



A Comprehensive Analysis of Honor Killing Practices in Pakistan: Contributing Factors, Legal Frameworks, and Intervention Strategies

Sahibzada Muhammad Wasim Jan*

Department of Business Administration, Sukkur IBA University, Sukkur, Sindh, Pakistan

Article history:

Submission date: 3 April 2025

Received in revised form: 11 May 2025

Acceptance date: 28 May 2024

Available online: 10 June 2025

Keywords:

Honor killings, gender-based violence, Islamic jurisprudence, legal reform, patriarchal structures

Funding:

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Competing interest:

The author(s) have declared that no competing interests exist.

How to Cite:

Muhammad Wasim Jan, Sahibzada. 2025. "A Comprehensive Analysis of Honor Killing Practices in Pakistan: Contributing Factors, Legal Frameworks, and Intervention Strategies". *Al-Daulah : Jurnal Hukum Pidana Dan Ketatanegaraan* 14 (1):1-14. <https://doi.org/10.24252/al-daulah.v14i1.57485>.

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Abstract

Research Objective: This study examines women's rights and honor killings in Pakistan, with particular attention to the socio-cultural and economic factors driving gender-based violence, especially the *Karo-Kari* practice in Sindhi culture. **Research Method:** The research adopted a qualitative approach, drawing on a literature review and secondary data sourced from academic journals, legal documents, news reports, and human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Purposive sampling and thematic analysis were applied, with data triangulation employed to enhance accuracy and credibility. **Results:** The findings reveal interconnected drivers of honor killings, including patriarchal family systems, arranged marriages, property disputes, limited access to education, misinterpretations of religion, poverty, rigid social norms, and weak law enforcement. **Findings and Implications:** Honor killings are rooted in both cultural and economic motives, particularly the consolidation of property. Inadequate education perpetuates distorted religious justifications, while entrenched gender subordination fosters ideologies that normalize violence. Although legal reforms, such as the 2016 Act removing the option of family forgiveness, represent progress, enforcement remains ineffective due to corruption and inadequate investigations. **Conclusion:** Honor killings constitute a multifaceted problem that requires comprehensive interventions addressing cultural, economic, educational, and institutional dimensions simultaneously. Effective prevention demands coordinated efforts involving legal reform, educational initiatives, economic empowerment, and cultural transformation programs. **Contribution:** This study links historical legal reforms to contemporary patterns of honor-based violence, illustrating the relationship between economic hardship and gender-based violence while underscoring the role of NGOs in prevention. **Limitations and Suggestions:** As the study is based solely on

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: wasimjan@iba-suk.edu.pk (Sahibzada Muhammad Wasim Jan)



secondary data, future research should incorporate interviews with survivors, families, and community leaders. Longitudinal studies assessing the effectiveness of interventions, as well as comparative analyses across different Pakistani provinces, could enhance understanding and support the development of more effective prevention strategies.

Introduction

This social issue has persisted as a significant concern throughout human history. Women have long been compelled to confront troubling perceptions held by the opposite sex. In cultures such as those of the Greeks, Romans, and Persians, women were often objectified to satisfy male desires, particularly in contexts involving gender hierarchies and the pursuit of various forms of entertainment. Sadly, they were deprived of fundamental freedoms essential for independence and the ability to make their own choices.¹

Many prominent philosophers, including Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes, are regarded as the founders of their respective disciplines. They devoted themselves to advancing political discourse by proposing a variety of political theories. In contrast, Rousseau argued that women are unfit to lead nations or serve as heads of state. Furthermore, the practice of *Sati*, which treats women as akin to animals and denies them the right to live beyond their husbands' deaths, undermines women's fundamental rights, particularly in societies like India, where such rights are often disregarded.²

There is strong evidence that in the early days of Islam, certain horrific acts against women were prevalent in pre-Islamic societies. In this regard, the teachings of the Qur'an are exceptional. According to the Qur'an, those who falsely accuse a chaste woman of adultery are subject to the *Qazaflaw*. To avoid being labeled a liar and receiving the prescribed punishment of eighty lashes, the accuser must present four credible witnesses for their testimony to be accepted. If the required evidence is not produced, the accused woman is considered innocent, and the accuser is punished accordingly.³

In Pakistan, the sharp decline in socioeconomic development, coupled with the influence of tribal and feudal systems, continues to affect women's lives. While women's rights in Pakistan

