

Paradigms of Homicidal Female Honour Victimization in Sindh

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Abstract

This article articulates the new paradigms of Homicidal Female Honor Victimization in the rural context of Sindh. The study focuses on exploring the etiology of the homicide-related victimization of the females. The background literature and studies laid the conceptual framework starting from concepts like homicide, violence, victimology, and victim-precipitation and victim-offender relationship. The study findings reveal that the victimization is the result of cultural taboos, heat of passion, prevailing lawlessness, sub-culture of violence, male-dominancy, domestic feuds and feudal mindset. The response of the police towards the criminality affecting women is very poor and unsatisfactory. Police fails to enforce and execute the adequate action against the offenders. The female victimization could be prevented with deterrence of adequate and swift punishment to law-violators. Besides, the development related to the socio-economic, rural, educational, cultural and legal sectors can truly empower women preventing their victimization in Sindh society.

Key words

Paradigm, Sindh, Homicidal Female Honour Victimization, Victim-precipitation, Honour Killing, Victimology

Introduction

Criminal homicide is defined as killing of one person by another without any legal justification or excuse. Murder is felonious killing of another with malice aforethought (Nettler, 1982,p.3). It may be result of any violent crime like robbery or rape etc. Homicides involving honour is important research area for social scientists especially. Honor-killing results in criminal victimization of females and males especially in rural pockets of population in Sindh. Honour-oriented homicide victimization necessitates multiple arguments and perspectives discussing various aspects/dimensions of the criminal violence and resulting victimization. Homicide Female Honor Victimization in Sindh is result of dangerous/violent male offending originating from multiple individual, psychological, socio-cultural, ecological and economic factors. The social learning prepares the offending mindset that there would be no reaction of significance from community and criminal justice. Honour-related female victimization prevails largely in the lowest and lower middle class families in rural Sindh. Thinly, it may prevail as cultural norm in rich families continuing the old tribal practice. Honour killing in Sindh involves hostile aggression which “occurs in response to anger - inducing conditions, such as

insults, physical attacks, or personal failures” (Bartol, 1996, p.153). The male-dominated cultural and customary value system in some highly backward pockets of society define honor and unleash violence to justify the crime against the weakest segment of society. The victims'-offender nature is usually closest-blood relations having intra-family and inter-family dimensions. The violent crime is often the result of impulsive, spur-of-moment and unpredictable acts of enraged individuals (Bartol, 1996, p.187).

Victimology is growing sub-discipline within Criminology that studies role of victim in his/her victimization. It includes within its scope the analysis of victim characteristics and victim profiling. (Talwar, 2006, p.1). It deals with victim-offender relationship and interactions with criminal justice system, media and society at large. (Karmen, 1990, p.3). The violent episodes are well-learned and strategic outcomes for some individuals to effectively deal with conflictual situations in inter-personal relationship. The violence is thus habitually patterned response towards particular situations (Toch, 1969). The victim may initiate, provoke, and facilitate crime through negligence, carelessness and even vulnerability. The victims actively participate creating situations of victimization. (Block, 1980, p.53) and conditions for his/her victimization (Fattah, 1979, pp.202-203). These recently added dimensions are relevant to honor-related victims where they challenge moral fabric of society, involve in risk-taking behavior and engage in negligence causing their ultimate death.

Victim-precipitation is defined as “the case where victim is first in the homicide drama to resort to physical force against the subsequent slayer” (Wolfgang, 1957). The threats and humiliations thus invite violent reactions initiated by individuals asserting as family heads. The idea of victim-precipitation was coined by Wolfgang in 1958. He used the term in the sense where the victim was causing the crime and was responsible as main precipitator. In purview of above definition honor-killing and resulting deaths do not blame victims for their role and responsibility in their victimization. The honor violation triggers violent pathology which gives the impression that homicide is victim-precipitated. This study focuses Homicidal female victimization especially the causes, context, correlates and patterns of the criminal victimization affecting the female and male victims. The main objective of this study is to look at violence against women from different paradigms.

