

Reasons and Victims of Honour Killing in Pakistan: An Analysis

Fozia Naseem, Asma Shakir Khawaja and Ishtiaq Ahmad Choudhry

Abstract

Honour killing in Pakistan is a very critical issue which is being echoed throughout the world. Parallel to it are the governmental claims that this issue has been addressed, by enhancing the representation in the legislature assemblies and by the strict and hard laws in this regard. However, this problem is the deeply rooted in socio-economic and cultural values and traditions of the country. The supporters of such values are sitting in the lawmaking bodies and openly support such negative practices. They have kept the doors open in the legal and judicial system for the escape of the offenders. Overwhelming majority of the victims are women of the remote rural areas, while the offenders are, mainly, the husbands, fathers or brothers. The reasons of this cruel practice, as found in this study are related to the alleged extra marital relations of the women (which never proved) or exercise of the choice of marriage by the victims, and very rarely the disputes of the property. Majority of the crimes remained unregistered, hence no question of the trial or the punishment. Major hindrances in the improvement of lack of women education, poverty, poor implementation system of law, poor grip/writ of the government in the remote rural areas of the country.

Keywords: honour killing, *karo kari*, extra-marital relations, choice of marriage, women rights.

Introduction

Honour Killing in Pakistan's Context:

Pakistan is such a country where the society still runs under tribal and mediaeval system and the mainstream of the population lives under rural traditions and feudal control. In such a system people are rarely educated, especially women are totally illiterate. They are treated like slaves or prisoners or the households. Violence against them is very common. "Marriages, for political and tribal peace are quite common. Similar practices are still ongoing. Many families do not allow their women to marry out of the family so that the property, especially the ancestral land may be kept intact without any division (Mayell, Hillary, 2015). Killings in the name of family or tribes' honours are quite common.

The objective of study is made to explore this issue in Pakistan from various angles. It is an attempt to exactly find the answers of the questions that: where does exactly this tradition of Honour Killing firmly exists in Pakistan; which groups of population are made the maximum targets of this notorious practice; who commit this crime (without considering it a crime). Which methods/tools are used for such killings? It is also tried to have a comparison of the intensity of such crimes in various provinces of the country. To expressly highlight this issue, the interviews and the comments of prominent feminists, lawyers, and social workers are also included.

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Women in Pakistan continuously live under fear. They have to face death by shooting, burning or killing with axes if they are deemed to have brought shame on the family. They are killed for supposed 'illicit' relationships, for marrying men of their own choice, for divorcing abusive husbands (Khalil, Noor Akbar, 2010). They are even murdered by their kin if they are raped as they are thereby deemed to have brought shame on their family. The truth of the suspicion does not matter rather merely the allegation is enough to bring dishonour on the family and, therefore, justifies the slaying (Nasrullah, Muazzam; Sobia Haqqi, et al, 2009).

The methods of honour killings vary from place to place. In Sindh, a kari (literally a 'black woman) and a karo (a black man) are hacked to pieces by axe and hatchets, often with the complicity of the community. In Punjab, "(Siah-kari) the killings, usually by shooting, are more often based on individual decisions and carried out in private. In most cases, husbands, fathers or brothers of the woman concerned commit the killings. In some cases, jirgas (tribal councils) decide that the woman should be killed and send men to carry out the deed. A man's honour, defiled by a woman's alleged or real sexual misdemeanor or other defiance is only partly restored by killing her. He also has to kill the man allegedly involved. Since a kari is murdered first, the karo often hears about it and flees". However, Honour killing has always been the extreme form of violence against women, where she is killed when even a man says he has dreamt his wife to have illicit relations with another man and it isn't a wife that is always victim to these kinds of killings, Honour killing having not to have known boundaries snatches the lives of even 9 year old girls or even younger (Bukhari, Amjad Ali, 2010).

Women are killed for choosing a marriage partner for them; they are killed seeking divorce from a barbaric man, killed when even raped, they are killed when they don't do anything at all. The frequency of karo-kari killings and the unexpectedness with which women are targeted contributes to an atmosphere of fear among young women. The poet Attiya Dawood quoted a pubescent girl in a small Sindhi village: "My brother's eyes forever follow me. My father's gaze guards me all the time, stern, angry... We stand accused and condemned to be declared kari and murdered" (Feminist Daily News Wire: April 8, 2004). This young woman from the Sindh Province of Pakistan had appealed to the then President of Pakistan Musharraf for protection from being killed in the name of Honour.