¹ Hsiu-Lan Cheng and Helen, and Youngju Kim, "Racial and Sexual Objectification of Asian American Women: Associations with Trauma Symptomatology, Body Image Concerns, and Disordered Eating," *Women & Therapy* 41, no. 3-4 (October 2, 2018): 237-60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2018.1425027>; Erika R Carr, Green Brandeis, and Allison N and Ponce, "Women and the Experience of Serious Mental Illness and Sexual Objectification: Multicultural Feminist Theoretical Frameworks and Therapy Recommendations," *Women & Therapy* 38, no. 1-2 (April 3, 2015): 53-76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2014.978216>; Eric D. Wesselmann et al., "The Effects of Sexual Harassment, Assault, and Objectification on the Self," *Self and Identity* 20, no. 7 (2021): 841-44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2021.1882551>.

² Penny A Weiss, "Rousseau, Antifeminism, and Woman's Nature," *Political Theory* 15, no. 1 (June 1, 1987): 81-98, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/191721>; Suzanne A. Blunn, "Sati and Its Abolition in British Social and Political Discourses c. 1832 - 1895" (Birkbeck, University of London, 2020).

³ Abdel Salam Sidahmed, "Problems in Contemporary Applications of Islamic Criminal Sanctions: The Penalty for Adultery in Relation to Women," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 28, no. 2 (November 1, 2001): 187-204, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530190120083077>; Md. Sirajul Islam, "Al-Qadhaf and Its Punishment in Islamic Criminal Law," *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications (IJSRP)* 10, no. 2 (2020): p98111, <https://doi.org/10.29322/ijsrp.10.02.2020.p98111>; Meraj Ahmad Meraj, "The Concept of Crime and Punishment in Islam," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research* 4, no. 5 (2018): 27-34.



have been advancing, evidenced by a gradual rise in female literacy rates, gender-based violence remains a pressing issue, as highlighted by civil society and religious authorities. The All-Pakistan Council of Scholars, the country's largest body of religious clerics, has affirmed that Islamic law strictly prohibits killing. In some regions, with the support of women's rights advocates, courts have accepted appeals and imposed harsher penalties for violent crimes against women. The preamble to Pakistan's Constitution promotes democratic ideals and guarantees the fundamental rights of all citizens. Women were granted the right to vote in 1947, which was reaffirmed by the 1956 provisional constitution during the national elections.⁴

A thorough examination of women's rights in contemporary Pakistani society reveals widespread violations, despite constitutional and Islamic protections. Some individuals, whether knowingly or unknowingly, contravene Islamic teachings and legal principles. Although Pakistan is an Islamic republic where laws are expected to align with Sharia, certain traditions and customs conflict with universally recognized Islamic legal norms. For example, girls in detention are often denied their civil liberties, despite legal and religious safeguards. In many cases, cultural norms and tribal customs take precedence over Islamic law. Alternative judicial systems, such as the *Jirga* or *Panchayat*, frequently disregard women's grievances, resulting in minimal legal recourse.⁵

A pervasive culture of fear discourages women from advocating for their rights. Traditional councils and community systems often impose unjust punishments on both men and women who challenge entrenched tribal or cultural norms. Such practices distort the Islamic principles of peace and equality. Disturbingly, honor killings have become socially tolerated in some areas, regarded as an acceptable defense against murder. In 2012, 913 women and girls were reported killed in the name of honor.⁶ The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan documented approximately 675 such killings between January and September 2011, and 791 cases in 2010.⁷ In 2004, recognizing the inadequate representation of women in political and community structures, significant legal reforms were introduced through the combined efforts of women's rights activists, religious leaders, and female members of political parties.⁸

⁴ Mara Malagodi, "Dominion Status and the Origins of Authoritarian Constitutionalism in Pakistan," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 17, no. 4 (December 31, 2019): 1235–57, <https://doi.org/10.1093/icon/moz080>.

⁵ Malagodi; Mingyue (Michelle) Gu, "A Complex Interplay between Religion, Gender and Marginalization: Pakistani Schoolgirls in Hong Kong," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 11 (September 2, 2015): 1934–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.941895>; Hira Alvi Khokhar, Tabinda Rani, and Fawad Hussain, "Impacts of Gender Disparity and Socio-Educational Structure on Legal Awareness of Women Inmates: A Case Study of Prisons in Sindh, Pakistan," *Global Regional Review* IX, no. III (October 7, 2024): 131–41, [https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2024\(IX-III\).13](https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2024(IX-III).13).

