



Shame Killing: Characteristics and Outlooks

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Summary

An honor killing is a kind of crime, which includes the murder of a family member, due to the perpetrator's certainty that the victim has brought disgrace or scandal for the family or has disrupted the ethics of a community or a religion with honor values. So, HK is a type of domestic violence in the broadest sense of violence within a family. Both men and women are the victims of shame killing. The threat of murder is used to control behavior, particularly with reference to sexuality and marriage. Committers often do not face negative stigma within their societies, because their conduct is seen as warranted. Though shame killings are often associated with the Asian continent and Middle East, they occur all over the world. In developed societies the majority of honor killings are committed by first generation immigrants against second and third generation to prevent them from becoming westernized. On the other hand, a systematic review of the research literature indicates a paucity of studies relative to the presumed size of the problem, and despite a recent increase in published surveys, persistent methodological limitations limit the generalizability of conclusions. In the present article, which is focused essentially on physiognomies of developing countries, the sociocultural, forensic and psychopathological aspects of honor killing are discussed, while considering that as a double-sided problem the demands reciprocal cultural and educational changes for maximum compromising and reshaping of collective behavior:

Keywords: Honor killing; Honor crime; Shame killing; Murder; Criminology; Criminality; Forensic Psychiatry; Psychopathology

Introduction

An honor killing [HK] or shame killing is a kind of crime, which includes the murder of a family member, due to the perpetrators' certainty that the victim has brought disgrace or scandal for the family or has disrupted the ethics of a community or a religion with honor values [1]. So, HK is a type of domestic violence in the broadest sense of violence within a family. Males can also be the victims of shame killings by relatives of a woman with whom they are perceived to have an unsuitable relationship, or by participating in gay activities [2]. Many times, cultural standards and performs including the legal practices related to honor crimes support the practice of killing women for sexual misbehavior and excuse offenders of such crimes from penalty [3]. While extra-marital pregnancy is one of the strongest motivators for honor killings and

old injuries are a potential sign of ongoing intimate partner violence [4], adult married women constitute the majority of victims of HK [5]. A forced suicide, as well, may become a substitute for HK. In this case, the relatives do not directly kill the victim themselves, but force him or her to commit suicide, to avoid sentence [6].

Human Rights Watch defines "honor killings" as follows: "Honor crimes are acts of violence, usually murder, committed by male relatives against female family members who are perceived to have brought disrepute upon the family [7]". For women, methods of 'dishonor' include communicating with 'unknown' men, being in a room with a man who is not a relative, perceived, or actual adultery, running away, premarital pregnancy, or otherwise challenging patriarchal gender norms [8-10]. Relatives may target a woman

because she refuses a prearranged or forced marriage, is the victim of a sexual assault, or seeking divorce - even from an abusive husband. As Amnesty International statement notes: The rule of honor is unforgiving because women on whom doubt has fallen are not given a chance to defend themselves, and family members have no socially acceptable alternative but to remove the stain on their honor by attacking the victim [11]. Many honor killings are scheduled by multiple members of a family, sometimes through an official "family council". The threat of murder is used to control behavior, particularly with reference to sexuality and marriage, which may be a responsibility for some or all family members to uphold [9]. Committers often do not face negative stigma within their societies, because their conduct is seen as warranted [12].

The assassinations are sometimes performed in public to warn the other folks within the community of probable penalties for engagement in forbidden manners [1]. The incidence of honor killings is very difficult to decide, and guesstimates differ broadly. Though shame killings are often associated with the Asian continent, they occur all over the world. In developed societies the most of honor killings are committed by first generation immigrants against second and third generation to prevent them from becoming westernized [11]. As said by advocacy director for Human Rights Watch, the practice of honor killing "goes across cultures and across religions." An estimated 5000 'honor killings' occur every year, with the majority of these in the Middle East and Asia, and their diaspora in Europe, America and Latin America [7]. Anthropological writings have made three main arguments about the drivers of HK in societies where these are obvious. First, it is a form of patriarchal social control over women's bodies and sexuality [13]. This connects HK to other forms of violence against women and girls, often noting women who are murdered 'in the name of honor' have before experienced other forms of violence from relatives [14]. A second part of research highlights economic factors in HK. Broadly, in societies where 'honor killings' are more common, women's bodies may be considered as resources for reproduction, domestic labor, and access to other resources [15]. A third argument proposes that 'honor' is a resource through which families can make social prestige in a community, without recourse to economic or political routes, which for poor families is not thinkable [16].

