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Representation of Honour Killing in the Newspapers of Pakistan: A Content Analysis

Abstract:

Honour killing being the widely prevalent social evil in Pakistan, this research article aimed to investigate the representation of honour killing in the newspaper articles. For the descriptive analysis, 101 articles of two leading media outlets were selected, Dawn and Express tribune, from the time period from 2019 to 2021. Purposive sampling was employed. The categories of analysis were Gender, Identity, Implementation of law, Relation of accused with victim, Methods/weapons used for killing, Reasons of killing. It is revealed that female victims were 105 and male were 36 respectively. 13-30 as the most affected age group, husband & father being the accusers in most cases, 'in the name of honour' as the most mentioned reason of honour killing followed by love marriages, guns as the most frequent used weapon for honour killing.

Keywords: Honour Killing, Descriptive Analysis, Reporting, Pakistani Newspapers.

Introduction:

Gender based violence and honour killing has been long rooted in many parts of the world specifically South Asia. Pakistan has been facing this social evil for long now. Many people especially and majorly women get killed in the name of honour, however this crime is not specific to any gender. Honour killing is defined by UNICEF as "An ancient practice in which men kill female relatives in the name of family 'honour' for forced or suspected sexual activity outside marriage, even when they are the victims of rape." Honour killing is defined under Section. 299 of Pakistan Penal Code, 1860 as "Offence committed in the name or on the pretext of honour means an offence committed in the name or on the pretext of karo kari, siyah kari or similar other customs or practices" Law Amendment Act 2004.(Act I, 2005) Honour killing does not only happen in Pakistan or more specifi-

cally Asia but it has been happening since the ancient times. Goldstein (2002) in his book revealed that back in Roman times, unmarried daughters who were sexually active and wives could be killed by the senior or male member of the family in the lieu of adultery. This crime has been prevalent in Europe as well. The pelting with stones used to be the method of dealing with the people who were engaged in adultery. In Urdu, the word honour killing means black male and black female hence known as Karo kari. Talking about this evil being practiced in Asia, the practice of Sati was a form of honour killing in which a widow was made to burn herself voluntarily after or at the death of her husband. This deep-seated and innate practice was eradicated by Queen Victoria in 1861.

The major reason of this atrocious and ancient immorality goes back to the integrity and uprightness of the family which majorly fall on women's shoulders especially in Pakistan and to bring back the honour of the family by killing the person who fails to keep the honour of the family. Most of the times, women have been killed on the mere suspicion of amour or love affair. Another cause of this monstrous crime is the prevalence of patriarchy in our society. Being a firm patriarchal society and men being the head of the family, a slight mistake occurred by women counts as a crime. Love marriage is another reason of girls and boys getting killed in the name of honour. Many parents detest the idea of love marriages and still want to fix weddings of their children by their choice which results in forced marriages and girls and boys running off to get married to their interest which further results in honour killing.

According to Aurat Foundation, there has been a 70% increase in honour killings in 2016. According to a 2018 survey conducted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, Pakistan has ranked sixth most dangerous country for women. In the 2019 Women's Peace and Security Index, Pakistan secured 164 rank out of 167 countries in terms of financial inclusion & discrimination against women. Pakistan was named as the fourth worst nation when it came to discrimination in the workplace, access

to economic resources and honour killings. (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2018). About 15% of Pakistani women have faced violence from their intimate partners (Women's Peace & Security Index 2019-20). These alarming figures and statistics highlight the widespread prevalence of gender based violence in Pakistan despite the bill of anti honour killing being passed in 2016 which concludes the punishment of life imprisonment.

Literature review:

This chapter includes the related studies regarding representation of honour killing of in media outlets of Pakistan. Khoso, Abassi & Irum (2021) analysed the cases of 858 violent crimes reported in the Sindhi daily newspapers during the years of 2015 and 2016 in the Sindh province of Pakistan. The reports analysed by using content analysis procedure found there were 199 cases of abduction, 157 of honour killing, 228 of murder, 108 of rape and 166 of suicides. In the reported cases women was a victim, and almost in the 50% of the cases the husbands was perpetrator who used firearm weapon to carry their acts. The motives behind honour killings and murders were domestic conflicts and suspicion of illicit relationships of women with men, while for the kidnapping/abduction, land disputes and matrimonial issues remained significant.

Bhanbhro (2020) conducted a content analysis of the reports regarding honour killing. The focus of the study was to observe the frequency of brothers who killed their sisters in the name of honour and shame. Between 2010 and 2014, 4388 incidents of honour killings of women were recorded in Pakistan. 22% of the killers were their brothers. The motives of killing were amour, marrying off consent of the family or out of caste marriage and honour of family.

Elahi & Saeed (2019) conducted an analysis on the crime reporting in two newspapers which were Dawn and Jang, one English and one Urdu papers respectively from the time period of January 2017 to December 2017. The results concluded that Dawn news sowed more urban crime news as compared to rural

areas crime news however in terms of violence against women both the newspapers reported and covered equally.