⁶ Deler Singh and Dipali S. Bhandari, "Legacy of Honor and Violence: An Analysis of Factors Responsible for Honor Killings in Afghanistan, Canada, India, and Pakistan as Discussed in Selected Documentaries on Real Cases," *Sage Open* 11, no. 2 (April 24, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211022323>.

⁷ Rashida Abbas, Fazal Elahi Bilal, and Muhammad Akif Rashid, "DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PAKISTAN: TO WHAT EXTENT PAKISTAN FULFILLED ITS INTERNATIONAL PLEDGE," *Pakistan Journal of Social Research* 04, no. 01 (March 31, 2022): 575–82, <https://doi.org/10.52567/pjsr.v4i1.923>; Pasand Khoso, "Violence Against Women in Pakistan: Analysis of Print Media Reports during the Years of 2015 and 2016 in Sindh Province of Pakistan," *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 5, no. I (March 15, 2021): 250–64, [https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2021\(5-I\)20](https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2021(5-I)20).

⁸ Masood Ahmed Riaz and Humera Naz, "An Analysis of Women Laws in Pakistan Theory and Practice," *Bulletin of Multidisciplinary Studies* 1, no. 4 (December 31, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.48112/bms.v1i4.961>; Prof. Dr. Jawed Aziz Masudi Abdul Saboor, "INFLUENCE OF WOMEN ENACTMENTS (2000-2015) IN PAKISTAN," *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs* 6, no. 2 (June 10, 2023),



Shahla Zia's initial efforts to address horrific crimes through parliamentary legislation were significantly hindered by the Pakistan Penal Code, representing a troubling setback for reform efforts. Ultimately, the proposed legislation was presented to the National Assembly with many of its most controversial provisions removed. While the introduction of invoices for consumers was made optional in December 2004 and mandatory in January 2005, recent data indicate that there have been no officially reported cases of honor killings since that time.⁹

This research undertakes a comprehensive analysis of honor killings in Pakistan from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence. Its primary objective is to assess whether such practices align with, or contradict, the fundamental principles of Islam as articulated in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Through meticulous textual analysis, the study seeks to demonstrate that honor killings are violations of Islamic law and ethics, rather than practices sanctioned by religion.

The investigation critically examines the principal sociocultural factors contributing to the perpetuation of honor killings in Pakistani society, with a specific emphasis on distinguishing between genuine religious motivations and pre-Islamic cultural traditions. It explores how patriarchal social structures have historically shaped violence against women across civilizations and investigates the correlation between women's diminished social status in male-dominated societies and the prevalence of honor-based violence in the Pakistani context.

A key focus of this study is the extent to which Pakistani women have mobilized against honor killings and the effectiveness of their advocacy efforts in fostering meaningful societal change. The analysis evaluates the role of women's rights discourse in challenging such practices and examines how advocacy movements, particularly those informed by Islamic feminist perspectives, have contributed to raising awareness and promoting reform.

The research also assesses Pakistan's current legal mechanisms for addressing honor killings, identifying legislative reforms needed to align national laws with authentic Islamic jurisprudence while ensuring comprehensive protection of women's rights. This includes reviewing governmental responses to honor killings and women's rights violations, evaluating the effectiveness of existing policies, and identifying critical areas requiring improvement in both legislation and policy implementation.

Finally, the study seeks to propose evidence-based, culturally sensitive intervention strategies that are consistent with Islamic values and responsive to Pakistan's social realities. Through an extensive literature review and gap analysis, it offers practical solutions that address the root causes of honor-based violence and outlines how educational, social, and legal initiatives can be effectively designed to eradicate this practice while preserving cultural and religious integrity.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design and descriptive analysis to examine women's rights issues and the phenomenon of honor killings in Pakistan. The methodology was

<https://doi.org/10.52337/pjia.v6i2.775>; Shabana Shamaas Gul Khattak and Akhtar Hussain, "Women Representation in Pakistani Legislatures," *South Asian Survey* 20, no. 2 (September 3, 2013): 191–205, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971523116679785>; Abeeda Qureshi and Sara Ahmad, "Reserved Seats for Women in Pakistan: Reinforcement of Patriarchy and Powerlessness (2002–2018)," *Women's Studies International Forum* 94 (September 2022): 102629, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2022.102629>.

