



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Mob Lynching in Pakistan: An Integrated Conceptual Model**

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<b>Received:</b> January 19, 2020	Mob induced violence is prevalent across the cultures. Pakistan too has received spells of mob violence in the form of lynching. Theoretical models give access to multiple theoretical works on the issue by integrating them into one coherent framework. This way, they prove very useful in understanding, explaining and solving the problems in hand. This is a conceptual article that introduces an integrated model for the phenomenon of mob lynching. For this end, the researcher has used his previous experience on the theme by summarising the conceptual literature review of the relevant ideas. It is argued that this model caters to the need of researchers and academicians in the field in comprehending the problem in various contexts including Pakistan
<b>Accepted:</b> March 15, 2020	
<b>Online:</b> March 30, 2020	
<b>Keywords:</b> Communal Responsibility, Conceptual Model, Lynching, Mob Violence, Pakistan	
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**Introduction**

Mob triggered lynching is widespread in Pakistan (Singay, 2020). It is imperative to make a stock of theories to construct a better theoretical lens to understand and explain the problem. This article, to understand lynching in Pakistan and other contexts, presents a model for this aim. The model is a set of four theories for four levels of analysis: Individuals, Process, Society, and State.

**Individual**

An individual is a social being with a motivational force. These motivational forces are categorised into four types: Instrumental rational, Value-rational, Affectual, and Traditional (Weber 1979, p.24). Instrumental rational actions (zweckrational) are motivated by the actor's estimation of means to achieve an end. These are typical means-ends actions. Present day rational-choice theories build on this line of human action. Value rational actions (wertrational) are the ones the actor deems do-able for their own sake. These actions carry a sense of duty, loyalty and command. The actor carries out his conviction without recourse to the 'cost' involved. Religious action is a pure type. There are two irrational sources of human action: Affectual and Traditional. Effectual are the pure emotional sources of human action. These are 'uncontrolled reaction' to some hidden stimuli or 'conscious release of some emotional tension' as in artistic expressions (Weber, 1979, p.25). These are actor's feeling states (p.24). A man's revengeful murder can be an affectual act. Traditional actions are caused by orientation to past actions of others. These are habits deeply ingrained and now turned into conventions. Actor is habituated to these actions or he feels personal fear of estrangement from a community of conventions that he is motivated to carry on with. Feudal or patriarchal cultures are of this sort.

For a modern reader, the words can be updated. Human actions, from a rationality problematique, have two types: reflective and reflexive. The reflective actions are the ones the actor can prior calculate what he is achieving with it. Whether he is achieving something else (instrumental), or his action is the end in itself (value). The reflexive actions are the ones the actor does not calculate it in advance. The emotional actions are the sudden outburst of certain actions, such as triggered by anger, excitement etc. Then, there are some actions which the actor does as a habit, without much pondering about it.

One can only expect that a lynching act falls within these four categories. A lyncher participated in a violent mob to achieve some other personal ends, e.g; profit, position, personal revenge. Or, he did it out of moral duty as in religious lynchings. Or, he got involved out of momentary burst of emotions, as in many examples of gender violence. Or, he performed a traditional job just too habituated to do it and unable to think out of box. Or, he may have a combination of these four for the ultimate motivation for action.

### **Process**

Randal Collins has studied and explained mob lynching at micro level in his works, especially in his book, "*Violence: A Micro Sociological Theory*", (2008; see also his articles 2008; 2012; 2014). Collins believes that humans are a peaceful creature (Collins 2012, p.136). Yet, at times, this peaceful creature sheds blood, as in a mob for lynching.

The Model				
	Analytical Category	Key Concept	Major Contribution	Lynching
Micro Level	The Individual	Interpretive Sociology	Max Weber	The actor/s is acting on both some rational and irrational motivations.
	The Process	Tunnel of Violence	Randal Collins	It explains how a mob starts lynching. Actors under certain emotional state go forward in a situation of lynching and resort to cruelty.
	The Society	Communal Responsibility	Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Rene- Girard	It explains mob formation. Traditional communities espouse a sense of communal responsibility among its members. Mobs come out of this sense of communal responsibility.
It explains the identity of the two sides of a lynching. It is an enabling structure for lynching.				
Macro Level	The State	Monopoly over Violence	Thomas Hobbes	It explains the frequency of lynching at a place. State weakness enables more lynching events.