Legal Revisions and the Rights of Women in Pakistan:

The debate about the role of women has its roots in the soul searching and identity crisis that has pre-occupied Pakistan since its inception. Even though the religious right controls the current public discourse, this hasn't always been the case. In Pakistan's first constitution proclaimed the country as a Republic, along with women's equality. The first Muslim Shariat laws guaranteed political representation to women,

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and even equal pay. These early religious laws secured women's right to inheritance and divorce (Cheema, Moeen H. 2008). Then in the 70s a leftist government re-named Pakistan as an Islamic Republic, making Islam the official religion. When democracy crumbled, General Zia ul-Haq used Islamic law for credibility. Declaring himself as "divinely appointed", he made Pakistan an Islamic state. Then General Zia took steps to integrate the state and religion. Soon afterward, Zia introduced the laws to restrain women. The Hudood Ordinances passed in 1979, and the Law of Evidence in 1984. He required all female students and teachers to wear the chaddar over their heads. Interestingly, after he fell from office, no one repealed his religious measures (Quraishi, Asifa, 1996).

In fact, a series of minority governments took further theocratic steps in coalition with fundamentalist religious parties. The rightist government of the Pakistan Muslim League passed the dictator's Shariat Bill through the elected assembly. Then the leftist Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party ratified the same law in the Senate. After the Muslim League grabbed power again in 1990, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, and some Islamic parties, passed a stronger Shariat law setting up a parallel religious courts structure (Idriss, Mohammad Mazher, 2010).

Asma Jehangir, an Outspoken Feminist and a Lawyer, fought against the integration of religious law into civil and criminal law. She took risks by challenging the religious state. In Pakistan it is illegal to advocate a secular course. That's blasphemy, punishable by death. This has restrained feminists and human rights activists. Whereas women's situation all around the world is quite abysmal, at the same time governments and society have consciously at a state level taken a decision that they would want to help women progress. In our country it is the reverse. We do not even want to accept, we do not even want to acknowledge that women are not being treated equally. And because the state structure is not a secular state structure, that adds more problems for women in Pakistan. The greatest opposition to the fundamentalist agenda focuses on the religious laws which have an unequal application on women.

The Hudood laws, and the Law of Evidence may have Islamic roots, but they literally make women less human than men. Under the Law of Evidence, one man's testimony is equivalent to two women. This makes a rape conviction difficult. So difficult that some say these laws are a license to rape. The impact of the Hudood Ordinance is even more significant because if women fail in their attempt to charge rape, the very fact that she brought a rape charge is seen as an admission of extra-marital sex. Under the Hudood law, adultery is also a crime. Not only is adultery punishable, but any sex outside of marriage is punishable. Therefore, there is a very thin line between a person who's raped because the police who investigate the crime can say that she consented to the act and, therefore, charge her under fornication which is called zina here. The punishment for it is ten years and thirty stripes which are lashing in public. While a

decade is the standard sentence for adultery, the Hudood law does allow for a death sentence. Hudood is the plural of Hadd, which literally means "the limit." In practice, a Hadd punishment means stoning to death (Lau, Martin, 2007).

For a Hadd conviction in a rape case, only the evidence of four upstanding Muslim men is allowed, and they must have witnessed the act. So many women fail when they try to charge rape. The result is a majority of rape victims, get convicted of zina, or adultery. That is no government had the courage, and past experience has shown us that they did not have the political will to repeal such laws. Everybody once in power is too much into the hands of the fundamentalists, and pressure from the religious extremist groups. Not only political groups, but also institutions like the judiciary which over the years has become extremely conservative. Nobody can risk taking disapproval of this nature. A law once made in the name (ring) of religion whether fair or unfair, stays in this country (Cheema, Moeen, 2008).

Jehangir has voiced her opposition to the Shariat Laws to all of Pakistan's political parties. But the Human Rights Commission is just a non- governmental agency. She has no power to force change on the government.

Asma Jahangir says, "Really, if you are looking at civilized countries where there is a law, there is a constitution, and I would say it is one of the worst situations in the world today. But in countries where there is a constitution, they say there is a democracy, they say we belong to the civilized nations of the world, however Pakistani women are by far the worst treated human species in this part of the world" (Cheema, Moeen, 2008).

While Asma Jehangir couldn't change the laws, she did help individual women. Some women are lucky be able to take refuge at this private women's shelter paid for through the generosity of four feminist lawyers. Stories of rape and no attempt at legal recourse are common place in Pakistan ... and even more common at this shelter. This is common practice in Pakistani society that if any girl wanted to do something legally, then her husband and family didn't allow her to do this thing. They force her not to do that thing and such girl was confined to the house by her in-laws or even by her own family. She has no support from them or the legal system. Since she did not seek medical corroboration at the time, there is no evidence. If she were to go to court, her charge of rape would be seen as an admission of adultery. She would face a jail term. When feminist groups say the Hudood Laws are a license to rape, it isn't far off in such type of cases (Azam, Hina, 2015).