⁹ Qureshi and Ahmad, "Reserved Seats for Women in Pakistan: Reinforcement of Patriarchy and Powerlessness (2002–2018)"; Huda Fatima et al., "Pakistan Steps up to Remove 'Honour' from Honour Killing," *The Lancet Global Health* 5, no. 2 (February 2017): e145, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(16\)30359-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(16)30359-X); Ayesha Tanzeem, "Pakistan's Parliament Strengthens Honor Killing Law," *VOA, East Asia*, October 7, 2016; Ali Shahid, Malik Husnain Awan, and Farhana Aziz Rana, "Honour Killings in Pakistan: Legal Perspectives and Reforms," *Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences* 5, no. 1 (March 30, 2024): 134–40, <https://doi.org/10.55737/qjss.547319279>.



grounded in an extensive literature review and the analysis of secondary data drawn from diverse sources, including academic journals, legal documents, newspaper articles, and international human rights publications from organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the Pakistan Human Rights Commission, as well as reports from the Pakistani Senate and National Assembly.

Purposive sampling was used to identify relevant secondary data specifically related to violence against women and honor killings within the Pakistani context. Data collection involved systematically compiling case studies that documented instances of honor killings and gender-based violence. Cases were selected for their relevance to the study's objectives and their potential to provide meaningful insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

For data analysis, the study adopted the thematic analysis framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which enabled the identification, interpretation, and reporting of patterns within the qualitative data. This approach was selected for its flexibility in accommodating various theoretical perspectives and its effectiveness in facilitating an in-depth examination of complex social issues. The process involved systematically coding the selected case studies and reports, identifying recurring patterns, and developing themes that linked historical research findings with contemporary manifestations of honor-based violence.

To strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings, data triangulation was employed by cross-referencing multiple types of sources, including academic literature, legal documents, media coverage, and international monitoring reports. This multi-source strategy provided a comprehensive understanding of the legal, social, and cultural dimensions of honor killings, thereby establishing a solid empirical foundation for the study's conclusions and recommendations.

Results and Discussions

Cultural Factors and Traditional Commitments Contributing to Honor Killing Practices

Karo-Kari, a practice rooted in Sindhi culture, is a complex phenomenon shaped by interconnected sociocultural factors that have fueled gender-based violence across the Sindh province. This practice often results in deadly punishments for perceived disobedience, particularly targeting women who resist arranged marriages or challenge patriarchal authority. Families are frequently the perpetrators of these fatal acts, which can also extend to the killing of wives who confront their husbands or in-laws. A significant driver of such actions is property inheritance, where women's land ownership can spark disputes. When legal avenues for resolving these conflicts fail, relatives may resort to honor-based killings, invoking moral justifications to evade legal consequences.¹⁰

Marriage practices in Pakistani society, particularly in rural areas, are largely shaped by patriarchal family structures, where matrimonial decisions are often predetermined at birth or

¹⁰ Sujay Patel and Amin Muhammad Gadit, "Karo-Kari: A Form of Honour Killing in Pakistan," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 45, no. 4 (December 1, 2008): 683–94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461508100790>; Surryia Khanum, Dr. Muhammad Arfan Lodhi, and Anila Hashim, "Thematic and Contextual Reflection of Women in 'Honour Unmasked' by Nafisa Shah," *Journal of Advances in Education and Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (January 28, 2022): 24–29, <https://doi.org/10.36348/jaep.2022.v06i01.004>; Nadeem Bhatti et al., "Domestic Violence against Women: A Case Study of District Jacobabad, Sindh Pakistan," *Asian Social Science* 7, no. 12 (November 29, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v7n12p146>; Najma Noor Phulpoto, AISHA BASHIR SHAH, and Faiz.M. Shaikh, "CULTURAL CONSEQUENCES OF KAR KARI A CASE STUDY OF JACOBABAD- SINDH-PAKISTAN," *Australian Journal of Business and Management Research* 02, no. 01 (August 13, 2012): 70–72, <https://doi.org/10.52283/NSWRCA.AJBMR.20120201A10>.