Background

In the Roman Empire the ancient law permitted the murder of daughters and their mistresses who committed adultery at the hands of their fathers and permitted the killing of the adulterous wife's mistress at the hand of her husband [17]. In ancient China and among the Indigenous Aztecs and Incas, as well, adultery was punishable by death. During John Calvin's rule of Geneva, women found guilty of adultery were punished by being drowned in the river. Similarly, the French or Napoleonic Penal Code, which was passed in 1810, permitted killing of an unfaithful wife and her mistress at the hand of her husband. It was abolished only in 1975.

The said penal code passed by Napoleon was copied by Middle Eastern Arab countries, too, where honor killings have a long tradition [17]. While, anthropologically, an act, or even supposed act, of any female sexual misconduct, upsets the moral order of the nation, and killing looks the only way to remove any shame brought by the actions and restore social steadiness, the relation between honor and female sexuality is an intricate one, and some scholars claim that it is not females' sexuality per se that is the 'problem', but rather women's self-determination in regard to it, as well as fertility. In present times, the changing economic and cultural status of women has also been used to explain the incidents of honor killings. Therefore, some investigators argue that the shift towards greater responsibility for women and less for their fathers may cause their male relatives to act in oppressive and sometimes violent manners to regain authority [18].

Associated Social Circumstances

Misogynistic views towards women and the place of women in society, exaggerated concept of family honor and management of reputation, preponderance of collectivist cultures, where the family is more important than the person and personal autonomy is seen as a threat to the family and its honor, economic vulnerability, and absence of the rule of law are among the known causes which endorse HK [14]. Analysis of data suggests a strong relationship between women reporting 'honor killing' in their family and reporting other violence from household members, which suggests a clustering of violent practices within families. Furthermore, the analysis also highlights a link between poverty and HK [18]. Besides, as said by some studies, education is associated with attitudes to 'honor killing' and persons with more education have less patriarchal outlooks [19,20]. On the other hand, legal frameworks can encourage HK. Such laws include, on one side, leniency towards such murders, and, on the other side, criminalization of various behaviors, such as extramarital sex, impolite dressing in public places, or homosexual sexual acts, which may reassure perpetrators of honor killings that people engaging in these activities deserve penalty [21]. In fact, legal responses to honor killings and honor-based abuse are often weak [22].

Discussion

According to Kanchan, et al. [23], honor killings are graceless and ferocious murders by chauvinists with an antediluvian mind. These are classified separately because these murders are committed for the prime reason of satisfying the ego of the persons whom the victim trusts and always looks up to for support and protection. It is for this sole reason that honor killings demand harsh and strict sentence, not only for the person who committed the murder but also for any person who contributed or was party to the act [23]. There is every reason to believe that honor-based violence is one of the forms of domestic violence that is being practiced against women all over the world. This type of violence includes a wide range of crimes, the severest of which is honor killing. While many

studies have adopted different definitions for HK, it goes beyond ethnicity, class, and religion [24]. On the other hand, a systematic review of the research literature on honor killings in the Middle East and North Africa indicates a paucity of studies relative to the presumed size of the problem. Despite a recent increase in published studies, persistent methodological limitations limit the generalizability of conclusions [25]. Also, despite existence of a significant body of qualitative research, the resulted findings offer rare quantitative evidence about the root causes of 'honor killings' [26].

Without doubt, HK is a wrongdoing. Disregard to its cultural or personal justifications, according to the standards of a civilized nation or modern legal system, it is a murder, whether deliberate homicide or unintentional manslaughter. Therefore, forensically, or from a criminological viewpoint, it is a harmful, illegal, and irrational act. Backbone or sense of dignity, which is usually claimed to be at the core of HK, and perhaps is more excessively knowable in developing societies, is a passionate sensation, which is made up of a few characteristics, cultural, emotive, cognitive, and customary elements. But what is an indelible blot on family reputation that demands corporal wiping out? It is a cultural-historical concept that separates worthy persons from valueless people, dominant authority from subordinate groups, or moral people from immoral guys, which can be relic of social class struggle, from a Marxian outlook, Social or group ranking theory, from a Neo-Darwinian or sociobiological standpoint, or sign of Satanist naughtiness, from a theistic or holy view, respectively.