She quoted an example of a victim, named Mirani, who wanted to proceed with a rape charge, she doesn't have the means. She's illiterate and has no knowledge of the law. Her own family is so poor, they can't even support her if she moves back home. She has four brothers and four sisters. How can they manage it? Her father can't do

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anything because he has lost his arm in an accident. That's why. And mother isn't allowed, to, even to step back from her home. So what she can do? In these circumstances, you can well imagine. Either she can take some legal action against that man, who is very powerful, as compared to her. She is a woman. She is poor. She has children. And the man on the other side is stronger. He has money, and can do everything. Amnesty International has singled Pakistan out for persistent human rights violations when it comes to the rape of women in police custody. It reports that women are often intimidated and threatened not to proceed with charges. And if they do, Amnesty says police routinely refuse to investigate and instead, shield the offenders.

It would be wrong to suggest that women are not making major advances. In many areas of Pakistan, women are challenging their traditional roles for the betterment of their community. When they break barriers, in the process they are contributing to a more independent role for women. And while they're unlikely to say they're doing advocacy work for women's rights, in practice they are improving their own lives. A few examples are as under:

Advances for Women: Literacy

There are some educational efforts which aim to turn around the low female literacy rates. In Quetta where female literacy is among the lowest in the world at around two per cent, certain schools are being run by different volunteer organizations and have some impact. One such school is being run by the Business and Professional Women's Association, and funded through UNICEF. Its administrator Hanna explains serious difficulties in convincing the community to send their girls to the school. The girls seem older than the teachers. So they don't want to send their older girls to the area or the schools because they have a lot of things to do at home and they have to take care of their younger brothers and sisters, and have to do household work. Definitely because there are some reasons, they have some economic, financial problems. Usually parents have six, seven or even eight children so they couldn't afford for all to send to school, so what they usually do is send their sons to the school so they can have education to get jobs. The school made every effort to reduce the costs of attending. It took a great deal of work, but the organization has been able to convince families to send their girls to school. But what they did is they go home to home. Unfortunately the government of Pakistan or the provincial/local governments do not invest much in education.

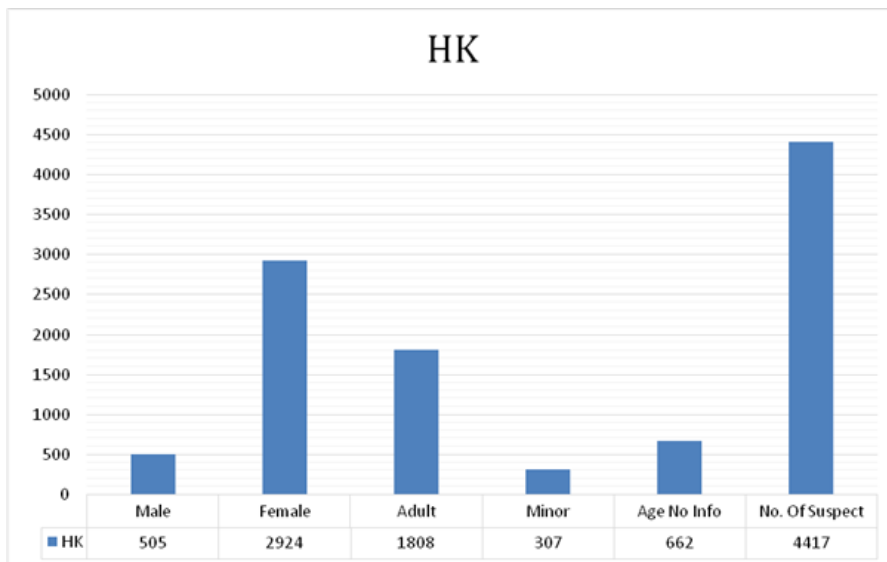
Most women share a common goal in opposing religious laws, but they are careful not to take strident positions advocating individual equality rights, or even feminism because such things are viewed as Western values. It is a liability that has harmed the effectiveness of the women's rights movement. There are those who go further, into what may be called "secular feminism." But very few go the extra step to publicly

promote this position. They are kept in check by the fear of a blasphemy charge. You see, it's blasphemous to advocate a secular state. As a result, this position is reserved for prominent people who are very brave, but are perceived to be at the more radical end of the spectrum. That's because most women in Pakistan do not have the luxury to engage in a debate about choices or rights.

Reported Crimes of Honour Killing in Pakistan:

The summary of Honour killing in Pakistan is furnished through visiting the regional departments of "Human Rights Commission of Pakistan". All the data that has been analyzed is summarizing last five years date from 15th May 2013 to 15th May 2018. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan conducted annual report every 15th May of each year hence we considered evaluation from 15th May.