arranged through interfamily agreements.¹¹ The study found that verbal commitments between families, typically involving promises made by brothers regarding the future marriages of their children, function as binding social contracts that take effect once the children reach adolescence. These traditional arrangements create significant social pressure and can lead to honor-based violence when individuals attempt to deviate from established marital expectations. Within this cultural framework, engaging in romantic relationships outside such arrangements is viewed as a breach of family honor, often resulting in fatal consequences for those deemed to have violated these social boundaries.¹²

Economic Motivations and Educational Deficits to Religious Misinterpretation

The investigation reveals that property ownership plays a pivotal role in many instances of honor killing, particularly in cases involving women who inherit land or other valuable assets. The findings indicate that relatives may attempt to acquire inherited property through both legitimate and illegitimate means, with honor killing sometimes serving as a means to eliminate property claims when other avenues prove ineffective. This economic dimension suggests that the practice extends beyond conventional notions of honor, encompassing material interests, whereby accusations of dishonor provide a socially acceptable pretext for depriving women of inheritance rights and consolidating family wealth.¹³

The study further demonstrates that insufficient education, especially in rural areas with limited access to formal schooling, significantly contributes to the persistence of honor-killing practices. The analysis highlights that inadequate religious education among community leaders, particularly mosque imams lacking formal theological training, often results in the misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Islamic teachings on honor and violence. This

¹¹ Amrina Khan and Asim Iqbal, "Child Marriage in the Light of Objectives of Shari'ah and Islamic Jurisprudence (An Analytical Study of Prevalent Practices in Pakistani Society)," *International Journal of Social Science & Entrepreneurship* 2, no. 2 (September 15, 2022): 520–31, <https://doi.org/10.58661/ijss.v2i2.98>; Zara Ahmed, "Evolution of Pakistani Marriages," *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth / Le Journal Canadien de Famille et de La Jeunesse* 14, no. 2 (January 1, 2022): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.29173/cjfy29760>.

¹² Amiya Bhatia et al., "Honor, Violence, and Children: A Systematic Scoping Review of Global Evidence," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 151 (May 2024): 106642, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.106642>; Olympia L.K. Campbell et al., "Genetic Markers of Cousin Marriage and Honour Cultures," *Evolution and Human Behavior* 45, no. 6 (November 2024): 106636, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2024.106636>; Mohammad Mazher Idriss, "Abused by the Patriarchy: Male Victims, Masculinity, 'Honor'-Based Abuse and Forced Marriages," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37, no. 13–14 (July 25, 2022): NP11905–32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260521997928>; Joseph A. Vandello and Dov Cohen, "Male Honor and Female Fidelity: Implicit Cultural Scripts That Perpetuate Domestic Violence," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84, no. 5 (May 2003): 997–1010, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.5.997>.

¹³ Ahmad Talha et al., "Judicial Inefficacies and Legal Inconsistencies in Addressing Honour Killings: A Human Rights Analysis of Pakistan's Legal Framework," *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, October 28, 2024, 2931–41, <https://doi.org/10.52131/pjhss.2024.v12i4.2438>; Shahid, Awan, and Rana, "Honour Killings in Pakistan: Legal Perspectives and Reforms"; Salma Nawaz et al., "The Role of Safety Management to Analyze the Current Situation of Honour Killing in Pakistan," *Journal of Public Value and Administrative Insight* 5, no. 2 (June 26, 2022): 424–39, <https://doi.org/10.31580/jpvai.v5i2.2517>; Pernilla Ouis, Annika Staaf, and Hanna Cinthio, "That's How We Were Raised," *Nordic Journal on Law and Society* 5, no. 01 (February 25, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.36368/njolas.v5i01.191>.

educational gap fosters an environment in which distorted religious justifications for honor killing can proliferate unchecked, without proper scholarly correction or theological oversight.¹⁴

Socioeconomic Pressures and Social Immobility

Extreme poverty and the inability to meet basic needs create conditions in which honor killings may be employed as a mechanism to address economic desperation. The study suggests that individuals may falsely accuse family members of moral transgressions as a means to justify their elimination when financial pressures become overwhelming. This reflects a particularly disturbing intersection of economic hardship and gender-based violence, in which vulnerable family members become targets under the pretext of preserving family honor.¹⁵