Scope of Study

The scope of this article fundamentally includes and focuses upon the homicidal female victimization in Sindhi society. Understanding homicidal - female victimization in Sindh province necessitates an outlook focusing primarily the rural

context of the phenomenon. This further leads us towards a conceptual frame of the study problem. The causative factors and contextual ecology of the homicide-female victimization are specifically focused in this study. The study embodies searching the key sectors that could help empower women preventing and controlling infliction of violence against themselves. The study predominates with socio-cultural, rural correlates, and morally deviant pathways responsible for criminal victimization of women in Sindh. The honor-oriented/related killings in Sindh involve variegated definitions and multiple concepts leaving us to a social milieu with diversity of thought, differences of opinion, variation of perspectives, multiplicity of paradigms, and paradoxes of reality towards the problem. The landscape of female victims of homicide has rarely been touched by researching social scientists with adequate professional approaches combined with matching research tools

Female Homicide honor- victims conceptually include female and male partners who are condemned to death due to moral violation of the female honor. The problem with the reported data is that female homicides and Female Homicide honor- homicides are not clearly and categorically distinguishable. The victimizer is fixed with the definition and concept that the female in target has infringed upon her honor. Resultantly, the reactions are also well-defined and structurally supported to kill the violators. The victimizer perspective predominates with allegation that girl/woman has violated her chastity and sanctity humiliating the nobility of the family or the tribe. The apparent reaction pathology is built within value system of the backward tribal culture. The life course theory is highly relevant to explain the female homicide victimization prevailing in Sindh. Besides; the victimizer possesses rational choice who is motivated to eliminate the honor-violator(s) in absence of the police.

Related Literature & Studies

Homicide & Victim-Precipitation

According to Emile Durkheim weak individuation impels to homicides. Durkheim's concepts were tested. Results from the cross-national analysis of 29 nations support Durkheim's prediction concerning the inverse relationship between individualism and murder (Huang, 1995 p.63, 73). Hentig asserted that homicide victims invite their victimization. The offending and victimization are mutually shared and triggered involving offender and victim. Major cause of homicide is victim precipitated (Barlow, 1978; Conklin, 1980; McCaghy, 1980). These texts say that 25 to 50 % of all homicides are victim precipitated (Barlow, 1978, p.118). Lukenbill said that homicide results from passive interaction by the victim (Lukenbill, 1977, p.182). According to the concept of sub-intentional death, victims play a role in their own homicide through poor judgment, excessive risk-taking, or a self-destructive life style (Timmer & Norman, 1984, p.64).

Victim-Offender Relationship

Homicide, without doubt, is the most heinous crime among the index crimes. Theoretically, studies (Decker, 1993; Wolfgang, 1958) have suggested that homicide may be qualitatively distinguished on the basis of the victim-offender relationship. Empirically, early examination of homicide has for the most part, lumped together different types of homicide, even though there is little reason to expect that patterns of the different types of homicide are necessarily the same. In past quarter of the century, many studies have disaggregated homicide along gender (Browne and Williams, 1995) and racial lines (Messner and Golden, 1992) and along the motivation of instrumental and expressive homicide (Miethe and Drass, 1999). Decker (1993) proposed a classification of homicide according to the strength of the victim-offender relationship. The five categories were homicide between strangers, between acquaintances, friends, and romantic links and between relatives (not romantic). His study showed the utility of this classification. The more specified models resulted a more detailed understanding of the correlates of the each type of the homicide.

The classification based on the strength of the victim-offender work well with the theoretical prediction of homicide along instrumental and expressive lines (Block, 1981; Riedel, 1987). Decker (1996) classified three categories of the relationships involved. In this study stranger homicide refers to the situation in which there is an absence of any prior relationship between the victim and the offender. Acquaintance/friend homicide refers to the relationship that may exist between persons who recognize each other for a number of years or have some shared history of interaction. For intimate homicide, there are strong and long-term mutual bonds, including husbands and wives, ex-husbands and ex-wives, current and previous romantic links, in-laws, and relatives. Instrumental crime involves an offender who seeks to maximize gain and to minimize the risk of apprehension, whereas expressive crime fails to include the rationality of such cost-benefit consideration. Expressive crime is more emotional and more spontaneous.