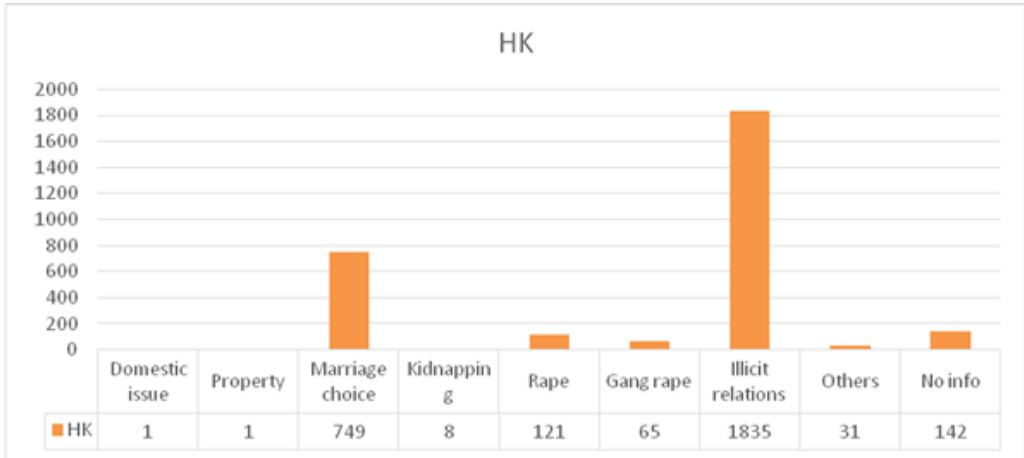
Summary of the Data at Pakistan level



- ⇒ As graph shows that in last five years total 505 males and 2924 females are victims of Honour killing
- ⇒ In which 1808 adults while 307 are minors.
- ⇒ About 662 victims age are unidentified
- ⇒ A total 4417 no. of suspects has been found

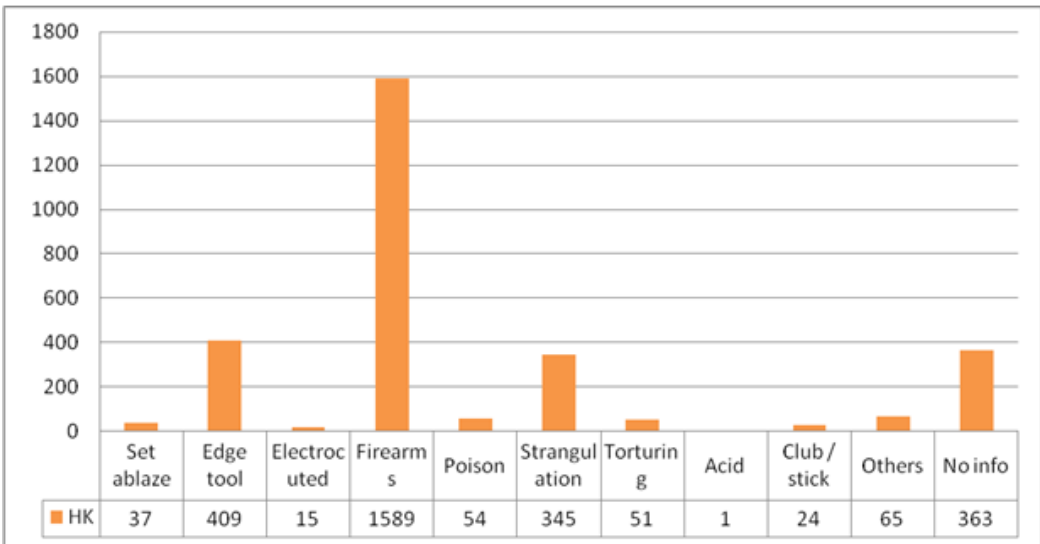
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Reasons:



- ⇒ Most common known reasons are Illicit relations, Marriage choice with ratios of 1835, 749 respectively
- ⇒ Minor reasons included Domestic issue, Property, Kidnapping with ratios of 1,1 & 8 victims respectively
- ⇒ 31 victims have other reasons rather than mentioned above
- ⇒ About reasons of 142 victims are unidentified.

Weapon/Method Used for Murder:



