

**Murders in the name of honour - findings from an  
ethnographic study**

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# Murders in the name of honour - findings from an ethnographic study

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# Scope and size of HMs

Year	No. of HMs
First half of 2012	144 (Sindh)
2011	605 women & 115 men (Sindh)
2010	791 (Pak)
2009	647 (Pak)
2008	618 (Pak)
2007	538 (Pak)
2006	607 (Pak)
2005	465 (Pak)
2004	560 (Pak)

In Sindh 2228 cases of HMs were recorded between 2001-2004 by Sindh Police.

Sources: HRCP, AF, RDHR & IG Investigation Sindh Police

# Scope and size of HMs -1

## Top 8 Districts for HMs during year 2008-2010

Sr. No.	2008		2009		2010	
	District	No. of cases	District	No. of cases	District	No. of cases
1	Ghotki	36	Jacobabad	36	Jacobabad	42
2	Lahore	34	Sukkur	32	Ghotki	37
3	Naseerabad	34	Khairpur Mirs	32	Larkana	33
4	Jacobabad	32	Larkana	31	Faisalabad	22
5	Larkana	32	Faisalabad	26	Kashmore	21
6	Khairpur Mirs	31	Lahore	23	Lahore	19
7	Sukkur	26	Ghotki	24	Khairpur Mirs	19
8	Nausheroferoz	24	Lahore	23	Sargodha	18

Adopted from Aurat Foundation Annual Report 2010

# Under-reporting of HM cases

- Unwillingness of victims' family members
- The criminality of these murders is not recognised within the social and cultural contexts
- HMs have a high level of support in society
- HMs are masked as suicides or accident
- Lack of a government or any independent organisation initiated system to document the cases

# History of Honour Murders

- Roots in patriarchal structures
- Happening for centuries in various societies such as Babylon, Incan, China, India (including present day Pakistan), Ancient Rome and pre-Islamic Arabs
- Incan laws allowed husbands to starve their wives to death as punishment for committing adultery.
- Aztec legal codes meted out death by stoning or strangulation for female adultery.
- Pre-Islamic Arab tribal societies used to bury their daughters alive and killing women in the name of honour was common practice.
- The practice reached the Indian sub-continent in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when Arabs came to settle in Balochistan

# Structures that maintain HM

- Feudal structures
- Tribal customs
- Tribal enmity/conflicts
- Jirga system
- Religious misinterpretation
- Inactive role of government institutions i.e. police, courts, district administration

# Methods & setting

## Methods

- Ethnographic observation
- Informal discussions
- Focus group
- Semi-structured interviews

## Participants:

- Female = 12
- Male = 18
- Female = 04
- Male = 02

Had direct or indirect involvements in HM incidents

## Setting

- Jacobabad city and a village in its vicinity
- Population of village about 2000 people consists of approximately 100 households
- Two primary schools (boys & girls)
- A secondary school

# Reasons given for HMs

## Social/Cultural/Behavioural

- Delaying in providing meal/food
- A man wishing to remarry
- Marrying to a man outside her *braderi/clan/caste/tribe*
- Frequently standing/glimpsing from the door or windows of her house
- Talking to a strange man or someone who is not close relative
- Admiring any male except husband, father or brother
- Frequent visits of any male from outside the family to the house
- Frequent standing of a male nearby the house
- Wearing make-up without any special occasion such as wedding or Eid (religious festival)
- Frequently taking shower and wearing new cloths in absence of her husband
- Expressing a desire to choose spouse or marrying with a person without family's will
- Settling dispute with opponents

### Financial:

- Settling debt
- Inheritance property share

# Male-dominated social structure

- ❖ Family
- ❖ Caste
- ❖ Biraderi
- ❖ Tribe
- ❖ Marriage
- ❖ Jirga

On other hand a woman can go alone to give *neeran* or lunch to her husband in field or women can work alone in fields, while stranger can cross but in these cases man's honour is not hurt because it is their benefit that we are helping him in the fields" (A female participant)

- "*woman is izat [honour] of a man and his khandan [family], if she dishonours then she is punished*" (A male participant).
- "*the discrimination starts at the day we (women) born, our families do not make special arrangements for chhathi for girls, in case of boys special naming ceremony is arranged*" (Female participants)
- "*we (women) cannot go to hospital without a male companion even that male could be a four year child. In our community male call us "bar", so we are considered as weak and cannot look after ourselves as like kids. As a small kid cannot decide for him/herself as women cannot decide for themselves*" (Female participants)

*"we (women) were stopped from progressing from every aspect of life. We never seen gate of school and we know our girls will also not see that (women group).*

# Internalised oppression

Women are powerless and victimised, both deliberately by men and unthinkingly by women who have accepted their subservient position in the society as deserved, natural and inevitable (Griffin, 1997, p. 76)

*"majazi khuda"*  
[god in earthly form]

"a woman has to obey orders of his man at any cost, whether he is right or wrong" (a female participant)



Women have internalised oppressive forms of violence due to insecurity, fear of family, braderi and unfavourable social and legal conditions.

Being women it is our duty to serve men because they earn, work hard, run households; bring food and clothes to home"; if they beat us sometimes on our mistakes it doesn't matter (Female participants).

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- Ashfaq Talpur - University of Sheffield

# References

# Growing harmful trends

- Tribalism & tribal leaders
- Madrasahs & religious extremism
- Forced conversion of Hindus especially women
- Caste based ties
- Tribal conflicts
- Inequality in social classes
- Deteriorating situation of education, health and law & order

# What does a civilised society demand in a 21<sup>st</sup> century?

- Tolerance, harmony, peace
- Respect and equal treatment of women
- Respect and equal treatment of minorities
- High standard of education
- Promotion of science and technology