Agha & Ahmed (2018) conducted a content analysis on the representation of honour killing in news media. This study analysed and discussed findings about reported cases of VAW (violence against women) in Pakistan, in general, and in Sindh, in particular. Through a six month of content analysis of a Sindhi newspaper i.e. the Daily Kawish, the study recorded the nature and frequency of reported acts of VAW. The results showed that the cases of such acts are alarmingly high and in Sindh alone, 156 cases of VAW occurred in six months. Within the 70 reported cases, honour killings top the list of VAW cases followed by physical violence, rape, kidnapping and suicide. However, these are results of just the reported cases, the number of such acts are expected to be even higher in areas where gender based violence is supported to punish women. Raza & Tehreem (2017) conducted an analysis on the gender reporting in Jang and Nawa-i-waqt newspapers. The results concluded tha Jang did not portry women as helpless and powerless, while the Nawa-i-Waqt describes women as victims in a patriarch society. Nawa-e-waqt portrayed more women related issues and crime news as compared to Jang.

Raza & Liaquat (2017) examined news coverage on honor killing using two famous print media outlets Jang and Khabrain. Content analysis was conducted to analyze how honor killing news is presented from January 2013 to March 2013 in these two newspapers. The study developed six categories and five hypotheses. The study aimed to observe how honour killing has been given importance in print media of Pakistan or was it shown as trivial issue. The study revealed that honour killing was stressed upon in the page of issues related to women, in the national pages and in few editorial pages. The reasons of honour killing were mainly Love marriage, amour, karo kari and rape.

Raza & Khan (2014) conducted a content analysis of two newspapers, Khabrain and Dawn from the time period of January 2009 to December 2009 in order to observe the frequency of

gender sensitive news and to analyze that how these newspapers treat the gender sensitive news. The results concluded that Khabrain gives more importance and place to gender sensitive news and crimes news as compared to Dawn. Deol (2014) conducted a content analysis method to study how the choices of daughter's marriages into inter caste and inter religious lead to gender based violence. The results revealed that honour killing took place when the girls have been seen with opposite genders in inappropriate conditions. Apart from male members of the family, female member such as mothers and paternal or maternal uncles, in-laws, cousins were also seen as culprits. The study proposed that to get rid of this unpleasant practice one has to change the in-built narrow-mindedness towards love marriages and daughter's say in the mate selection.

The study has examined the following research questions:

1. Which gender is the most affected by honour killing?
2. What are the reasons of honour killing mentioned in the newspapers?
3. What are the methods/weapons of killing used?
4. Do newspapers mention the relation of accuser with victim?
5. Do newspapers mention the identity of victims and accused?

Research Design:

To descriptively analyze the reporting of honour killing cases in Pakistani newspapers a content study has been made in this research. For the present research study 101 newspapers articles of two leading English newspapers Dawn and Express tribune were selected through non probability, purposive sampling, from the period of 2019 to 2021. The reason of selecting these newspapers is the most readership of the papers. For the present study the coding scheme and categories of analysis were selected to examine the stories, articles, editorials of selected

newspapers which are leading in Pakistan. Keywords such as honour killing, gender based violence were entered in the database of the selected newspapers websites in order to collect the articles and material which has contained these keywords. With the help of focused and careful reading and observation of the selected articles and material the incidence of the developed categories was found. Then frequency of incidence of each category was observed in the newspapers articles.

Categories of analysis:

To analyze and make inferences from the newspaper articles followings categories were used for the present study.

Gender: It is coded as male and female victims as well as male and female accusers.

Identity: It is coded as names of victim and accused mentioned in newspaper articles. Implementation of law: It is coded as accused getting arrested or getting escaped.

Relation of accuser with victim: It is coded as father, son, brother, husband and other relatives.

Methods/weapons used for killing: It is coded as being shot, killed by sharp object, strangled, burnt and being poisoned.

Reasons of killing: It is coded as love marriages, illicit relationship, in the name of honour and interaction with opposite gender

Results:

Table no 1: Number of years and media outlets selected.

<u>Years</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Newspaper outlets</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
2019	44	Dawn	73
2020	37	Tribune	28
2021	20		
Total	101		101

Out of 101 news articles, 44 were from 2019. 37 were from 2020 and 20 were from 2021 whereas 73 were taken from Dawn and 28 were taken from Express Tribune.

Table no 2: Incidence of age and provinces of victims of honour killing in the news articles.

<u>Age</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Provinces</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
13-20	26	Sindh	28
21-28	13	Kpk	35
29-35	03	Balochistan	11
36+	05	Punjab	27

26 cases of honour killing were found in the age group of 13-20, 13 in 21-28, 3 in 29-35 and 5 in 36+. Khyber Pakhtinkuwa has 35 cases, Sindh has 28, Punjab has 27 and Balochistan has 11.

Table no 3: Incidence of victims of honour killing according to gender in the news articles.