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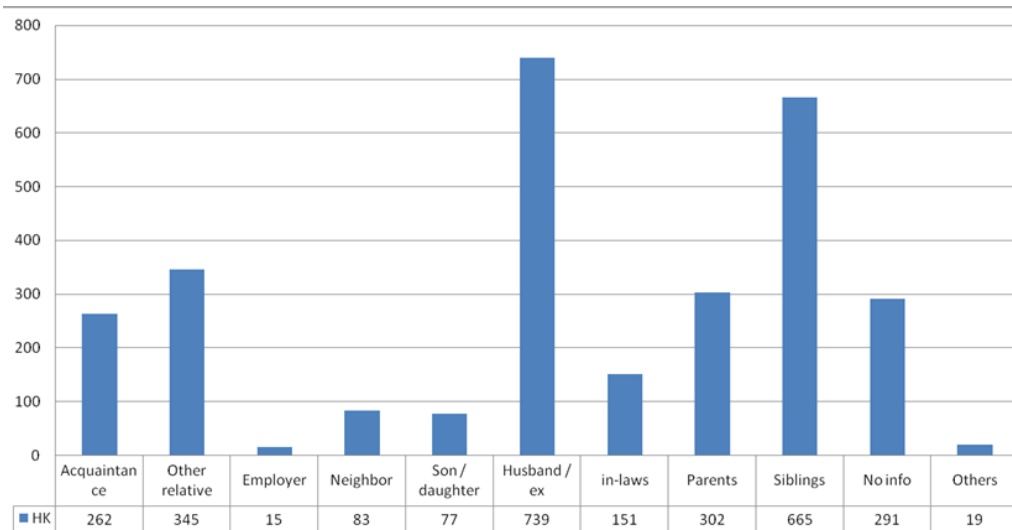
- ⇒ Most common known incidents are Firearms, with ratios of 1589 victims respectively
- ⇒ 65 victims have other incidents rather than mentioned above
- ⇒ About incidents of 363 victims are unidentified.
- ⇒ im’s information is unidentified.

FIR Registered:



- ⇒ As graph shows that FIR registered to 2041 victims while to 48 not registered.
- ⇒ About 860 victim’s information is unidentified

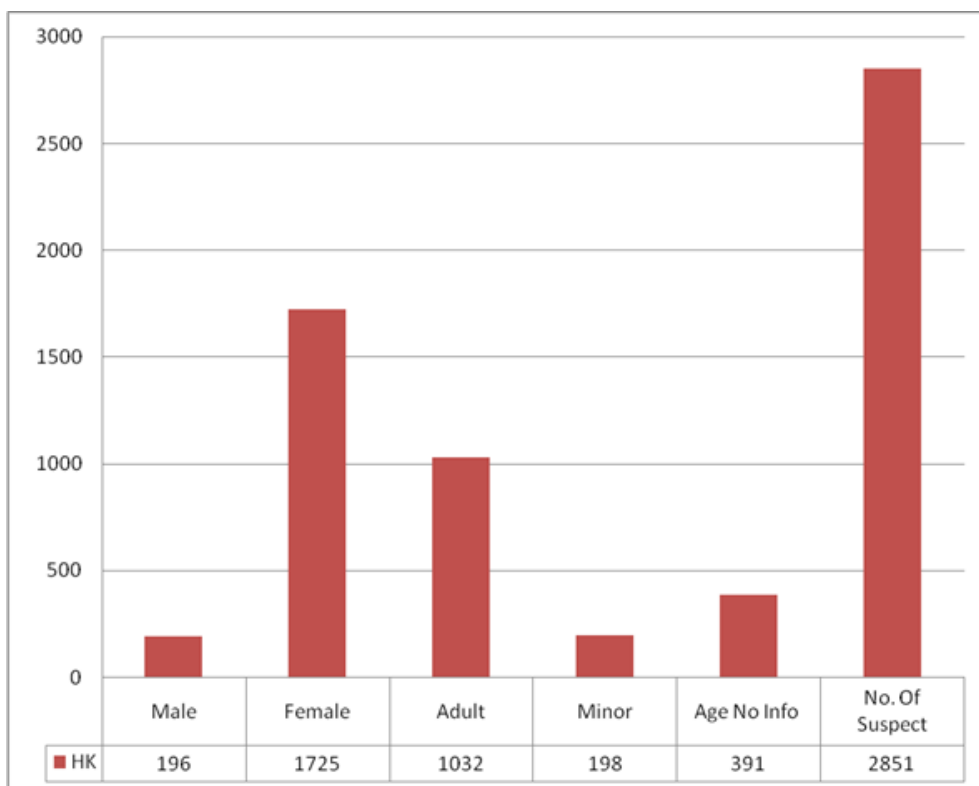
Suspect's relation with victims:



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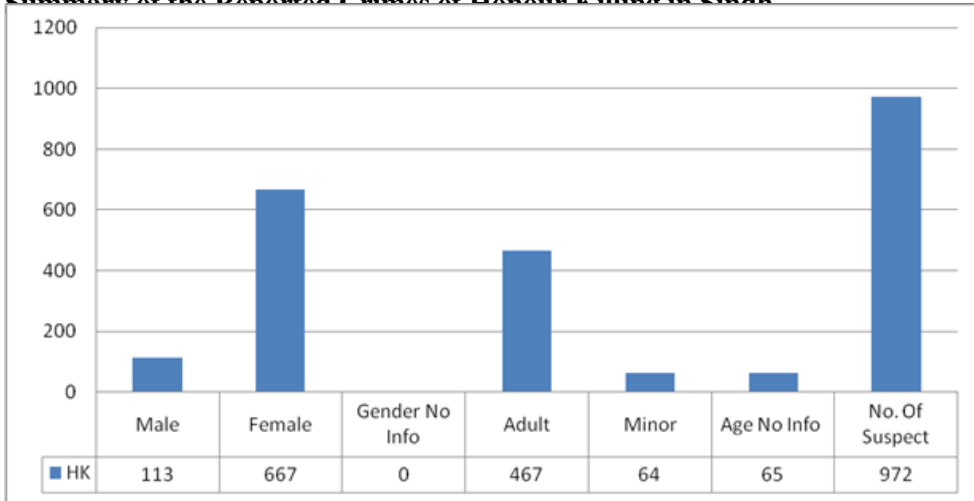
- ⇒ Most of known incidents are Husbands/ex-husbands, relatives, Siblings, Parents, & Acquaintance 739,345,665,602,262
- ⇒ Minor of known incidents are Employer, Neighbor, Son / daughter, & in-laws 15, 83, 77, 151.
- ⇒ Somehow are other incidents as mentioned above 19 suspect's relations
- ⇒ About 291 suspect's information is unidentified

Summary of the Reported Crimes of Honour Killing in Punjab



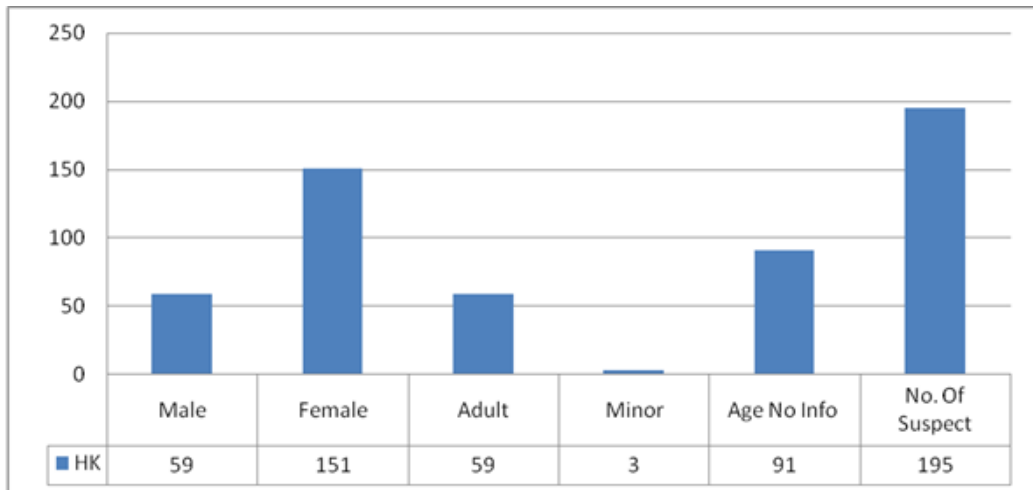
- ⇒ As graph shows that in last five years total 196 males and 1725 females are victims of Honour killing
- ⇒ In which 1032 adults while 198 are minors.
- ⇒ About 391 victims age are unidentified
- ⇒ A total 2851 no. of suspects has been found

Summary of the Reported Crimes of Honour Killing in Sindh



- ⇒ As graph shows that in last five years total 113 males and 667 females are victims of Honour killing
- ⇒ In which 467 adults while 307 are minors.
- ⇒ About 65 victims age are unidentified
- ⇒ A total 972 no. of suspects has been found