Besides, it is argued that gender, age, and education play different roles in the different types of homicide, and their effects on homicide vary based on the victim offender relationship. According to routine activity theory, there are situational factors which predetermine the homicidal behaviors (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Homicides are related to higher levels of gun ownerships (Hoskin, 2001) and weapons are used as per nature of victim offender relationship. The location of crime is another important variable here. Block (1981) finds that impulsive homicides among relatives are more likely to happen in home. Decker's (1993) study indicates that the greater the intensity of the relationship (from strangers to relatives), the more likely it is that a homicide takes place inside the home.

Honor-Killing in Sindh

Homicide female victimization data are not very reliable in Pakistan. A rough estimate says over 1000 victims were reported (1998-9) projecting Pakistan as the country with highest per capita incidence of honour killings in the world (HRCP, 2002). Women are killed in Sindh on various pretexts of honor. The conviction of honor killers is almost zero (Amnesty International, 1999). Violence against women in rural Sindh is perpetrated during their daily activities and interactions (Brownmiller, 1975). The social and cultural values imprison women. Despite equal partners in daily agricultural labour, women are denied of any credit, monetary reward and any recognition of their role in local economy. Instead, women are subjugated to level of animals and they are traded (Shah, 1996). Homicide of Female in Sindh is result of social environment where women are discriminated against in fields of development like education, health sector, labour and routine domestic activities. The disparity, injustice and unequal treatment for women has left this potential sphere of social development to state of perpetual backwardness (Kakepoto, 2000, p. 3-8).

Study Method

The study involves exploring the homicidal victimization of the women in Sindh in context of rural setting. The universe of the study was Sindh. The sample of interviewees consisted of fifty (50) respondents purposefully selected from social science profession and criminal justice. Interviews were conducted in Hyderabad and Jamshoro. Data presentation was descriptive as well as involving graphic representation. The quantitative tools were also engaged selectively.

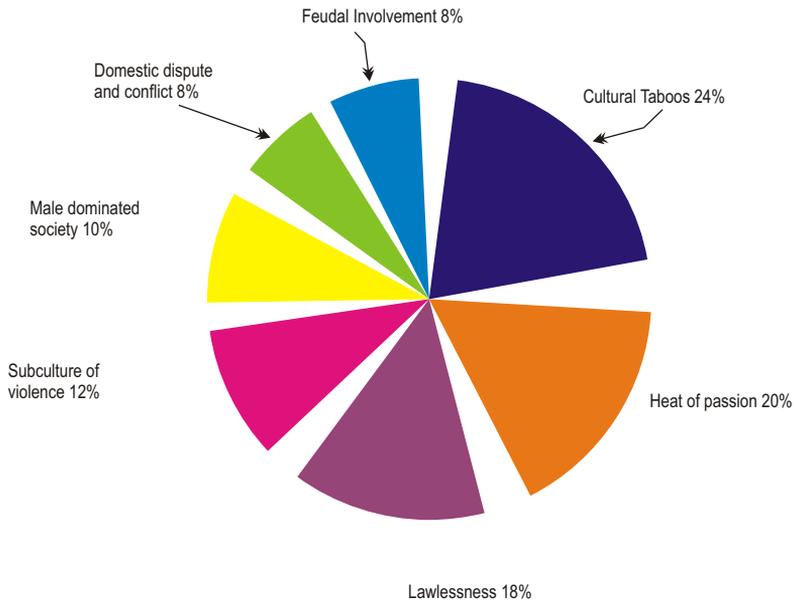
Data & Analysis

Causes of Honor Oriented Victimization of Women

The highest response to this question (24%) was that cultural taboos are responsible for the honor oriented victimization of women in Sindh. The causes of honor related homicide victimization are multiple in numbers. Cultural taboos narrowly define and conceive the daily activities of women in society. The attitudes and outlooks are shaped by such definitions and concepts. Resultantly, the girls / women are suspiciously watched during their daily social activities. The circumstances of suspicion and distrust result in the allegation on the selected individuals that they have involved in illegal sexual encounters. Besides, the second highest response to the causes i.e. heat of passion (20%), is closely related to the first one. Even a stint to rethink about men's presupposition, may cause a considerable decrease in honor related women victimization. Significant number of killings

related to honor is committed in impulsive circumstances. The male dominated society, although it makes only 8% of our responses, is key hindrance towards any positive change making in affected pockets of Sindhi society.