The analysis further reveals that rural Sindhi society maintains rigid kinship structures that hinder individuals from breaking free of traditional caste and tribal loyalties. These entrenched social constraints foster circumstances in which family members may feel compelled to commit honor killings in order to maintain their standing within established social hierarchies. The inability to achieve upward social mobility or disengage from traditional obligations perpetuates cycles of violence that trap individuals in systems demanding strict adherence to honor-based codes, regardless of personal beliefs or moral objections.¹⁶

Governmental Response, Patriarchal Systems, and Gender Subordination

Reports from Amnesty International and other human rights organizations highlight significant governmental failures in preventing honor killings and protecting vulnerable populations. The research indicates that inadequate investigative procedures, corruption within law enforcement agencies, and the lenient treatment of perpetrators contribute to the continued prevalence of these crimes. The institutional weaknesses identified in the analysis suggest that honor killings persist, in part, due to systemic failures that foster an atmosphere of impunity for offenders.¹⁷

¹⁴ Fariha Bibi Dr. Arshad Khan Bangash, "HONOUR KILLING: ILLITERACY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF WOMEN SUBORDINATION IN TRIBAL AREAS OF PAKISTAN," *Pakistan Journal of Educational Research* 3, no. 2 (March 25, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.52337/pjer.v3i2.44>; Hamida Bibi, Yunas Khan, and Tabinda Rani, "Honour Crime; Factors and Challenges: A Case Study of Khyber Pakhtunkwa Province Pakistan," *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology* 10 (December 31, 2021): 1746–53, <https://doi.org/10.6000/1929-4409.2021.10.197>.

¹⁵ Andrew Gibbs et al., "Factors Associated with 'Honour Killing' in Afghanistan and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Two Cross-Sectional Studies," ed. Soraya Seedat, *PLOS ONE* 14, no. 8 (August 8, 2019): e0219125, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0219125>; Pahor WA, Guraamani AH, and Khan Pahore D, "Gender Inequality Causes and Impacts on Honor Killing: A Case Study of District Shikarpur, Sindh, Pakistan," *Arts and Social Sciences Journal* 07, no. 06 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.4172/2151-6200.1000229>; Abdul Hadi, "'Honor' Killings in Misogynistic Society: A Feminist Perspective," *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 9, no. 3 (May 10, 2020): 29, <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2020-0039>; Nootash Keyhani, "HONOUR CRIMES AS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE UK: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT," *Journal of Law and Jurisprudence*, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.2052-1871.010>.

¹⁶ Ghulam Hussain, "Ethno-Nationality of Caste in Pakistan: Privileged Caste Morality in Sindhi Progressive Literature and Politics," *Critical Sociology* 48, no. 1 (January 21, 2022): 127–49, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920520964541>; Abdul Qadar and Arslan Waheed, "From Sainthood to Saintly Kinship: How Claiming Saintly Kinship Is Structuring the Social and Patronage Relationships in Rural Punjab, Pakistan," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 59, no. 1 (February 12, 2024): 69–80, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096221097720>.

¹⁷ Shagufta Kanwal, "Honor Killing: A Case Study of Pakistan," *Journal of Law & Social Studies* 3, no. 1 (June 30, 2021): 38–43, <https://doi.org/10.52279/jlss.03.01.3843>; Rafia Naz Ali, "Honour, Custom or



The term *patriarchy*, derived from the Greek word *patriarch*, meaning “father rule,” describes a system in which social relationships are fundamentally shaped by male authority, relegating women to subordinate positions. The findings suggest that in patriarchal societies, men dominate all significant social, political, and economic roles, leaving women in positions of dependency and vulnerability. This systemic gender subordination establishes an ideological framework that not only legitimizes but also perpetuates honor-based violence.¹⁸

International Legal Framework and Domestic Implementation

A review of international legal standards reveals that honor killings constitute a clear violation of multiple human rights instruments, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966), and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (1979). Despite Pakistan’s commitments under these international agreements, significant gaps remain between treaty obligations and domestic implementation.¹⁹

