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### **Honor Killing Violating Human Rights, it's Theoretical Dimensions: A Review**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Large numbers of population are regularly subject to torture, starvation, terrorism, humiliation, mutilation, murder in India. Among these Honor killing' is a complex phenomenon that reflects a shocking social crime, a moral dilemma within the societies, and an intercultural challenge. In general, while killing can be unintentional, planned killing with hatred is murder. From this outlook, honor killing is murder, usually the murder of a female family member by her own family or friends to punish humiliate or dishonor brought by disloyalty or any other culturally unacceptable behaviors. . Therefore the paper aims to explore the views and attitudes of the society towards women and their rights to live, equality, dignity and the self determination in their every aspect of life and its theoretical dimensions. The paper deals on theoretical aspects of honor killing in relation to accuse and victim.

**KEY WORDS:** Honor Killing, Torture, Humiliation, Moral Dilemma and Culture.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Honor killing is the murder of a family member by the other member within that family itself, due to assuming that the member has brought dishonor upon their family, or has violated the rules and regulations, principles of the community or a religion usually for denial of arranged marriage, being in a relationship which is disapproved by their family, extra marital affair, being a victim of rape, inappropriate dressing pattern, etc. which is considered as breaking the belief and faith of the family. Honor is valued in Indian culture which is mostly noticed in the patriarchal families irrespective of caste, religion or regional identities<sup>1</sup>. The misbehavior of women, gain or loss of money and power creates dishonor in families. Belief acts according to dharma and maintains the purity and honor of the family, heredity and caste while the inappropriate ones corrupt it<sup>2</sup>.

The ideas of honor (Izzat) is been stereotyped in India where both men and women are been symbolized with honor completely in different ways. Women contribute towards the family honor in performing their different roles in life such as daughter, wife, and mother while man controls it. The danger involved among women towards honor is her body, reproduction and procreation capacity<sup>1</sup>. Honor is been noticed to be a female related term which is connected with male's advantage to ensure that she does not lose it at any cost. The countdown starts for a girl when she grows up; burden of shame associates her femaleness making it difficult for her to be proud of her body<sup>3</sup>. Due to this female is been helpless recipient of the male origin, she dishonors her family by her disgraceful physical conduct. On basis of this social opinion of the man's creative ability, the whole concept of honor is created<sup>1</sup>. Women is symbolized for her fertility and growth which is detached from male and not under his control, her power is seen as unsafe, cruel and potentially a destructive force<sup>4</sup>.

In spite of the best efforts of women's rights activists over the past decades, thousands of women around the world are murdered every year for refusing the unspoken patriarchal code of conduct. And they face intolerable pressure in their daily lives. A conventional and much quoted United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimate suggests that at least 5,000 women every year are been murdered killed in name of "honor"<sup>5</sup>. From that 5000 approximately 1000 per year is claimed by India<sup>6</sup> but it seems very less. Society supports the HK (honor killing) legitimizing it social way of life that require girls to be disciplined, obedient, uncorrupted, innocent and pure. It is perceived often that in the West as an Islamic custom, honor killings are in fact a pre-Islamic tradition that prevailed in many countries for centuries and whose heredity are lost in time<sup>7</sup>. (Nicolus Pope 2012)

## DEFINING HONOR KILLING

‘Honor killing’ is a multifaceted phenomenon that reflects a shocking social crime, a moral dilemma within the societies, and an intercultural challenge<sup>8</sup>. In general, while killing can be unintentional, planned killing with hatred is murder. From this outlook, honor killing is murder, usually the murder of a female family member by her own family or friends to punish, humiliate or dishonor brought by disloyalty or any other culturally unacceptable behaviors<sup>9</sup>. Women are the greater part of victims of honor killing but in some cases men can also be a part of it<sup>10,11</sup>. The world wide age of female honor killing victims is 23 years. Even men are also victims of honor killing<sup>12</sup>.

