



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Unveiling the Reality: A Study of Honour Crimes in Interior Parts of Sindh Province**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the prevailing honor killing and honor crimes status in rural areas of Sindh. Honor killing is widely reported from rural and tribal areas of Sindh province. This is known as 'Karo -Kari' which is perceived or alleged involvement of a male or female in pre-marital or extra-marital relationship. It results in killing usually of a female by her close relative for bringing 'dishonor' to their family. For this study purpose mixed method research was adopted comprised of interviews, FGDs and field observations. The findings reveal that honor crimes including honor killing is deep rooted in rural areas of Sindh. Community perception does not discourage people from committing such heinous crimes. The role of relevant stakeholders is also ineffective to control honor killing. The study recommends a holistic approach including structural reforms of law enforcement institutes, changes in laws and widespread community awareness to curb this heinous crime.

**Introduction**

Honor killing locally called "Karo-Kari" found in rural and tribal areas of Sindh. It is executing a woman for accusation of getting involved or engaged in pre-marital relationship or extra-marital affairs. Such a woman is thought the source of causing dishonor to their family. Hence, to restore honor male family member kills the woman in question (Patel and Gadit, 2008). In a typical rural society of Pakistan where brother who is considered as protector to his sister turn to be her killer when she is alleged or perceived to bring dishonor to their family. Any close relative including brother, father, husband or other member from family commits such killing known as honor killing (Bhanbhro, 2020). Such killings however are driven only by customs or traditions but also feudalism and patriarchal society (Bhanbhro et al., 2013).

Although physically beating, torturing, taking the victim off home or society (Biradary), snatching children and many others might come under domestic violence, yet all these acts committed using the mask of honor do come under honor crime. These sins are often considered as domestic violence and private matter by society, police and law enforcing agencies; therefore, it goes unnoticed until it takes extreme forms of murder or attempted murder. Suicides and attempts of suicide in different forms are also deep rooted for so called honor. This study is conducted for the purpose of overviewing the existing situation of the subject matter in rural areas of Sindh. A detailed examination is carried out in the rural areas to explore the understanding and perception of communities, polices, judicial concerns, social activists and other stakeholders directly or indirectly involved to address honor crime.

Rural areas of Sindh are underdeveloped where people dwell in tribes and other ethnic combinations. Cultural values and social norms are very deep rooted which are practiced by rural and tribal communities. Victimization of women is very common in these rural areas.

Honor killing in Sindh is not only limited to Karo-Kari, but it has many other illegitimate forms which are being practiced (Jamali et al., 2015). Women once accused with Kari have very limited chances of redressal or relief. Such women are killed by their close family members. Study found that educational, financial and social background impact greatly on such allegations to women. Deprived of this social protection such vulnerable women are badly victimized (Laghari, 2016). There are frequent cases reported for violence against women in Sindh. In the year 2016 a total of 858 such cases of violence against women are reported including 157 honor killings, 108 rape cases, suicides 166, girls and women kidnapping 199 cases and rest of the 228 cases for other sort of violences with women. The weapons used for such crimes are either guns or axes (Ali et al., 2020).

Gender inequality is one of the major reasons which provoke violence against women including honor crimes. The other factors include forced marriages, illiteracy, preference of male child by parents, women depending economically on men. Study found that just only in one district i-e Shikarpur, of Sindh 10 to 12 women are killed annually in the name of honor. (Muzaffar, et. al., 2015). Other than enforcing law at first place, there are required some long-term solutions like promotion of education and enhancing economic conditions of rural women in Sindh (Pahore et al., 2016). There have been recent efforts to curb honor killing in Pakistan. However, there are still lacunas left in laws to protect women and related amendments. The existing laws leaves much room for perpetrators to commit honor killing and to get protected. The legislators are required to formulate and ensure implementation of such stringent measures as per international safeguard provided to women, so that all sort of honor crimes are controlled (Hongdao, 2018).

From the above discussion it is evident that the major reasons for not reporting from the side of victim or family members was probably existing laws and judicial system do not address such cases effectively. Even some community members were of the idea that reporting such incident causes greater trouble for the victim and her family. Community estimates more than hundred cases occur annually in the district which are nor reported and never brought to the media. In this regard the role of media has also not been found effective to address issues and ensure justice to the victim. Consequently, victim prefers either remain calm or silent or go to customary Jurga, Panchait or Biradary system decision making institutes

It is assumed that such offenses do happen because of either false allegations' basis on internal biasness or for the sake of economic interests, in which women face all kinds of gross violence and abuse at the hands of the male perpetrators' family members and influential. Multiple form of violence includes moral assault domestic abuse as spousal murder, mutilation, burning and disfiguring faces by acid, beatings; ritual honor killings and custodial abuse and torture are the areas to be explored, addressed and take its way out. Illiteracy is the major cause for crimes being undertaken over the name of so-called honor.