Fig 1: A Conceptual Model on Lynching.

Violence depends on the actor’s reservoir of Emotional Energy (EE). This EE “is tied to an arena of successful social membership, and to its collective symbols and moral standards which guide action”. (Collins, 2014, p.412) So, violence in every form is an emotional state than being any rational form.

Violence, especially for a peaceful creature like humans, is a difficult situation. An individual in a situation of violence develops an emotional state of tension and fear, called, Confrontational Tension/Fear (CT/F).The violence continues if the EE remains in stock. “Any kind of violent confrontation is emotionally difficult; the situation of facing another person whom one wants to harm produces confrontational tension/fear (CT/F); and its effect most of the time is to make violence abort, or to become inaccurate and ineffective,” (Collins, 2014, p.409).

So, CT/F is the biggest barrier hampering humans motivation to go into an act of violence. But, there comes at certain occasions when this CT/F is crossed over. They are four:

There are many different types of violence. I divide them into pathways circumventing the barrier of confrontational tension. In brief summary, the four

main ways in which in this is done are: (1) finding a weak victim, especially a victim who is *emotionally* dominated; (2) orienting to an audience that encourages a small number of performers of violence; (3) remaining at a distance to launch weapons without having to confront the enemy face-to-face; (4) a clandestine approach which pretends there is no conflict until the very last instant" (Collins, 2012, p.136, italics added).

Obviously, it is the first two that constitute a lynching: a weak victim, an encouraging audience. The weakness of the victim lowers the mounting CT/F in the prospective aggressors. The availability of an audience is also a CT/F minimizer. The audience also ascribes legitimacy on the act of violence. It is because of this fact that mob lynching is also a form of vigilante justice. The perpetrators believe in the 'rightness' of their action and the 'sin' of the victim. Now, once the perpetrators have crossed the CT/F, which was the original barrier, they are in the flow of emotions. Collins call this condition the 'tunnel of violence'. So, mob lynching is a tunnel of violence where the presence of mob itself and the approval of the large segment of the society works against the CT/F has been flooded open, and the weakness of the victim adds to it.

## **Society**

The above two sections have already prepared the venue for this section. The agent is a social agent; and, agents in a violent situation face both enabling and restraining social environment. Once a lynching has taken place, people usually ask one question: who were they? Apart from the answer, 'they were two groups of human beings', rest of the answers beg the identity of the two sides. The societal structure defines: who were they? But, another question is also in demand: why such mobs form at all in certain societies than in others? According to Collins(2014), societal structure such as of race and the prejudice of actors do not automatically lead towards violence every time and everywhere. Collins' theory is a bet on whether the mob that has been formed will start lynching or not; it does not tell whether the mob will initially form or not. Then, why certain societies are 'mob prone'? To answer these two sets of questions, two societal level theories are presented below. First, the theory of 'communal responsibility' is explained as an explanation for the propensity towards mob formation in certain societies. Then, the theory of 'moral community' is given to allow the general and wider structure of the society to play crucial role in lynching events and allowing for different identities for the mobs.

## **Communal Responsibility**

Lynching starts when a mob big or small gathers to punish an individual. So, understanding mob formation is essential for any theory on lynching. Mob is not always ready in a shelf; it is formed under certain situations. It forms when an individual leaves his workplace to gather at a place where a violent act is expected to happen. He moves forward on a call of duty from someone, on hearing news of

alleged crime or on some rumours of sin. This moving forward of some individuals towards the expected scene of lynching is the first step in mob formation. It is other matter whether the mob that has been thus formed will actually start the process of lynching or not. This question has been settled down in the Tunnel of Violence thesis of Collins, as explained above.