The main English terms to understand the motivations of this form of killing are ‘honor’ and ‘perception.’ ‘Honor’ is the English translation of the term ‘Izzat’ in Hindi–Urdu languages and cultures. ‘Izzat’ is a broad term that includes honor, reputation, dignity, respect, social standing, and justice. In many cultures ‘family Izzat’ which assists the social relationships and interactions<sup>13</sup>. All family members are demanded to conserve and enhance their family izzat. Social mobility from a low-status position to a high-status position via academic and professional achievement or matrimonial alliances, for example, a poor person marrying into a rich family, can enhance family Izzat. Given the history of the caste system in India, social position is intimately related to one’s Izzat<sup>14</sup>. While promoting family Izzat would usually be highly praised whereas disgracing family Izzat entails serious social consequences including social exclusion and even murder in the name of honor. The term ‘honor killing’ thus illustrates the dark side of izzat. Honor killing is believed to restore family izzat that is so called as ‘Honor’.

## UNDERSTANDING OF HONOR KILLING BY DIFFERENT THEORIES

Honor killing is a multidimensional phenomenon that requires interdisciplinary and other theoretical perspectives for breadth and depth of its understanding. Understanding honor killing from different theoretical background, help us to understand it more deeply. Deep understanding of problem help us to reach solution or management.

***Honor Killing and Theory of Symbolic Interactions:*** Symbolic interaction is a theory evolved by George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, according to them symbolic interaction is conversation between the individuals<sup>15</sup> within the society. This perception views society as a product of everyday social interaction between individuals. This theory explains about that people allocate symbols and create meaning based on their interactions with one another. For example: there are rules to be followed on behalf of road safety and according to traffic police instructions (waving hands, showing symbols, signal lights) we follow the rule of driving as its been communicated to individuals in the society through interactions that if we follow the rules we can avoid traffic and

accidents Sydney<sup>16</sup>. Green light symbolizes to go, red to stop and yellow to wait. This is where we learnt the behavior from our interactions with others in our society. In this context it is very important to realize that our meanings are often subjective. We behave based on what we perceive to be true rather than what is objectively true. For example; when you sit under the tree for shade after a long walk in sun, there comes a passerby and tells you, “don’t sit under the tree it is full of ants which might harm you”. Then you replied the person that “I am sitting here for shade and there is no problem found here”. Later you realized there came in a big line ant going towards the trunk of the tree. Then you started to make a meaning out of the statement given by the passerby and perceived that every tree consists ant and you decided here after you won’t sit under it. This shows how individuals believe the same meaning for everything in their life which adds up to their experience and they don’t realize it accurately Sydney<sup>16</sup>. As the both statements consists of meaning as well as change too. Change is also important because even the person can sit under another tree too that there might not be ants over there.

In the same way even in the society honor symbolizes the most prestigious asset in the Indian culture which is mostly noticed in the patriarchal families irrespective of caste, religion or regional identities<sup>1</sup>.

Where misbehavior of women, gain or loss of money and authority creates dishonor in families. The value on the family honor is very important to the Indian social framework since the family still constitutes a very strong force in the social structure. Honor killing is the homicide of a family member by her own member of the family, due to perpetrators that the member has bought dishonor upon their family, or has violated the rules and regulations, principles of the community or a religion/ caste usually for refusing arranged marriage and being married to someone to whom the family didn’t agree for, extra marital affair, being victim of rape, disapproved dressing pattern, etc.<sup>1</sup>. This culture of killing is been from past decades and till now people imitate this from generation to generation as a symbol been followed to enhance their honor by perceiving a different meaning by killing the innocent lives of their community. This leads in breaking the rules, belief and faith of the family.