An examination of Pakistan’s legal history indicates that the country inherited the Indian Penal Code from the British colonial administration, which contains provisions relevant to honor killings under Sections 299–304 and 307–308. However, enforcement remains inconsistent and ineffective. While Pakistan’s 1973 Constitution guarantees equal rights and protections for women under Articles 25, 37, and 57, these constitutional safeguards have not been translated into effective mechanisms for preventing honor killings. Notably, specific legislation addressing honor killings was introduced only in 2004 under military ruler Pervez Musharraf, reflecting a prolonged period of legal inadequacy in addressing this form of gender-based violence. These findings demonstrate that honor killings are a multifaceted problem requiring comprehensive intervention strategies that address cultural, economic, educational, and institutional factors simultaneously. Effective prevention must involve coordinated efforts across sectors, including legal reform, educational initiatives, economic empowerment, and cultural transformation programs.²⁰

Different categories of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play distinct yet complementary roles in establishing sustainable prevention mechanisms. Local NGOs, with their strong community ties, are particularly effective in delivering grassroots education and training programs. International NGOs contribute by engaging in broader human rights advocacy and raising global awareness of systemic issues. This multi-tiered approach ensures both local relevance and global visibility, creating a comprehensive framework that spans from community-

Crime: Honour Killing in Pakistan,” *Journal of Regional Studies Review* 3, no. 1 (December 30, 2024): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.62843/jrsr/2024.3a014>; Dr. Bahadar Ali, Mr. Arshad Nawaz, Ms. Parveen Gul, “HONOUR KILLINGS ON THE TOUCHSTONE OF CONSTITUTIONAL AND CRIMINAL JURISPRUDENCE,” *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs* 6, no. 2 (June 20, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.52337/pjia.v6i2.773>.

¹⁸ ,Mr. Arshad Nawaz, Ms. Parveen Gul, “HONOUR KILLINGS ON THE TOUCHSTONE OF CONSTITUTIONAL AND CRIMINAL JURISPRUDENCE.”

¹⁹ Idriss, “Abused by the Patriarchy: Male Victims, Masculinity, ‘Honor’-Based Abuse and Forced Marriages”; Vandello and Cohen, “Male Honor and Female Fidelity: Implicit Cultural Scripts That Perpetuate Domestic Violence.”

²⁰ Robert Paul Churchill, *Providing Protection and Leveraged Reform*, vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190468569.003.0007>; Kanwal, “Honor Killing: A Case Study of Pakistan”; Shahid, Awan, and Rana, “Honour Killings in Pakistan: Legal Perspectives and Reforms.”

level interventions to international advocacy in the fight against honor killings.²¹

Integrated Educational, Awareness Strategies, and Leadership Engagement

Ignorance remains a significant barrier to the prevention of honor-based violence, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive educational interventions across multiple platforms. Social awareness programs, media campaigns, and community education initiatives must operate collaboratively to maximize their collective impact. The findings indicate that both print and electronic media serve as effective channels for disseminating prevention messages to wide audiences. Additionally, community-based educational efforts, conducted through religious services, social gatherings, and family events, create opportunities for direct engagement that reduce resistance to behavioral change.²²

Educational strategies should prioritize legal literacy and awareness of family law as mechanisms for safeguarding women's rights. This multifaceted approach leverages existing social and cultural structures rather than imposing purely external frameworks, thereby fostering community acceptance and ensuring long-term sustainability. Effective prevention also requires coordinated engagement from religious authorities, tribal leaders, and government institutions. Religious leaders hold unique moral authority to challenge discriminatory attitudes toward women and to correct theological misconceptions that have been misused to justify honor killings. At the same time, traditional tribal leaders (*vaderos*) must be held legally accountable for incidents occurring within their jurisdictions, shifting their role from passive observers to proactive agents of prevention.²³

Government intervention is equally vital, particularly in addressing poverty as a driving factor behind criminal activity in Sindh province. The research suggests that effective legislative reform must be paired with comprehensive police restructuring, enhancing training programs, increasing women's representation in law enforcement, and strengthening local organizations to safeguard citizens' constitutional rights.²⁴

The table below summarizes the historical development and ongoing limitations of Pakistan's anti-honor killing legislation:

²¹ Ayesha Nazuk and Javid Shabbir, "A New Disclosure Index for Non-Governmental Organizations," ed. Massimo Marchiori, *PLOS ONE* 13, no. 2 (February 21, 2018): e0191337, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0191337>; Rafeel Wasif, "Does the Media's Anti-Western Bias Affect Its Portrayal of NGOs in the Muslim World? Assessing Newspapers in Pakistan," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 31, no. 6 (December 29, 2020): 1343–58, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-020-00242-5>.