What Basically Causes Honor-oriented Victimization of Women in Sindh?



Other factors include prevailing lawlessness, subculture of violence, domestic disputes and feudal involvement, which can more easily be reduced through governmental role and social change inputs / efforts, collectively make the biggest reason of violence against women.

Victimization & Rural Context

The study illustrates that highest number of respondents (35) were of the opinion that homicidal victimization of girls/women is only the problem of the rural community of Sindh. The tribes having backward cultural taboos/outlook could also be found in urban cities too but in small number. There are increasing reported cases of homicidal violence against women in cities like Karachi in recent years. This is result of continuous population mobility and migration to magnet cities like Karachi.

Ecology of Victimization

Honor-oriented female victimization substantially occurs in rural communities' setting. The environmental ecology and agricultural crops facilitate such victimization enhancing suspicion. The offenders are irrationally motivated to kill or implicate the victims giving the incident the true natural shape and justification. It involves paradoxical situation that women are co-participants working together with their male members in agricultural fields. The social ecology allows and restricts women creating contradictions of command and control on their lives. Women do not exercise true control over their mobility and life especially in rural areas of Sindh province.

Cultural Context

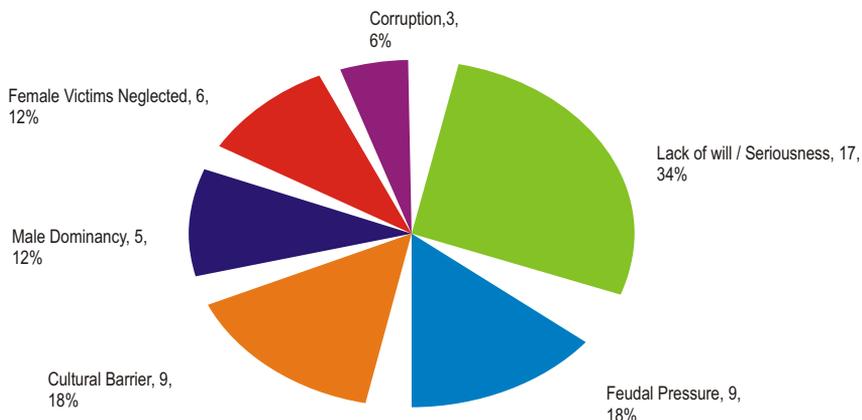
Honor-related homicide victimization is predominantly practiced by certain number of people having backward tribal mind-set. The taboos shape attitudes and create a mindset making females vulnerable in suspicious circumstances. The majority of the study responses confirmed this assumption.

Suspicion -Precipitated Violence

The pockets of rural communities involving the violence customarily shape a suspicion precipitated environment. Seventy four percent of the respondents said this type of victimization was suspicion precipitated. The offender is watchful, backward and opportunist in character.

Female Murder & F.I.R.

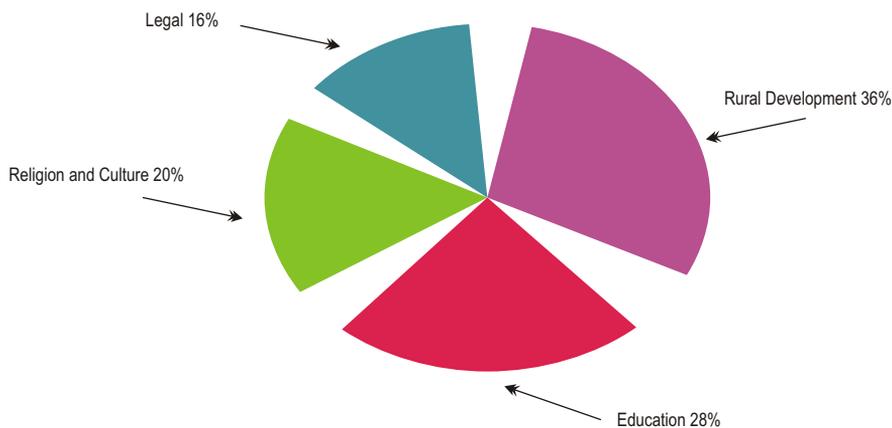
Why Does Police Fail to Enforce the Existing Law Accepting the Killing as Murder of Women?