***Honor Killing and Feminist Theory:*** Feminist theory focuses on the gender inequalities in society. It is a modern approach which is developed from the social movement feminism, originated from conflict perspective by focusing on the stratification and inequalities in the society<sup>17</sup>. It looks beyond the male-based perspective and examines the women’s social roles, their experience in variety of fields like education, family and work place<sup>18</sup>. Feminist theory explains about how females are discriminated, objectified, oppressed and stereotyped<sup>18</sup>. They are discriminated on the bases of

sex it's the unjust treatment of a group of people because they are by birth as female<sup>18</sup>. They are treated as object which has no value which means less importance and are oppressed. They are treated unequally and are forced to follow their gender based roles and are abused. They even stereotyped as assigning those roles as per feminine and masculine, where the female had to look after the household, children and family resulting in limited space to her in social participation<sup>18</sup>. While men are working out and are responsible to earn money for the daily life and future. They are also been structurally oppressed here where female body is only given importance whereas men's mind is given importance which feminine and masculine. Females are viewed as soft, caretakers; emotional and obedient other side men are meant to be tough, aggressive, strong and are warriors<sup>19</sup>.

There are different types of feminist theories which are shaped through the process of socialization<sup>19</sup>. This theoretical perspective of feminism in 'Honor killing' also focuses on socialization created differences in men and women in the socially constructed gender differences where each society creates and passes down norms, customs and expectations from generation to generation. This perspective examines how women's experience being women than are associated with men and masculinity. Women are considered as the family honor in her different roles as a granddaughter, daughter, sister, wife and mother while male controls it. The main risk is to female, in her body, conduct due to her reproduction and procreating capacity. Honor is connected to the female related term involved with the male privilege to ensure that she does not expose its delicate balance in any case. As a girl grows up, burden of shame associates her submissive femaleness making it complicated for her to be proud of her body. Being an obedient beneficiary of the male seed, she dishonors her family by her disgraceful physical conduct. Along with this social perception of the man's imaginative ability, the whole concept of honor is created. Thus she represents wealth and development, detached from the male and not under his control, her power is seen as unsafe, cruel and potentially a negative force. For example of Shafia trial where Arza Parvez was strangled to death by her father and brother in 2007, it was considered very bad form and the media conveyed that was a culturally motivated killing<sup>20</sup>. In a reflexive bow to feminist ideology, according to which all abuse of female falls under the umbrella "the patriarchy". Feminist theory is not a step to replace man; it's a different perspective on society to point out the inequalities that exist between men and women in one society<sup>19</sup>.

***Honor Killing and Functionalist Theory:*** This theory is stated by Emile Durkheim, he spoke that society as a broad scale perspective where it is important for it to be stable and enable to create it in equilibrium<sup>21</sup>. He has even mentioned society is bunch of institutions and social facts where the institutions which meets the needs of the individual in the society such as schools, military, hospitals,

mass media, marriage, etc.<sup>22</sup>. On the other hand the social facts which give way for thinking and acting owned by society by individual which still exist. There is a social order to be followed by the each individual in the society as to protect each individual of society from danger or to provide them justice and equality<sup>22</sup>. Functionalist theory also exists in the honor killing where the people from their ancestry origin they believe the fact of losing their honor in name of caste, assets, not following the family words and the person who is against to it has to be killed by that moment by their own family or by that community which is still practiced in few parts of the world. Thus this contributes towards the society in taking laws in their hands and violating the country's law in doing such humiliating and intolerable events.

***Honor Killing and Conflict Theory:*** Conflict theory is developed by Karl Marx basically he gave meaning to that as the struggle between the lower class with the upper class<sup>23</sup>, where the higher class dominates over the lower class. Therefore this also leads to competition between the both which results to conflict. Since, from long year's Indian tradition is known to be male dominant society<sup>24</sup>. We can also see the disequilibrium even within the members of its society due to class, race or religion, assets, etc. Karl Marx has divided this theory in 3 stages which is feudalism, capitalism and socialization<sup>23</sup>. So by relating this concept honor killing is based on the capitalism where the dominant people fighting each other in meaningless way as in the name of honor they are killing their own family members as per the wrong judgment and this rule is been decided for this event. The conflict is based on perceived social status or honor, where people feel harm to their social status through some act like love marriage, refusal to marriage, rape etc. Women is considered main culprit to harm that honor, because they are weaker section, dominated by men, therefore victim of honor killing.