So what moves an individual into a mob? A potential lyncher leaves his place to join a potential mob with a sense of moral responsibility towards the section of society that wants to implement a certain justice. The question of justice is fundamental. Lynching and justice are strange bed fellows. The writer proposes that 'lynching' is a modern phenomenon. The practice, a mob trying to kill a certain victim who has allegedly broken some taboo, is though pre-modern; yet, the meaning attached to this practice now arrested in the term 'lynching' is modern. Lynching, as shown in above pages, got coined in the US context of the late nineteenth century. The older word for lynching was communal justice. A certain justice deemed illegal after modern concept of justice emerged is lynching. So, though the practice is ancient, but the phenomenon (social meaning of the fact) is new.

Max Weber explained modernity with thought provoking conclusions (Weber 1979, p.2001). Modernity, according to Weber, constitutes three undercurrents: rationalisation, disenchantment and bureaucratisation. It is the last that interests us here. Modern states are bureaucratic organisations. Bureaucracy is a modern organisation, which resulted in the formation of modern states. Bureaucratic culture distinguished two spheres: the private and the public. This distinction was not there in the pre-modern age. The pre-modern era constituted only one sphere. This research calls it the communal sphere. Modernity sharply disintegrated two spheres in every walks of life. Availing 'private' and 'public' life and keeping them separate is a distinguishing aspect of a modern man. This distinction has also reformed modern justice system.

Justice is now bureaucratic. It is a public sphere and as a result strictly in the hands of the judicial officials. Justice, keeping in view of its bureaucratic rational progress, follows legal principles. The written form of which becomes the constitution of any state. So, judiciary decides the matters according to the ordained principles, law. Police refers the issues of justice to the judiciary where it is rationally decided on 'merit'. In contrast, the tradition justice (excluding the bureaucratic legal systems of some big empires) had no permanent officials to interpret and enforce it. It was most often sudden. The criteria of justice was most often following the consensus among the community at moment. As such, it was collective and consensus-based. In such systems, every member of the society felt an obligation to participate in the process of justice and punishment.

Traditional societies still exist, and they may come back in other forms. These are the societies where modernity has not yet replaced the old value systems completely. Traditional societies lack a sense of modern distinction of the private

and the public spheres. In the absence of modern concepts of 'legitimacy' and 'merit'; and, in the presence of old ideas about a collective judicial responsibility; these societies resort to mob justice more often than others. Proof for the existence of traditional societies within modern state system is the availability of traditional justice systems at different locations. News broke out from Multan, a district in Punjab province of Pakistan, that a community of villagers executed a verdict of 'rape for rape' against the charges of illicit sexual relation between a couple (Dawn July 26, 2017). For the interest of this research, it was the community as a whole that decided and executed the justice after a long negotiation between the sides of the two aggrieved parties. It is in such conditions that individuals leave their homes to watch, participate and share the consequence of a justice in making. Mob formation for lynching has just the similar causes.

Traditional societies have strong bonds of community and sense of solidarity. Any charge of crime has to be taken care of by the community as a whole. Durkheim's phrase 'Altruism' captures the sense completely. Altruism is a state of complete surrender of individual free thinking in a highly integrated society. Traditional societies have altruistic motivations for action. "Exactly like those more explicitly prescribed by society, they arise from this *state of impersonality*, or as we have called it, altruism, which may be regarded as a moral characteristic of primitive man" (Durkheim 2004, p.234, italics added). A sense of social collective responsibility over the questions of criminality prevails in such communities. Individual members cannot stay at home; as, tomorrow they may need the community justice in some case. Individuals in such communities are prompt to rush to the crime and the justice scene under a strong social urge; which is highly lacking in a modern individual who leaves such matters readily to the security officials and rush back home quickly as possible. A modern man accepts the separation of the private from the public and knows it well that he falls in the private sphere than in the other.

Concluding, mob justice is the traditional justice. In the presence of traditional systems, there are greater chances that alleged offenses will attract mobs to plan some action on them. Lynching was one of such traditional justice, made illegal by the modern bureaucratic order; but, yet to be found where traditional order is still alive in some form or where the bureaucratic legitimacy is becoming weak due to certain reasons. And, this traditional form of order prompts individuals to form collectives on social issues, including mobs to lynch a victim.

