (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). Hence, the methodology was selected to understand the HM phenomenon through accessing the meanings that participants assign to them.

The interpretive methodology emerged from the experiences of field studies of people from different religious and cultural backgrounds, using the method of ethnography and social anthropology (Jackson and Nesbitt, 1993).

Thus, underpinning the interpretivist stance is an ethnographic method and unobtrusive tools of data collection to explore a phenomenon in a cultural context (Geertz, 1973). An ethnographic approach was used to undertake the fieldwork.

Ethnography uses inconspicuous cross-cultural observations and informal discussions (e.g. with victims' relatives, neighbours and villagers) as a means of interpreting social reality (Savage, 2000). The fieldwork was conducted to gain in-depth understanding of the wider context, from a variety of perspectives, in recognition of the highly sensitive nature of the issue being studied.



#### 4.1. Setting and Participants

The field work was conducted in a small neighbourhood of Jacobabad city and a village in its vicinity. The village of about 2000 people consists of approximately 100 households that belong to different tribal groups.

The village is located at border of Balochistan province. There is one primary school and a secondary school in the village, but both have been defunct for five years. According to the villagers the school buildings and furniture are intact and teachers are appointed, but they do not teach and they get a salary regularly without doing their job. This is considered normal by the villagers. According to the Pakistan Economic Survey (2007-08) approximately 7, 500 (58%) schools are non-functioning in this province (Government of Pakistan, 2009).

The fieldwork began with informal conversations with people to build rapport with potential research participants. Six female and ten male participants were identified from the neighbourhood and the village through purposive sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The participants: (a) were willing to take part in the study; (b) had direct or indirect involvements in HM incidents; and (c) were able to provide oral or written consent independently.

In addition, a sample for individual qualitative semi-structured interviews was identified using a purposive sampling technique. A number of people were invited to participate in the study from a university, electronic and print media, and civil society organisations, women's organisations, political parties and human right groups. Potential participants were sent an introductory letter and information sheet. If willing to take part participants contacted the researchers by telephone and email to arrange a suitable time and place for interview. Four females and two males agreed to take part in interviews.

#### 4.2. Ethical Issues

Following ethical approval from the Pakistani university research ethnics committee, the lead researchers started fieldwork in a small neighbourhood of Jacobabad. Given the sensitivity of the research topic and violent nature of some of the people on the side-lines, concerns arose regarding the safety of researchers and participants. The researchers were anxious to minimise the potential risk and a strategy was devised, in which a local person (trained as an anthropologist) was approached and involved as a team member in the study. Initially, people were reluctant to speak about HMs and less motivated to take part in the study.

After involvement of the local researcher and extensive pre-fieldwork informal discussions of researchers with the community, people came forward voluntarily to take part in the study. The tape recording of interviews was identified as potentially problematic because it could raise suspicion in the community. Further to minimise the risk, a local female researcher was recruited to conduct interviews with women participants.

During informal discussions oral consent was sought from participants. For semi-structured interviews each participant was provided with a letter of consent prior to the interview detailing the purpose of the research and requesting his or her consent to participate in the study. The participants were reassured of their anonymity and informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point. A non-judgemental stance was adopted throughout the fieldwork interaction in relation to perpetrators' justifications for HMs.



### 4.3. Data Collection

Over a two month period of immersion in the field, the researchers engaged in participant observation and informal group interviews (i.e. conversation and general interaction) during day-to-day activities in village. The informal conversation and interviews were noted down by the researchers and at the end compared notes to make sure that these were accurately written down. The informal conversations and general interaction were conducted in male guest rooms, local hotels or participants' homes in Sindhi language (native language of the community).

An interview schedule was developed, drawing from the current literature, and a series of open questions constructed. Beginning with more general questions and moving towards more focused questions this type of approach has a funnel effect and is useful in ascertaining participants' interests quickly and in helping to establish rapport between participants and researcher.

## 5. FINDINGS

### 5.1. Reasons Given for HMs

A variety of motives and 'reasons' emerged from the data to explain the killings of the majority of women and some men under the pretext of honour. They resonated with previous studies and we have collected them under two main headings:

#### Social/Cultural/Behavioural

- A man wishing to remarry may kill his wife as *kari* (Aftab *et al.*, 2008; Actionaid, 2012)
- A girl married to a man outside her *braderi*/clan/caste/tribe
- A woman who was frequently standing/glimpsing from the door or windows of her house
- A woman who was talking to a strange man or someone who is not close relative
- Admiring any male except husband, father or brother
- Frequent visits of any male from outside the family to the house
- Women wearing make-up without any special occasion such as wedding or Eid (religious festival)
- Frequently taking shower and wearing new cloths in absence of her husband
- Expressing a desire to choose a spouse or marrying with a person without family's will (PDI, 2005)
- Settling dispute with opponents

#### Financial

- Settling debt (Shah, 1993; Phulpoto *et al.*, 2012)
- An unmarried girl was forced to sign away her inheritance property share to her brothers, or uncles failing to do so she was declared as *kari*

### 5.2. Example of Male-Dominated Social Structure

Our study found that male-dominated social structures play an extreme role in the community, which control all aspects of women's lives. These structures include family, caste/*braderi*/tribe, marriage and *Jirga*.