## **DISCUSSION**

By practicing this years and years which still exists in different areas of our country. It is socialized and is been followed against law and order of the society which is not taking action towards it. Honor killing can also be viewed as an example of intercultural conflict, defined as the implicit or explicit emotional struggle or frustration between individuals of different cultures over perceived unable to get along beliefs, values, norms, face-saving concerns, goals, scarce resources, processes or outcomes in a communication situation<sup>25</sup>. In Indian social-cultural contexts, izzat largely connotes communal face concerns. The Tibetan term la Gya also refers to group-based face concerns such as community honor, ethnic honor, and national honor<sup>26</sup>. These ethnically specific explorations of face provide insight into how face worries come out through interaction as well as the various expected communicated rules in these cultures explored the idea of izzat in intergenerational

contexts with Punjabi Sikhs in Canada, and found that the value of izzat is “very strong and is expressed through the idea of behaving properly to put aside expression, be it the family’s or community<sup>26</sup>”. The above cultural terms highlight the importance of maintaining honor or look in interpersonal and intergroup relationships and interactions.

In conflict situations, individuals need face work management strategies and skills to effectively negotiate conflict goals including identity goals and relational goals. According to FNT (face-negotiation theory), face work strategy consists of two types: face giving strategy and face saving strategy<sup>27,28</sup>. As social beings, all people want approval, prestige, respect, and acceptance. In this regard, it is vital to give others ‘face,’ i.e., by not humiliating others, acknowledging and respecting their identity, and conveying encouraging messages in social interactions. However, when face is threatened or undermined, people employ face saving or restoration strategy. In minor face loss situations (such as not getting the expected jobs), individuals can engage in situational suspecting attributes such as blaming all the foreigners coming in to take away the jobs. However, in major face loss situations, individuals may disrupt strategies or even undertake extreme actions such as committing suicide or engaging in honor killing to restore face following deep face shame and humiliation<sup>29,30,31</sup>. In the case of the honor killing of Banaz Mahmood to re-establish family honor or izzat, the father authorized the killing of his own daughter. Societal, acculturation, situational, relational, and personal factors can profoundly shape izzat outlook and perspective<sup>13</sup>. It is deep rooted and can be observed in cities like Delhi and Chennai<sup>32</sup> that shows thinking shrinks on social issues. Honour killing is ad on in violence against women<sup>33</sup> and South Asian countries are largely affected from that because of faulty social structure<sup>34</sup>. This is not a just social problem, it is due to mind set of some people who wants everything according to them, which is violation of “Right to Life”.

## **CONCLUSION**

Honor killing, we have argued, is a complex, complicated cultural behavior that should be looked at from a conjoint ecological and social, psychological perspective. There are various misconceptions regarding the practice that is controlled to the rural area. The truth is that it is spread over such a huge geographical area that we cannot separate honor killings to rural area itself, though one has to give up that majority of the killings take place rural areas. But it has also been recently seen even in metropolitan cities like Delhi where it is not safe the incident of 5 honor killings were reported from this; a daughter and son in law were killed due to marriage into the same Gotra. So it can be seen clearly that honor killings are not only seen in rural areas as its even pointing out the urban areas too which has a widespread of geographical area. The second misconception regarding

honor killing is that it has religious roots. Even if a woman commits disloyalty, there have to be four male for eyewitness good behavior and reputation to validate the charge. In addition only the state has the authority of judicial punishments, but never an individual vigilante. So, we can clearly see that there are no religious roots for this terrible crime. There is court to punish the offenders only after the crime done but where the law to prevent this?

We can only prevent this crime creating strong awareness of its affects and consequences or loss. Firstly, the mentality of the community, society or the parents has to change. As the people around has to accept victims as individual of society having equal importance to live and develop who are not creating any harm to the society instead they are creating unity among themselves as without discriminating regarding any caste, color, gender, religion, state , etc. Secondly, we need to have stricter laws to tackle these kinds of crimes as this is a crime which cannot be forgiven because it takes away the life of innocent couples, women / men in the society. The individual has his own right to live and no human has the right to write down death sentences of these fellow humans.

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