Summary of the Reported Crimes of Honour Killing in Baluchistan

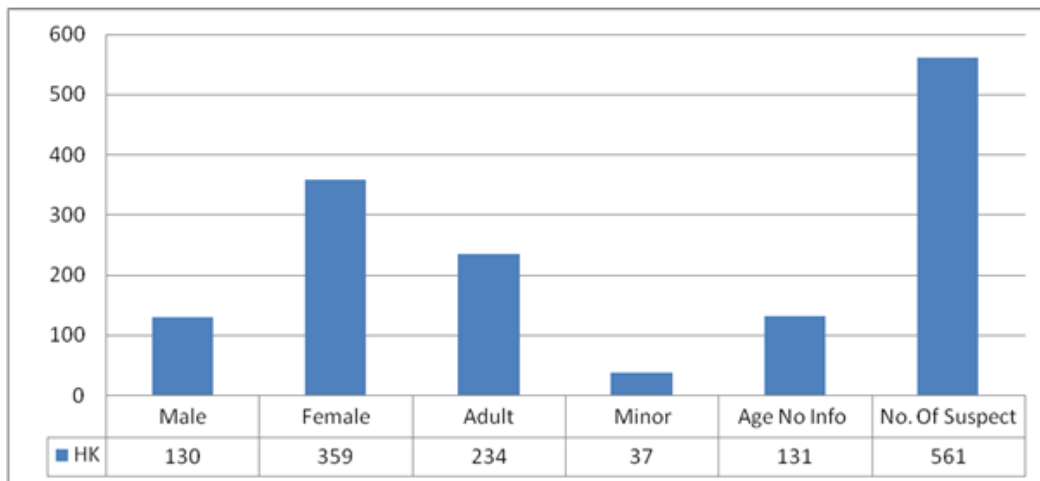


- ⇒ As graph shows that in last five years total 59 males and 151 females are victims of Honour killing

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- ⇒ In which 59 adults while 307 are minors.
- ⇒ About 91 victims age are unidentified
- ⇒ A total 195 no. of suspects has been found

Summary of the Reported Crimes of Honour Killing in KPK



- ⇒ As graph shows that in last five years total 130 males and 359 females are victims of Honour killing
- ⇒ In which 234 adults while 307 are minors.
- ⇒ About 131 victims age are unidentified
- ⇒ A total 561 no. of suspects has been found

Some Real stories of the victims of honour killing

The description of real stories of victims of Honour Killing here, the brutality with which the girls are killed, axed, burnt alive traumatized and maltreated will unveil the barbarism of man. It will also portray the real social status of women in Pakistan.

Zeenat case

16 year old girl Zeenat was burned alive by her mother Parveen Bibi because she had married without consent of her family. Zeenat is Punjabi and her husband Hassan Khan was pashtun. It was main cause for which her family is against her marriage. Hassan told police her family rejected several marriage proposal of his. After 4 days of marriage, Zeenat's family contacts us and promised that they will give us wedding party than we will be able to live together. Zeenat did not wish to go back to her home and she also told me if she went back than her family would kill her. But her uncle guaranteed for her safety than she agreed. But after two days she call me and said her family gone back from their promise and asked to come her home and to get her. But I

asked her that she would wait till promise. But she was killed earlier contrary to fulfillment of promise. And her mother confessed her crime. (Barney Handerson, 2016)

Miran

Miran was killed by her son with a bullet shot on 19 august 2008. Ali Gul Narejo kills his mother and 55 year old Bhai Khan Narejo in the name of Honour declaring them as karokari. It was later found out that Miran was the step mother of Ali Gul whom his father had married after his first wife's death. She was the mother of two children. Ali Gul Narejo has waited for an adequate time to kill his step mother and the person whom he thought was the sinner with her. And as his father left the village to visit someone from outside he killed his mother and Bhai Khan at his home where he was asleep. No cases have been registered or further action taken.

Sher Dil Jatoi

Mr. Sher Dil Jatoi, 62 years old, killed his second wife in an honour killing for allegedly having an illicit relationship with a person named Mr. Shahoo Jatoi. The honour killing occurred in August 2008. Based on this case, Mr. Mir Hassan Jatoi, one of the chiefs of Jatoi tribe, a powerful tribe in the area held a 'Jirga', a court which has been declared as illegal and unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, at Lucky Ghulam Shah, Shikarpur district, Sindh province on October 20, 2008 in order to make a decision on the murder case. Several elites of the Jatoi tribe who have remained in power in both the military and civilian governments took part in the Jirga. The decision said Sher Dil Jatoi was the victim of honour and innocent in killing his second wife. It further said, "as Shahoo Jatoi developed the illicit relationship with the wife of Sher Dil Jatoi, Sher Dil had the right to murder his wife. Shahoo Jatoi was ordered to compensate Sher Dil by handing over his three minor daughters". Since Shahoo has only one girl, a 10-year-old daughter, the Jirga decided that the brothers Mr. Miro Jatoi and Mr. Khanan Jatoi should give their daughters of ages between 13 and 11 years to Sher Dil. Besides, it also ordered Shahoo's family to deliver 20 buffaloes, costing more than 100,000 rupees (around USD 1,400) each, as a fine for having the relationship. When this incident took place, the people in the area were resentful and pressured the police to arrest him as he was known as a habitual killer of his wives. Due to the pressure, the police arrested and kept him in the police custody but released him after 15 days as the people's feelings settled down after his arrest".