Hence an effective and neutral role of community is one of the most significant factors to addressing honor crimes issues. Community is required to discourage such mishaps and try level best to penalize the culprits. This is also important that the community should provide immediate support, sympathy and safety nets to the victims and their families. Community should encourage the victim to stand against culprits to legally get them penalized for the sins they did commit. From the victimization to First Information Report (FIR) registration and reporting of cases up to final decision by judiciary system community is required to support victims' particular women and should ensure that the victim get appropriate justice.

## **Literature Review**

Relating honor crimes with the perception of a decultured domestic violence or its religious affiliation is wrong approach. Although traditional perception with the role of women in society incites her vulnerability. The landlords and patriarchal hierarchy make women marginal and prone to abuse and brutality. Such these circumstances encourage violence against women including honor crimes and honor killing (Zia, 2019).

Honor crimes or honor honor killings are basically the crimes and killing against women in a male dominating society. Such crimes are further named as honor crimes or honor killings which are basically the murders of women in a given patriarchal society. Thus, most of the honor killings executed in parts of Sindh are heinous crimes which are named as honor killing (Olwan, 2019).

Honor killing is justified based on the gender discrimination and religious perceptions. The other factors include poverty, illiteracy, social insecurity, political structure, and lack of values for human life. To curb such heinous crimes changes in existing laws and policies are required to ensure protection to victims (Vitoshka, 2010).

Honor crimes including rape, killing of women and attempts to murders are required to be controlled through both wide scale campaign to raise community awareness and also to bring reforms in existing laws. The role of communities and common men is important to discourage and demotivate such crimes against women. The rule of law has crucial importance to ensure safety of women against such heinous crimes (Soomro et al., 2012).

## **Material and Methods**

For this study purpose both qualitative and quantitative approaches of mixed methods research were used to gather information and to interpret results. Mixed methods research is used in social sciences research which provides researchers to employ a variety of approaches for answering research questions which otherwise cannot be addressed in a single method (Doyle et al., 2009). For this study purpose the tools for primary data collections were developed to collect data from various stakeholders keeping in view their influence and role to curb honor crimes. Survey guides were developed including Focus Group discussions to double check and verify the information collected through independent interviews, and survey questionnaire. The methodology is called mixed methods research as the study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. Mixed methods research incorporates both qualitative and quantitative research and data in the study (Hafsa, 2019). The study was conducted in 30 different villages belong to the rural areas of Hyderabad, Badin and Mirpurkhas districts. 60 FGDs were conducted with the local community (30 with male community members and 30 with female members). Besides, separate interviews were conducted from, NGOs representatives, members from bar councils, media persons, policemen, police officers, and other stakeholders from district administration and health department. The key informant interviews were also conducted including religious scholars, local influencers, political representative, human rights activists of the area, teachers, local traders and other relevant community members. All the data collection process used semi structured questionnaires and survey guides to collect data relating to the issues of status of the women in traditional rural society, their education and role in decision making, the incidences of the violence against women, and role and perception of community regarding violence and crimes against women.

## **Results and Discussions**

The results reveal that women in study area are most vulnerable keeping in view overburdened ranging from household chores, water collection, rearing of children to agriculture labor and livestock foddering. Contrary to their roles, the facilities provided to women are negligible to non-available. Women are deprived from very basic facilities including education, health, safety, security and social protection. Likewise, the facilities are homes are also negligible. 90% of the visited areas are deprived of basic sanitation facilities including toilets within households, and access to safe and potable water at doorsteps. Such women are coerced to travel in field to defecate in open and must travel to long distant areas to fetch water. Both such travels and their presence in open fields makes them vulnerable to various violence including incidences of sexual abuse, harassment, rape and other related brutalities.

The study collected the perception of communities regarding prioritization of social cum communal needs. A wide list of immediate community needs in all visited rural areas was presented to respondents. The answers were collected and summarized in relative groups. The ranking was allocated based on the needs prioritized. Table No. 01 below presents the summary of overall needs prioritized by communities based on their perceptions regarding crucial areas to be addressed by stakeholders for overall well-being of rural areas.