²² Wasif, "Does the Media's Anti-Western Bias Affect Its Portrayal of NGOs in the Muslim World? Assessing Newspapers in Pakistan."

²³ Salma Nawaz et al., "The Role of Safety Management to Analyze the Current Situation of Honour Killing in Pakistan"; Arshad Khan Bangash, Syed Imran Haider, and Fariha Bibi, "Role of Tribal Family Institutions in the Promotion of Honour Killing," *Global Social Sciences Review* IV, no. II (June 30, 2019): 276–82, [https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2019\(IV-II\).36](https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2019(IV-II).36); Patel and Gadit, "Karo-Kari: A Form of Honour Killing in Pakistan."

²⁴ Patel and Gadit, "Karo-Kari: A Form of Honour Killing in Pakistan."



Table 1: *Evolution and Limitations of Pakistani Anti-Honor Killing Legislation*

Legislation/Period	Key Provisions	Effectiveness/Limitations
British Colonial Law (1860 Penal Code)	Allowed lenient sentences for murder committed under “grave and sudden provocation.”	Established a legal basis for later judicial leniency; still cited by judges despite subsequent reforms, showing its enduring influence.
Federal Shariat Court Reform (1990)	Ruled that provocation does not lessen the severity of murder, aligning with Sharia principles.	Despite the ruling, some judges continued issuing lenient sentences, revealing a gap in judicial adherence.
Law of December 8, 2004	Increased punishment for honor killings (from 7 years’ imprisonment to the death penalty in extreme cases).	Failed to eliminate the practice of allowing perpetrators to escape punishment by paying compensation or receiving pardons, leaving a significant loophole.
Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act of 2006 (The Women’s Protection Bill)	Criminalized forced marriage, broadened the legal definition of rape, and restricted zina prosecutions.	Did not directly address honor killings, and concerns about its overall effectiveness persisted.
Criminal Law (Third Amendment) Act of 2011	Introduced penalties for compelling a woman to marry for any reason, including to prevent criminal liability or settle disputes.	Targeted a contributing factor but fell short of providing a comprehensive solution to honor killings.
The Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offences in the name or pretext of Honour) Act of 2016	Closed the loophole allowing perpetrators to avoid punishment through family forgiveness; set penalties of 14 years’ imprisonment to life for honor crimes.	Marked a significant legal advance, yet honor killings persist due to weak enforcement and continued impunity.

Conclusion

Honor killings are not merely cultural expressions; they represent a systematic subordination of women, reinforced by entrenched patriarchal structures. Economic motivations, particularly those involving property inheritance, often masquerade as efforts to preserve honor, revealing that material concerns play a significant role in driving these acts of violence. The examination of honor killing practices, especially the Karo-Kari tradition within Sindhi culture, exposes a complex social issue that transcends purely cultural explanations. Honor-based violence emerges from the interplay of cultural, economic, educational, legal, and institutional factors that sustain gender-based violence in the Sindh province of Pakistan.

Deficiencies in education, particularly in rural areas, foster environments where distorted interpretations of religious teachings take root. This enables community leaders to misrepresent Islamic principles and normalize honor-based violence. Despite legal advancements, such as the 2016 Criminal Law Amendment Act, persistent enforcement challenges and systemic corruption

create an atmosphere of impunity for perpetrators. Socioeconomic pressures, including extreme poverty and rigid social hierarchies, further rationalize honor killings as responses to economic desperation or as a means of maintaining social status. This reflects a troubling intersection of economic hardship and gender-based violence, where vulnerable family members are targeted under the guise of preserving honor.

Effective prevention requires coordinated interventions addressing legal reform, education, economic development, and cultural transformation. Both local and international non-governmental organizations have critical roles in establishing sustainable prevention initiatives. Engagement with religious authorities and tribal leaders is essential, as they can challenge discriminatory attitudes and promote legal accountability. Honor killing constitutes a grave violation of human rights that demands urgent action. A comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach is imperative to dismantle the social, economic, educational, and institutional structures that enable these practices, ultimately aiming to eliminate honor-based violence and safeguard vulnerable citizens, particularly women.

CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

Sahibzada Muhammad Wasim Jan: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing -original Draft, Writing - review & editing, review & editing.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing financial interests or personal relationships that could influence the work reported in this paper.

Data Availability

Data will be made available on request.

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