Subhan Khatoon

"In 2007, Yasin Shar declared his wife Subhan Khatoon kari (sinner) with Chakar Shar and sent her to her parents and since then both the groups were at daggers drawn over the issue and on Friday a Jirga was held to resolve the issue. The jirga was held at September 2008 in Khanpur Mahar to resolve the one-year old karo-kari dispute

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between Chakar Shar of Khanpur Mahar and Yasin Shar of Khuharo Village near Ghotki. The jirga, after hearing both the parties, came to the conclusion that Chakar Shar had illicit affair with Subhan Khatoon, wife of Yasin Shar. It slapped a fine of Rs 40,000 (\$US 527) on Chakar and regulated him to marry his cousin Irbil Shar's seven-year-old daughter Guddi to Nadoo Shar, 50, who is father of Yasin Shar. Chakar does not have a girl child. However, the family of the girl has refused to accept the verdict on the ground that she is too young to be married at this age. Later, talking to media, Yar Mohammad Shar, brother of Guddi Shar, termed the decision of Jirga as atrocious and revealed that the elder, who presided over the Jirga, was pressuring them to accept the verdict, but they would never accept it”.

Ruskhsana

“Falak Sher kills Ruskhsana of a small village in Sindh on 24th September 2008 declaring her kari . They were both married to each other a year ago and are parents of an infant girl. Falak Sher suddenly assumes that his wife is engaged in illicit relationship with another man of the village and on the night of 24th he beats her and kills her with electric shocks opening the wires at her. He later tells the family that Rukhsana was dead because she accidently had an electric shock with open wires when washing clothes. He repeats the same story for police. No action has been carried out on this yet”.

Wahid Bux

“One Wahid Bux of village Allah Bux Solangi has a months old lands dispute with the wadero (community leader) but having an unarguable power of wadero in front of him he does not find a way to avenge him. Soon he comes up with a clean plan to take revenge with the wadero and decides to kill his both wives and would declare them having illicit relations with the wadero. On 16th of August 2008 he approached the two of his wives in the dawn of the morning and shoots them when they were still asleep. He then with the help of the brothers of his wife throws the body of one down into the river and when they are just down to throwing the other body into the water, villagers approached them and Wahid Bux fled from the scene”.

Conclusion: the whole discussion and certain quoted stories lead to certain bitter facts. It can be concluded easily from the above presentations of charts that the most of the honour killings were targeted against the women (about 90%). This situation is even worse in other smaller provinces. It shows that how much unprotected the women are within the state boundaries. They are targeted just on the basis of doubt of their illicit sexual or extra marital relations, which never are proved. They are killed on the basis of unproved allegations. This very fact shows that this tradition is deeply rooted in the socio-religious grounds, which are openly condemned by the political leaders but at

the same time do nothing for its eradication. The existing laws are totally ineffective to extend any sort of them protection to the victims.

The second largest group of the victims is of those women, and men in some cases, who marry at their own choice. Though by doing this they just exercise their God given right (recognized by all the legal systems throughout the world). Women and men are killed either for their marriage against the parents' consent or for the demand of divorce by the wife from an abusive or violent husband. The above charts show that in majority cases the offenders are husbands. Even if an old lady or a man tries to have second marriage even due to some valid reasons, the siblings commit the murder of their step or real mothers or the fathers. However, in Sindh (Rural) the community leaders are also directly or indirectly involved in these murders. Daily Dawn dated 30th August 2008 reported about the three young girls who were first fired and then buried while they were alive. Their fault was just desire to have marriage according to their own will. According to the newspaper's report, "Balochistan Senator Sardar Israrullah Zehri stunned the upper house on Friday when he defended the this incident of burying alive three teenage girls and two women in his province, saying 'it was part of our tribal custom' (Daily Dawn Islamabad, dated July 30th, 2008). This single incident is more than enough to show that such brutal and barbarous traditions and customs are fully supported by the so called leaders and the public representatives.

The data about the social status indicates that mostly the victims are housewives, daughters or the maids, who generally belong to the lower class who have no voice in the corridors of the power. The data reveals that most of the victims are targeted by the husbands, brothers, or fathers. This is the reasons that very few cases are registered in police. Most of the cases are hushed up by the family to protect the victims who are their equal family members or the heads of the family. They say that they don't want to loose another family member. Despite of the promulgation of the Islamic law no punishment can be found resulted from any judicial decision. This very fact indicate that the honour killing tradition exists only as a social evil while the State and its law badly failed to stop it and extend any protection to the victims. If the majority of the cases go unregistered and the offenders uncaught, it is mainly due to the inefficiency of the law enforcing agencies in the country. Further, there are provisions in the law **for the protection of the offenders in such cases is responsible of such a situation.

The efforts of individuals, private organizations, NGOs, Foreign Agencies cannot improve this situation of the women of this country. For true empowerment of the women government at all levels need to work on emergency bases. Solid grounded educational system coupled with compulsion of sending the girls to schools is required. The cases of honour killings should be trailed by the special summary courts and decided in minimum times. Women empowerment just by increasing women

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quota in the political bodies and parliament is no possible. It is a multidimensional issue which is needed to be handled from different angles.

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