Through these structures men impose social restrictions, a practice of rigid gender segregation, specific forms of family and kinship and linking family honour to female 'virtue'. The family as a basic social institution is a male dominated system in the community where male members of the family exercise power and authority over women of the family. In relation to HMs, the family plays a very vital role because the act of HM is carried out by male family members against female family members. Male study participants stated that "*woman is izarat [honour] of a man and his khandan [family], if she dishonours then she is punished*".

In the social organisation of a Sindhi society, caste/*braderi*/clan is another male-dominated social structure. Caste, *braderi* or clan designates power, authority and identity of the head/chief and other male members of the group. A number of girls have been murdered under pretext of 'honour'; those girls who got married on their choice with men belonged to different caste, *braderi* or clan.

The social institution of marriage also reflects male-dominated social structure in the community. In the rural traditional set up, endogamy is practiced widely to maintain the patrimony or patriarchy. The parallel cousin marriage is usually practiced to maintain the endogamy. When a woman of a family dares to decide free will marriage and breaks the endogamous marriage tradition she is branded as *kari* and in most cases murdered.

These male-dominated social structures discriminate against women and they are deeply rooted in belief that women are objects and commodities. As women participants stated that "*the discrimination starts at the day we (women) born, our families do not make special arrangements for chhathi (naming ceremony after six days of a child's birth) for girls, in case of boys special naming ceremony is arranged*". Most of the women and a few of the men in the study voiced their opinion that the male-dominated social structures have been shaped to control women and use them for their own purposes.

As a woman participant expressed it: "*we (women) cannot go to hospital without a male companion even that male could be a four year child. In our community male call us "bar" (literally means a kid), so we are considered as weak and cannot look after ourselves as like kids. As a small kid cannot decide for him/herself as women cannot decide for themselves*". Three women participants supported this statement and further said "*on other hand a woman can go alone to give breakfast or lunch to her husband in field or women can work alone in fields, while stranger can cross but in these cases man's honour is not hurt because it is their benefit that we are helping him in the fields*".

Male study participants expressed their views as "*we (men) are entitled to have more than one wife because we have more shahwat (sex drive) than women. A woman should stay inside home; her role is to look after children and house and serve to man. A man's role is to go out and work. Men have authority to make all decisions and their decision must be obeyed because women cannot think straight and make mistakes*".

Under this arbitrary male-dominated social system women are denied education, adequate nutrition, legal and social rights and deprived of taking very personal decisions regarding marriage and divorce, size of family and other family matters. A women group stated that "*we (women) were stopped from progressing from every aspect of life. We never seen gate of school and we know our girls will also not see that. Social norms and customs have delegated power and authority to men.*

Setting up arbitrary boundaries for women, battering them, killing them in the name of honour, making decision for them even consulting them, deciding in a *Jirga* about their fate, all such kind of acts are self-serving tools constructed and promulgated by men to maintain their power and authority.

### 5.3. Manhood

Manhood refers to the attributes, characteristics and gendered roles of being a man. The attributes of being a typical gendered man are constructed through socialization, enculturation and culturally defined gendered behaviour and attitudes by men. The concept of manhood can be defined in terms of expressions, actions, behaviours and the role performed by men in social and gendered relationships (Wassan, 2012).

During fieldwork the attributes of manhood that emerged were a strong man, muscular man, real man, authoritative man, respectable and honoured man, sexually powerful man, and one who has social and political power to protect his family, community and village. A local term *mursmanhu* was used for an ideal man, who protects and holds honour of his womenfolk. In contrast, a man who cannot control his females is not considered as a *mursmanhu*. According to this socially constructed idea of manhood, man is expected to behave and express in a manner which is different from a woman, for instance, not to cry or weep.

A variety of characteristics of a *murushmanhu* have emerged from the field data such as a man who controls his females; a man who can protect his honour, a man who has been to prison once in his life; a man who can operate a weapon; a man who has had murdered someone, especially in the name of honour; and in some cases a man who has more than one wife.

A male research participant stated that "a man cannot be a man, only a *khadro* (eunuch), if he doesn't control his women". Most importantly, manhood is a socially relational concept which is always linked with women. In the context of honour-related violence against women, manhood is translated into action through the use of power, authority and violence. In many instances, the very idea of manhood is invoked to use violence and power over women.