The above figure depicts why F.I.R. is not registered as such of the murder in honor-related homicides. The factors involved in such scenario include lack of will/seriousness by police (34%), feudal pressure (18%), and cultural barrier (18%). Besides, police corruption (6%), female victims neglected and male dominance (12%) are aiding to the state of affairs where police fails to register F.I.R. of the murder when honor-related homicide takes place.

Women Empowerment and Linked Sectors

Which Sector is More Relevant to Tackle & Maximise the Women Empowerment Preventing Honor-Victimization ?



The above graph shows that Rural development (36%), Education (28%), Religion & Culture (20%) and Legal sectors are key areas of development relevant to tackle and maximize women empowerment. The empowered women hypothetically are less likely to be victimized by criminal offenders.

True or Fake Honour-killings

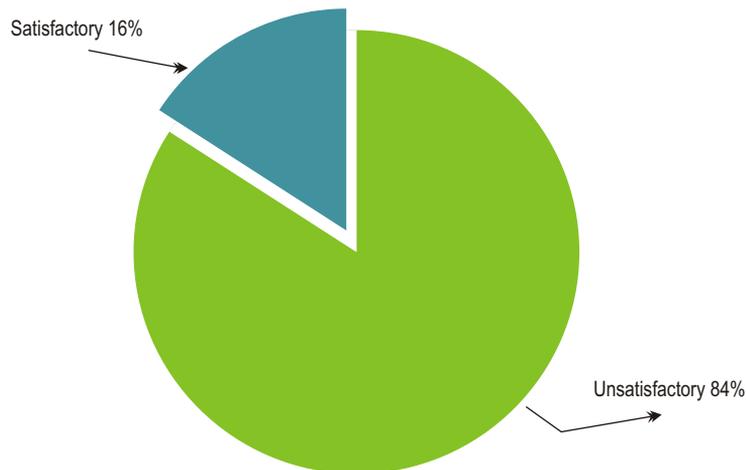
Thirty seven respondents out of fifty in total agreed that there is the prevalent practice of fake reporting of honor-related homicides in Sindh. Besides, there involves under-reporting in many incidents. Women in Rural areas of Sindh are killed due to several reasons including domestic disputes, husband or father battery, and property and heirship issues. However, honor-killing is not regular domestic violence but an extraordinary event surrounding honor conception.

Crime and punishment

The Classical School of Criminology pioneered by Cesare Beccaria assumed that 'punishment must fit the crime' to deter the criminals from repeated offending. Police detection of crime and apprehension of honor offender is very unsatisfactory in Sindh. Severe and certain penalties could deter in primary and secondary levels. The crime of honor-killing can be prevented/controlled through certain, swift and equal punishment to the offenders.

Response of Criminal Justice

How Do You Feel is the Response of the Criminal Justice Towards the Victims of Honor Killing?



84% of respondents are not satisfied with the response of criminal justice towards honor victimization of women. Poor response of criminal justice system is due to factors like unprofessional attitude, feudal pressures, male dominated attitudes, offender focused criminal justice and stereotyping behaviors.

Conclusion

Homicidal Female Honour Victimization portrays the true landscape of violence against women in rural context of Sindh. The paradigms included theoretical connections and causative factors like prevalent cultural taboos(highest response), heat of passion, lawlessness, sub-culture of violence, male-dominated

society, domestic disputes and feudal involvement. The practice is result of backward tribal mindset and criminal psychology. The ecology is relevant facilitator in victimization. The victimization phenomenon is victim-precipitated in some cases. The study revealed that increasing (significant) number of honor crimes are reported which are actually fake. It is found that women are killed due to several other reasons and motives other than defilement of honor. The significant numbers of victims are risk-taking, negligent, vulnerable, rebellious and inviting violence from the male-dominated mindset. More significantly, the homicide involves the suspicion-precipitated victimization. Respondents are dissatisfied from role, reaction and response of the police. The spheres linked to rural, educational, religio-cultural and legal dimensions of women are potentially suited to empower women preventing the homicide-victimization. The proportionate punishment to the crime can work as effective deterrent in our society preventing and reducing the menace of violence against women. The criminal justice must be re-oriented to focus on victims of honor-related homicides in rural sections of Sindhi society.

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