The findings highlight the availability of employment opportunities, sanitation including toilets within households and overall, the rural communal ambiance free from addition as the most pressing needs of the area. Focal Group discussions also prioritize at the bottom of frequency scale the social status, moral support to women, vocational institutes, equality, leaderships and maintenance of available electricity. Thus, from the community perception regarding their need prioritization ranks education and women empowerment at lowest ranking. Whereas socio-economic needs are considered most indispensable. The detailed frequency table according to needs and prioritization presented below.

**Table 1**  
**Prioritization of Community Needs**

Priority Name	Frequency			Overall Rank
	Total	Men	Women	
Shortage of Irrigation Water	5	2	3	Immediate Need
Basic Health Facility	5	4	1	Immediate Need
Drainage System	5	4	1	Immediate Need
Drinking Water	4	3	1	Prior Need
Education	4	3	1	Prior Need
Road	4	2	2	Prior Need
Girls Education	4	2	2	Prior Need
Teachers Unavailability	3	2	1	Average Need
Unemployment	3	0	3	Average Need
No Washrooms	2	0	2	Need
Addictions	2	0	2	Need
Discrimination	1	0	1	Less Need
Poor Electricity	1	1	0	Less Need
No Leaderships	1	0	1	Less Need
Livelihood	1	1	0	Less Need
No moral Support to Women	1	0	1	Less Need
Vocational Institutes	1	0	1	Less Need
Social Status	1	1	0	Less Need

The provision and access to basic health facilities and drainage system are highly prioritized during focal groups' discussion with men. On the other hand, unemployment is

highly prioritized by women members for that frequency of responses by male members is "0", this also suggests that women community members are either deprived of economic contribution or eager to contribute financially to their families. It might be assumed here that due to less or no contribution of women in the area of income to their households, has resulted their dependency on male members which in turns leads to vulnerability and marginality.

### Challenges to Women

The increasing violence against women is a matter of serious concern. Focal Group Discussion with community members intimates higher frequency for causes of problems faced by women. Illiteracy and unawareness regarding basic women rights is one of the major contributing factors which lead to violence against women. Thus, marginality and vulnerability of women is also because of less effective or no role of women in any decision making taken place either in their houses for their family members or for themselves. Study also suggests the vulnerability do also prevail because of women are socially deprived of contributing economically to their households. The reason behind the situation is unavailability of labor, low wages for labor and unskilled. A society where violence against women is endemic can never fully develop either socially or economically. Gender discrimination and unequal treatment for this marginalized segment of society are also major contributing factors to the violence. Consequently, such violence in the private domain undermines women's confidence and self-esteem and destroys their health, while the fear of moral assault in the public domain deprives them of their full participation in all aspects of development. This is a high social and economic cost for society to pay. Violence against this marginalized segment of society is the major issue of today's development world.

**Table 2**  
**Frequency of Challenges to Women i**

Community's Responses	Frequency			Rank
	Total	Men	Women	
Illiteracy	7	5	2	Frequent
No decisions making	7	3	4	Frequent
no labour/craft	5	3	2	Frequent
Overburden	4	2	2	Sometimes
low wages of labour	2	1	1	Rarely
maternity home	2	2	0	Rarely
Inequality	2	1	1	Rarely
Beating	1	0	1	Less
dependence on men	1	0	1	Less
deteriorating health conditions	1	1	0	Less
early marriages	1	0	1	Less
family disputes	1	0	1	Less
Livelihood	1	1	0	Less
no facilities at home	1	1	0	Less
no financial support by men	1	0	1	Less
no lady doctor	1	0	1	Less
no toilets	1	1	0	Less
no wages paid for domestic goods	1	0	1	Less
sister-in-laws beat	1	0	1	Less
slave treatment	1	1	0	Less
Third person interference in work	1	0	1	Less
unmarried women	1	1	0	Less

Physically beating and torturing is one of the major offenses found during Focal Group Discussions with community. Exchange marriages and forced marriages have been found to be 13% & 13% respectively. Community also estimates similar percentage for suicides and killing crimes in the areas. Among all the above-mentioned crimes there must be 16% of the cases reported as others. This was also shared during discussions with the community that such cases are either not reported or reported for less than 2%. Even most of the FGDs were reluctant to share information in this regard (Muzaffar, et. al. 2018)

The major reason for not reporting from the side of victim or family members was probably existing laws and judicial system do not address such cases effectively. Even some community members were of the idea that reporting such incident causes greater trouble for the victim and her family. Community estimates more than hundred cases occur annually in the district which are not reported and never brought to the media. In this regard the role of media has been found effective to address issues and ensure justice to the victim. Community discussions also conclude such offenses do happen because of either false allegation based on internal bias or for the sake of economic interests.