### **Moral Community**

Till now, it has been mentioned enough that individuals live as a society. This society is the biggest influence on an individual's actions, including an act of lynching. Using Durkheim's concept of 'Moral Community', it is argued that mechanical societies have aspect of social solidarity among the members, which result in what Durkheim calls, 'Collective Consciousness'. Based on the nature of a community's solidarity mechanisms, one gets different types of communities:

religious, linguistic, racial etc. Type of communities gives us the identity of mobs. Every such community, once formed, has an inherent interest in preserving it against all odds. Type of a mob and the victim exposes the solidarity the society is trying to seek and preserve. Man is a social animal. "Social man necessarily presupposes a society which he expresses and serves" (Durkheim, 2004, p.171).

The norms and mores of a society can vary. Religion is one of the most intense social solids men have ever founded; but, it is not the only social bond. Race, gender, class are other important stratifications of a society. These social organisations help create 'Moral Authority' on the members. Societies vary in the type of social authority that is the supreme in each time and space. It is because of this that societies need to be studied under their specific contexts. It is possible that some societies have stronger religious sentiments as the main organising element; and, in some other, it is race that plays this role. It is also possible that a society has many solidarity drives working at the same time. Studying the moral communities will reveal the moral fabric beneath it that prompts mob actions of lynching. Every mob reveals the community it is representing and this way exposes the identity of the perpetrator and the victim. This brings us to the last question: why certain communities tend to act violently that result in lynching incidents? 'Governance' answers this question.

## **State**

It is now a modern era where human beings live in a new political organisation, called; state. Using the pioneering work of Thomas Hobbes for the exploration of the concept, it is argued that state is a form of domination with a promise of creating monopoly over violence in its controlled territory. So, ultimately it is the state that has the legal and moral responsibility to eliminate violence in all forms. Failure of achieving that shall be deemed as a failure of the state as the ultimate organisation.

Hobbes in his renowned treatise on government, '*Leviathan*' (2009) argues,

From... equality of ability, arises equality of hope in the attaining of our Ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their End, (which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only,) endeavour to destroy, or subdue one another (p.76).

As every man is naturally equal, their achievements tend to be in conflict. As a result in a state of nature, it would foster a warlike situation where everyone is against a war against everyone else. "Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of War, where every man is Enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withal" (p.78). It does not mean society has disappeared; rather, it becomes a society which promotes free competition for security. It also does not mean that such a state of nature empirically existed;

rather, he is only presenting a hypothetical scenario if security is not socially collectivized.

Closer to Collins, Hobbes argues that man has fear of death as the main cause for desiring peace. Consequently, to end this violent possibility, man creates states, as a monolithic power centre in the presence of which individuals are not able to use their own. Only the state has the legitimate power to use violence against the persons within or outside its territory. So, the Hobbesian state is 'a monopoliser of violence in a territory'. This definition is at the heart of modern nation-states and nearly all definition of politics has now this undertone (Weber, 1979, p.54).

Hobbes had warned that if a state fails to create monopoly over violence, the life of its citizens would become, 'short, nasty and brutish'. In the absence of state, other groups and individuals will execute violence for their own purposes; and, this will breed a communal society. Modern state exists on the bureaucratic bifurcation of the public from the private, and a complete control over the former. In it, violence is completely taken away from the private sphere as a right. Effective separation of the two spheres in terms of violence is the very genesis of modern polity. A state that is not able to dispense justice effectively, make good policing, and legislate rightly, will end up seeing more and more power contenders, even in the form of small mobs. State must enforce law from the external to each individual. This executive authority is essential for the continued stability of the modern political organization. Current understanding of weak or failed state has almost the same theme, (see for example, Rotberg 2003; Helman& Ratner 1992; where internal violence and conditions of anarchy are the first signs of state weakness). But, a state cannot always impose peace from the outside. It must come from the citizens also. Hence, the concept of 'legitimacy' is important in the modern era.