A male participant group member said: "*being a man it is our prime duty to protect our honour, in order to protect honour one can kill or to be killed*". This was reinforced by the minister who was interviewed: "*people don't kill their women without any reason, actually it is matter of ghariat (the honour) of a man and it's his duty being a man to save the honour of his family*". Perpetrators of violence against women use this notion of manhood as a premeditated tool.

## 6. DISCUSSION

### 6.1. Three Personal Testimonies from the Research Study

1. A woman participant told her story that one day she delayed to provide food for her husband's dog. When her husband saw the dog did not have food and he battered her severely. For the whole night she could not sleep, and on the next morning her mother took her to a nearby government hospital. Her father or brother did not come to see her or take her to hospital but they said it was her husband who has punished her on the mistake that she did not provide food to her husband's dog. In the hospital, the doctor said he could not treat her and it was a police case because she was wounded. Her mother and she went to the police station and a police man

- asked for a bribe to give orders to the doctor to treat her. Her husband was walking free, with nobody reprimanding him. Her mother gave 500 rupees to the policeman and he gave a letter for the doctor to treat her. Her father and brothers kept themselves aside and said it is her husband - he can kill her, beat her, whatever he wishes to do, it is not our problem.
2. Raheema (not her real name) a research participant said, "The day I was born, my father already decided my marriage with my first cousin who was approximately 10 years older than me. When I became 13 my father and brother decided that I am no longer engaged to my first cousin but my marriage has been arranged with another man. Till the wedding night I did not know who is going to be my husband, how he looks, how old is he or what his name is. On the wedding day I felt I am not a human being because the way I was treated as a toy for kids to play, because I was not allowed to speak or say anything to anyone. As the brief wedding ceremony ended, I was sitting on a cot in a room and suddenly the door opened and an old man entered in the room and said I am Haji your husband. I was shocked and scared to see him because he was just like my father. He said your father has received *taka* (money) for your marriage with me. After giving three children to my husband, I was declared as a *kari* with a man by my husband and brother.
  3. A male participant in the research told his story: I was happy with my wife and planning to have a child. But I regret the huge mistake, which I made some years ago. I was trapped in a dangerous plan of a *wadero*, who wanted to destroy one of his opponents and I owed 10,000 rupees to the same person. Every day this person was threatening me to return the loan otherwise he will go to police. I did not have a rupee to return him. The *wadero* knew this story. One day he called me in his bungalow and said that the person who you owe money is my enemy as well, why don't we kill two birds with one stone. I asked how, he said blame him that he is *karo* (having affair) with your wife. Than we will call a *Jirga*, which will be headed by me and I will make him pay you huge compensation in cash and his daughter. Then you can marry with her and your debt will be settled also. I was out of my mind and trapped in this plan. I did same as we agreed but people said it is untrue because both man and woman are alive, you must kill them. So, I killed my wife and spared the man to get compensation. But the plan did not go as we prepared. The accused man was very influential and he also bribed the police and the *wadero* also went against me. I went to prison for five years, and when I came out there was nothing for me and I am still regretting that.

## 6.2. Parties to HM System (Subsystems or Vested Interests)

It was the unanimous view of all participants that the major cause of honour related crimes is what we know as the feudal system, which is tribal and patriarchal in nature and in which feudal lords have undistributed power to exploit and oppress ordinary people. In order to protect perpetrators and used them for their own benefits they have created a *Jirga* system.

They enjoy enormous influence on state structures and institutions and use them for their own purposes. The major stakeholder in this 'honour killing industry' (Shah, 2007) is the police, which are completely controlled by local feudal lords. The following excerpt from data shows the extent of influence of feudal lords on ordinary peoples' lives:

*We are trapped in a vicious circle of social pressures, which keep us slaves of wadera and sardars. They use us against our own people including family and friends. The major thing is that they are in government and the police are in their control and they use police and government machinery for their own purposes. Therefore, for everything we have to knock at their doors.*

People lack social and political awareness and this make them easy to manipulate. In a group discussion all participants showed their concern that "*the wadera keep us poor, illiterate, dependent and engaged in fights between each other on petty issues but they live a luxurious life; daughters and sisters of poor people are killed in the name of "ghiarat" [honour] but their daughters visit and shop from London and Paris*". Another noted, "*It is the state machinery that supports waderas and sardars, so the primary cause is the state; if the state sincerely reduces the influence and interventions of these feudal lords, there could be a change*".

Participants expressed their views that the local police station plays an important role in rural life. They consider it is the only platform where they can seek relief from oppression and tyranny. Since the police station is controlled by a *wadero*, this means the *wadero* has become in effect ruler of the community. The research participants believed that some of the feudal lords are very influential without being part of government because they have connections and support from army officers.