It is estimated throughout the district women face all kinds of gross violence and abuse at the hands of the male perpetrator family members and influential. Multiple forms of violence include domestic, burning and disfiguring faces by acid, beatings; ritual honor killings and custodial abuse and torture were suspected to prevail in the area. Illiteracy is the major cause for crimes being undertaken over the name of so-called honor.

Findings reveal that for all such occurrences the community is responsible up to 50%, family up to 14% and all others are involved up to 36%. Analysis suggests that in 93% cases mostly women are victimized. Both the high illiteracy and low attention to women's education had this violence deep rooting. The community themselves also encourage such practices of honor crimes and they are complicit in this exploitation. The family and close relatives also have role in such reported violence against women. Community assumes throughout the district when there is an honor crime, despite the different stories and circumstances leading up to such a violent act, the need to control the body and behavior of women remains a central concern. The reason behind this unchanged motive is that the primary constructs of this society were and remain embedded in the patriarchal practice of valuing and de-valuing women according to the situational needs and threats to male dominance. In this rural society, the woman was deemed to be a commodity, owned and controlled by the male members of her family and her worth was defined by her conduct within the social group and her position in the family.

During the occurrences of such violence the community is usually called upon to stand witness and to take collective responsibility via a Jirgah (council) and as a group accept the punishment as mandatory and part of custom.

Focal group discussions summaries about 57% of the community discourages victims and their families after such occurrences, 29% of the community just leave them over their own fates and only 14% do keep and express sympathy to certain victims and their families. This is one of the issues not exposed or reported publicly. As in most cases of women victim she is widely discriminated and insulted by major portion of the community.

### **The Status of Marriages**

During discussion with community, it was observed that most of the participants (around 85%) were of the idea that women should be asked their will before marriages. In earlier times, it was thought taboo to ask from the women about her will for marriage.

Nowadays scenario in cities has changed, in most of the marriages in cities; women are asked their will before marriage. Otherwise on mutual consent of the parents' women must agree upon. In rural areas, the situation has not changed much. Peoples are still attached with the ancestral customs and rites. They still feel ashamed if they ask the will of the women. Focal Groups Discussion estimates that more than 90% community living in the rural areas does not ask the will of the women before marriage. Another factor that empowers the women is whether the women are educated or not. The participants of FGDs assume that if a woman is not literate, she is not asked to share her will.

### **Media and its Role**

During the FGDs with journalists it was found that the media is playing an active positive role. Media was not this vibrant and quick in previous times, this new technology boom not just helped people but created a few problems for them as well. Due to the boom of information coming to amateur journalists, it is becoming hard for them to tackle the info accordingly. This is not only affecting the journalist at an individual level, but society on a large scale too. Due to these cases like defamation and scandals are unearthed. The approach of the media men is unprofessional. They should be trained and guided accordingly as they can play positive role in the society and could become the ultimate tool of the victim crying for justice. Mostly peoples said that cases in the media should be highlighted as the cases could be registered at the local police station.

On the contrary FGDs with community concludes peoples were of the opinion that cases should not be exposed off to media, as they defame the cases and make them scandalized. Since, it brings a bad name not only to the women family but also to the whole area. And the way the media highlight the issue required lot of improvement. In case the incidents are highlighted, then it should be in such a way, it would create as minimums as possible issues for the community. Usually, the language used in the local newspapers is very objectionable. By highlighting these issues, the actual issues of the area, like, education, health and infrastructure went into the background and the areas are nominated as the honor killing areas. Another reason they quoted is that the newspapers are for only urban areas. 95% of the participants in rural areas reported that they do not read newspapers regularly. And the locations where focus group discussions were conducted informed that they hardly read newspapers once a week. Only the teachers responded that they read newspapers if available. But they don't buy special newspapers every day for reading purposes. It was also observed that a very limited people of the rural areas, have access to the electronic Media. Radio tape was reported available in most of the households; however, during a detail discussion with community it was informed that they use to listening songs from the radio, but outside the home like in the portion where guests usually stay, at a considerable distance from home. This is due to that they don't want their women to listen songs. Usually, women are kept busy in livestock rearing, water fetching, agriculture and other household chores. The responses of the community, regarding whether the honor killing cases should be reported in the newspaper and electronic media, is that about 64% thinks that there is no difference if the cases are reported in the newspapers, provided that media, role should be highlight the issue, rather than creating a new issue for the family. 36% completely responded that as this will bring a bad name to the family and the area, therefore, it should not be reported in the newspapers. Another interesting fact came out of the study, that women community encourage the reporting of such incidents. As in majority cases women are the victim, they are of the view that, it should be reported so that people get lesson and should not repeat it again.