'Legitimacy' is the probability that domination will be accepted by the subjects (Weber, 1979, p.214). This means there is and must be a moral bond between the government and the society. Without legitimacy, a government cannot impose its will upon the citizens through naked force alone. Legitimacy break-down makes the weapons of a state ineffective. This point has also been endorsed by Durkheim using his strict sociological vocabulary. First he affirms that social order is achieved externally: "Irrespective of any external regulatory force, our capacity for feeling is in itself an insatiable and bottomless abyss" (Durkheim 2004, p.108), so "[t]o achieve any other result, the passions first must be limited... But since the individual has no way of limiting them, this must be done by some force exterior to him. A regulative force must play the same role for moral needs which the organism plays for physical needs" (p.109, parenthesis added). Then, he quickly emphasises the need of legitimacy for the authority to achieve this end:



This means that the force can only be moral... Men would never consent to restrict their desires if they felt justified in passing the assigned limit... [T]hey must receive it from an authority which they respect, to which they yield spontaneously. Either directly and as a whole, or through the agency of one of its organs, society alone can play this moderating role; for it is the only moral power superior to the individual, the authority of which he accepts. It alone has the power necessary to stipulate law and to set the point beyond which the passions must not go. Finally, it alone can estimate the reward to be prospectively offered to every class of human functionary, in the name of the common interest" (p.209-10, parenthesis added).

What happens if this legitimacy is interrupted? "...discipline can be useful only if considered just by the peoples subject to it. When it is maintained only by custom and force, peace and harmony are illusory; the spirit of unrest and discontent are latent; appetites superficially restrained are ready to revolt" (p.212); and again he warns, "When we say that an authority is necessary to impose this order on individuals, we certainly do not mean that violence is the only means of establishing it. Since this regulation is meant to restrain individual passions, it must come from a power which dominates individuals; but this power must also be obeyed through respect, not fear" (p.212).

Then, what breaches legitimacy? We are back to the 'moral community'. If a certain moral community feels that the government has legislated something contrary to its core values or is not legislating something according to its values, it resists the authority. So, the actions of a government need to be seen as 'just' by the community (if it is a pure nation-state) or by the communities in general (if it is a multi-nation state like Pakistan). Failure to achieve this, some communities or some members of a community will deny legitimacy to the state and return back to the self-help system of governance, as mentioned in the above section. Such situation is ripe for mob violence, especially for lynching. The lynched in such cases is the victim of a community disgruntled by the political organisation and enforcing its interest by its own. But there is another factor that erodes legitimacy from a state.

"[W]hen society is disturbed by some painful crisis or by beneficent but abrupt transitions, it is momentarily incapable of exercising [its] influence". (Durkheim 2004, p.213, parentheses added). In some social crises, old values of the community come under threat. Crisis is not always the onslaught of another culture; it is most often the changed economic condition of a society as well. Any case, the social order is disturbed and the grip of the moral authority is upset by the new elements. Social transition is not quick; otherwise, the new values would make a new order and society would run smoothly. "The scale is upset; but a new scale cannot be immediately improvised" (p.112). Presently, a combined modern global culture of free-thinking and capitalist values strike head on the traditional communities and create legitimacy crisis for the states that have proved weak to

resolve this crisis peacefully in the light of the new age. It is also because state itself has to choose sides and many times it chooses the controversial.

### **Conclusion**

This research article employed a conceptual model to understand the phenomenon of mob lynching. The model analysed the problem at the micro and macro level from four analytical categories: individual, event, society, and state. To understand the individual, a sociological view was adopted that defines an individual as the custodian of his action with motivations and structures. The event of lynching was explained using a micro sociological view of it. The society was accepted as the structure of individual actions; and, two aspects of that structure were found to be helpful in understanding lynching. One is communal responsibility enshrined in all traditional societies that help mob formation on social issues. Second is the concept of moral communities as identity groups who keep struggling to maintain and strengthen their own solidarity against disintegrating forces. Lastly, the state was defined as an ideal type with monopoly over violence as the litmus test, on which it fails many times. Frequency of lynching is supposed to be related with this state weakness.

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