More than half of the participants voiced their opinion that the role of state institutions from local police station to parliament is complicit in honour related crimes. The people who had experience with state institutions appeared to view that police officers deny to institute first information report (FIR), courts decide under influence, doctor give fake reports, assemblies and parliament do not introduce tougher laws.

Women participants voiced their concerns as all these institutions are run by overwhelming majority of males and held similar patriarchal and feudal mind-set as perpetrators of HMs. For instance, three women were buried alive in the name of honour in Balochistan province and those killings were defended by a member of the parliament by saying "these are centuries old traditions and I will continue to defend them" (McDowell, 2008).

Religious institutions considered women as *fitna* – i.e. a potential source of social disorder or anarchy. Therefore, in current Muslim patriarchal societies, control over women by men is considered essential in part to avoid *fitna* (Sabah, 1984; Ghoussoub, 1987). In Pakistani society, religio-political forces have always supported and reinforced male-dominated customs and traditions which have caused the further marginalisation of women (Kapadia *et al.*, 2010).

The legal system in Pakistan is a complex fusion of tribal codes, Shria law, Indo-British judicial and customary traditions that have formed an environment of oppression of women, where any benefit offered to women by one law, is annulled by one or more of the others. Customarily, families considered that violence against women, including HM, is a private (family) matter, in which outsiders -including government authorities - should not intervene. A survey was conducted to explore the views of police about HMs and it revealed that for a majority of policemen, karo-kari [HM] was a family matter first, rather than a crime, and police did not usually arrest the suspects because of social pressures (Lari, 2011).

## 7. STUDY LIMITATIONS

The empirical research on murders in the name of honour is constrained due to socio-cultural sensitivity of the issue. Though this study presents some stimulating findings, it is only a small scoping project. A more extensive study in which data collected from district administration, police, feudal lords, politicians, healthcare professionals and clerics would add richness to the conclusions that can be drawn from the data in this study. A main limitation of the study was a relative small sample, which is a common limitation of qualitative research. It could be argued that study limitation was the use of a local researcher and applicability of these findings needs to be tested. Study findings could have been strengthened if perspectives of people from government agencies, feudal lords and clerics had been included. However, participants included in the study do reflect the key settings in which HM incidents occur.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The analysis of our data and the available literature has revealed that murders in the name of honour were not solely driven by customs and traditions, but also by a local gender system, a feudal structure, conceptions of manhood and the complicit role of state institutions and law enforcement agencies. These are the mechanisms that contribute to the perpetuation of violence against women in general and HMs in particular. The main players in incidences of honour murders are feudal lords and state institutions, in particular the police. The perpetrators of murders in the name of honour gain support from these major players and immunity from consequences. The pretexts of culture, honour and religion are used as self-serving tools and safeguards to avoid any punishment.

Our study findings reveal that the killing in the name of honour is one of the severe manifestations of a patriarchal, feudal and tribal mind-set and this mind-set is, surprisingly, prevalent amongst educated, urban people as well as uneducated, rural people in Pakistan. This attitude has been embedded in the social and cultural structures of a society and acquired through family, religion, schooling and media. It is defended and encouraged by the members of the Pakistani Parliament, Provincial and National Assemblies because same tribal chiefs and feudal lords are political representatives in these institutions. Our study findings confirm that the *Jirga* system is one of the major drivers in the rise of HMs in upper Sindh. This tribal system of justice does not deliver justice to victims nor punishment to killers, but actually encourages killers by providing them compensation - in the form of cash or women, or both. Our study findings conform with previous studies that revealed that institutions, in particular the police are complicit in crimes of honour, and that law enforcement agencies and courts deal with crimes against women with extraordinary leniency, with the law providing many loopholes for killers in the name of honour to murder without punishment.

### 8.1. The Implications of the Study

Proper documentation of HMs is required and this is the responsibility of the state government. However, at present the state is failing this responsibility. Redefinition of 'honour killings' as criminal murders is necessary to start to change the mind-set. Enforcement of a legal code is required. Education for women should be promoted; education promotes the ability of women to

form social relationships on the basis of equality with both other women and men and to achieve the important social good of self-respect. As mentioned earlier that there are approximately 7,500 boys and girls schools closed in the province, therefore it is important to open these schools.

Honour murders may be prevented by reducing the influence and interference of feudal lords on state institutions, in particular law enforcement agencies. Further research is required to investigate the nature and extent of feudal power, the hegemony of feudal culture and the complicit relationship of state institutions and feudal lords in relation to honour related crimes in Pakistan. In particular, there is a need to give voice to women who are oppressed and to create a more informed and supportive environment for advocacy and policy to eliminate violence against women.

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