<u>Newspaper Outlets</u>	<u>Number of female victims</u>	<u>Number of male victims</u>	<u>Number of children as victims</u>
Dawn	78	30	2
Tribune	27	6	0
Total	105	36	02

105 female victims of honour killing were found from the analysis of newspaper articles while 36 were male victims. Children as victims of honour killing were rarely found but they were killed in the cases of man and woman married off without consent of family.

Table no 4: Incidence of accused of honour killing according to gender in the news articles.

<u>Newspaper outlets</u>	<u>Number of married victim</u>	<u>Number of unmarried victim</u>
Dawn	34	16
Tribune	10	18
Total	44	34

In all the articles analysed accusers of honour killing were found to be a male.

Table no 5: Incidence of victims of honour killing according to marital status in the articles.

<u>Newspaper Outlets</u>	<u>Number of married victims</u>	<u>Number of unmarried victims</u>
Dawn	34	16
Tribune	10	18
Total	44	34

44 victims of honour killing were married whereas 34 victims were unmarried. In few cases the marital status of the victims was not mentioned.

Table no 6: Incidence of names of victims and accused of honour killing mentioned in the news articles.

<u>Newspaper outlets</u>	<u>Name of victim mentioned</u>	<u>Name of accused mentioned</u>
Dawn	17	19
Tribune	17	11
Total	34	30

Identity by mentioning the names of victims and accusers was another category which revealed that in 34 cases the name of victim was mentioned and in 30 cases the name of accuser was given. By mentioning the names, it is a threat to their life if the victims get a chance to escape the death which can be an obstacle to remain a normal member of society.

Table no 7: Incidence of accused of honour killing arrested and escaped in the news articles.

<u>Newspaper Outlets</u>	<u>Number of accused arrested</u>	<u>Number of accused escaped</u>
Dawn	31	23
Tribune	12	13
Total	43	36

In 43 cases the accusers were arrested while in 36 cases the accusers escaped. There has been seen a lack of proper follow-up of the cases in the newspapers. It seems like that they forget about the cases after publishing it about twice or thrice.

Table no 8: Incidence of relation of accused with victims of honour killing in the news articles.

<u>Relation of accuser with victim</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Husband	37
Father	15
Brother	10
Son	12
Other relatives	22

Accusers of honour killing as husbands were 37, as father was 15, as brother was 10, as son was 12 and other relatives include in-laws, nephews, cousins which was 22.

Table no 9: Incidence of methods/ weapons used for killing victims of honour killing in the news articles.

<u>Methods/ weapons used for killing</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Shot	66
Poison	26
Sharp object	09
Strangled	07
Burnt	02

Use of gun to kill was frequently used and mentioned in the newspaper articles, followed by 26 cases of killing by poison, then to kill by sharp objects was 9 cases, then strangled to death was in 7 cases and then by putting the person on fire was found in 2 cases.

Table no 10: Incidence of reasons used for killing victims of honour killing in the news articles.

<u>Reasons of honour killing</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
In the name of honour	47
Love marriages	20
Illicit relationships	17
Interaction with opposite gender	07

In the most cases which was 47 the reason of honour killing mentioned was 'in the name of honour' which is a vague reason and it includes bringing shame on family. Other than that 20 cases were found of love marriages, 17 were of illicit relationships or suspicion of an affair and 7 cases of interaction with opposite gender which includes taking to a man and taking pictures with a male cousin.

Conclusion:

The main purpose of the present study was to examine how accurate and complete newspaper articles portray the reports of honour killing and to explore the number of cases, identity of victims, reasons and methods of killing and relation of accused with victim mentioned and discussed in the selected newspaper articles. The data have been analyzed descriptively and then the inference has been drawn. It is observed that mostly news articles about the honour killing are published in the year 2019. Whereas, Dawn has published more than Express Tribune. Age group 13-20 is dominant in the news regarding the honour killing. However, more coverage has been given in the province of KPK. The coverage of the both newspapers shows that there are 78 female victims of the honour killing. So, female have victimized more than male. The data shows that more male have been accused as compared to the female. Furthermore, data reveals that there are 44 victims of honour killing who are married and there are only 34 unmarried victims. There were 34 news items published with names of the victims and 30 items

were published with name of accused. Moreover, the data reveal that there is high number of the accused arrested than the accused escaped. It is very astonishing finding of this study that husbands have accused their wives more than other relations as father, brother and son etc., as the frequency of this nature is found to be 37. With regard to the methods of weapons used for killing it is identified that 66 persons were shot dead and 26 poisoned.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that further studies of such nature should be conducted on the large scale. It is also suggested that multi-lingual newspapers and their analysis should be conducted. As, this study has only involved two English language newspapers. Secondly, recommended that qualitative studies of this nature be conducted.

As, it has been revealed through the data of this study that 78 females are the victims of the honour killing. This ratio is more than the male members of the society. In this connection it is recommended that special focus be given on this status of the female citizens of the society. Awareness about their rights must be generated through media and other mediums.

Furthermore, it recommended that husbands should understand the sanctity of their marital relationship and should adopt the element of tolerance. As, this study shows that more females have been victimized and accused by their male partners.

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