The police department officials said that the media has played a major role in highlighting the honor killing and women right. However, they added that the media should

play role to highlight the issue, in a responsible way, and it should be in such a way that the people feel this the issue of the area and that need to be minimized. When asked how they see the role of media, it was informed that it would be better if such cases are not published in the newspaper and in electronic media. Media personnel should develop a code of ethics while reporting the honor killing incidents in which the victim (women family) respects should be considered.

### **Police Department Perception and Role**

When the stakeholders were asked about the role of the police in these cases of honor crime, their immediate reaction towards the police was negative. People have the opinion that police does not play proposed role. If the police are mediating the issue, then it would be only to give safe hands to the kin involved of the influential person. In many cases a victim that registers FIR at the police station is re-victimized. Police tries its level best to push the victim to withdraw from the case or crave for justice. Most of the stakeholders have the idea that the police are not playing their role effectively and efficiently. When peoples were inquired about the irresponsible attitude of the police, they said that reasons are Bribery, Political Influence, Influence of the local representative of the community as wadero or sardar, at other times complaint does not have money to mobilize the police to their legal and official work. During detailed discussion with DPO Police it was observed that there is dire need on the side of state to revise the policies and laws to handle such incidents effectively and smoothly. DPO also added the need of capacity building of police department to understand laws and condition and to adopt adequate behavior to victim and her family are the major areas of attention.

### **Understanding Regarding Honor Crimes**

Results predict that one an average 10 to 12 cases of honor killing were dealt by police in the district last year in last year. Usually, victim family of women in case of honor killing reports the case in the police station. However, in some case the men family members, if men are killed, lodged a report against the offender. So, it depends upon the situation. In case of killing more than 90% cases are reported in the police station. According to police representatives the rural people are illiterate and don't know about the process, therefore, it would take time otherwise, at police station they guide the people to lodge FIR properly. However, once FIR is lodged it takes 2-5 years period for the court to decide a case. The reasons for the delay are lack of evidence, lawyers delayed tactics, and Pakistan Judicial system and other are the main reasons of the delay of cases.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that in more than 90% of cases of honor killing mostly women are victimized. The major contributing factors includes illiteracy and unawareness regarding basic women rights. Thus, marginality and vulnerability of women is also because of less effective or no role of women in any decision making taken place either in their houses for their family members or for themselves. Physically beating and torturing is one of the major offenses found in the area of study. Exchange marriages and forced marriages, suicides, attempts to suicide and killing under the name of honor have been noticed increasing day by day in the area. This was widely evident during the study that such offenses are either not reported or reported rarely. For honor crimes the community is responsible up to 50%, family up to 14% and all others are involved up to 36%. The reason behind this unchanged motive is that the primary constructs of this society were and remain embedded in the patriarchal practice of valuing and de-valuing women according to the situational needs and threats to male dominance. In this rural society, the woman was deemed to be a commodity, owned and controlled by the male



members of her family and her worth was defined by her conduct within the social group and her position in the family.

The study suggests there is dire need to address this issue by adopting different measures. The victim at and after time of victimization, had to face lot of mental depression to get restored from the incident. For which community and family behavior during the time is the major area of attention. Adequate laws addressing such issues and rendering justice within a short span are required at the side of state so that law enforcing agencies might be able to effectively handle such offenses. Behavioral change at the side of police, lawyers and judicial department and other concerned is the area of attention, to be improved to encourage victim to come forward and get handled the mishap. Study suggests role of media at general, social and religious activists, NGOs and other concerned has been found condemning such offenses and are playing effective role towards minimizing the offenses.

### **Recommendations**

The proactive and professional role of media is crucial to highlight such honor crimes and raise the voice of the victims.

The structural changes in both law enforcement agencies and judiciary are mandatory for speedy justice to victim

Promotion of literacy and education with special focus to girls and women in rural areas of Sindh

Social and economic empowerment of women to provide them social safeguard and partake in decision making. References

Overall awareness raising in community to stop such honor crimes

Existing laws to be implemented in later and spirit to ensure timely relief and justice to victim.

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