All of them result in conflict and demand a problem-solving strategy. Supposedly, the resolving strategy includes demolition of contender in the first attitude, suppression of the disobedient person in the second perspective, and annihilation of blasphemous being in the third stance. None of the aforementioned views allows procrastination or negligence because the assumed struggles may not be resolved without omission of one of the antagonists. This is the sentence which is prescribed through history for the rebellious person if he or she ventures to transgress the accustomed red lines, and even now it can be valid if there is no supremacy of law, or the civic toleration is lower than the legal threshold. But why the above process should change? Because in modern society, such a primitive problem-solving strategy, is a crime per se, can be abused, framed, or camouflaged, by the perpetrators, upset the humanity, and weaken the legal system more than before. From a psychopathological view, among personality characters, obsessive compulsive, narcissistic, borderline, antisocial and paranoid traits or disorders can prepare the individual for assassination, by way of harsh superego, selfishness, emotive instability, lack of morality, and doubtfulness, respectively. The said qualities can work as triggering dynamics, which can impact the judgment remarkably in stressful, insoluble, and despairing conditions. HK can be in continuance of earlier bullying conduct of a psychopath or person with sadomasochistic or sadistic personality disorder. In the same

way, delusional disorder, especially jealous type, erotomanic type and persecutory type, can persuade murdering, thanks to a psychotic state of mind, which is, also, many times hard to prove forensically. Forensically, delusional disorder, in the form of morbid jealousy, is an important psychopathologic cause in homicide, and major depressive disorder is a key element in homicide-suicide or extended suicide.

Also, borderline intellectual functioning or mild intellectual deficiency, too, which is many times unrecognized or underestimated, can speed up poor judgment, especially in the aforesaid morbid conditions. Also, since the victims are often attention-grabbing or good-looking, a possible unconscious or conscious incestuous or erotic feelings in the killer as regards the murdered person is occasionally conceivable, because ambivalence between hate and love can arouse more easily due to sensual jealousy than compassionate aspirations, and an envious being can assassinate more easily than a kindhearted person, a phenomenon which is easily processed by unconscious mechanism of reaction formation, such as, in obsessive compulsive people, or erotic intents in mindful perpetrators. Such an inference is somewhat in accord with the idea of Patel, et al. [27], who believed that perpetrators of 'honor killings' often have motives outside of female adultery [27].

What about the situation that provokes HK? As said before, the sense of dignity is overtly or covertly at the core of honor killing, and it is commonly announced by the assassin as a kind of retribution for violation of customary and domestic laws by the destroyed person. Traditionally and socially, there was always a sharp distinction between house and whorehouse, on behalf of preserving the safety and stability of family, as the constituent unit of society. Protection or management of household, as like as any administrative or commercial office, demands some interior and exterior rules, which are conventionally planned and stereotypically accomplished. Since, breaking of such orthodox instructions may destabilize the household, whether literally or metaphorically, no transgressing is customarily tolerable. So, every violation of principle rules is responded by retribution. While in older nations such sentences could be accomplished by blood relatives or head of tribes, in modern civilizations no punishment is acceptable out of constitutional rights or existing lawful rubrics. But even today and based on the cultural, educational and urbanity of folks a variable level of approval of civil rights is evident. So, more rural, more illiterate, more brazen, more silly, more impulsive, and more aggressive people can forget or deny the aforesaid civil rights as fast as possible, and act as a heartless executioner in unbearable instants. So, the honor killer accomplishes the role of accuser, prosecutor, and judge, all at once, with no place for legal representative of the accused. In contemporary era, it is duty of governance and legislative body of every society to think about regulatory mechanisms or rules for conveying the right of major punishments from persons to authentic public administrations and found such handing over on community feedback. Removal of accelerating rubrics, customs

or behaviors, and promotion of protective institutions, rules and lifestyles, with considering the mutual viewpoints and standard of living of family members, whether elder or fledgling, can modify reasonably the problem of honor killing. Though right lawmaking is the first step in stopping the said problem, auxiliary resolutions, too, is necessary for the safety of household itself. If safety of family is in jeopardy due to wrongdoings of one of family members, then the rest of kindred should not be influenced by that bad behavior.

The genuineness of misconduct, as well, may not have a similar implication in different civilizations. It depends on culture, tradition, education, attitude, social class, and subjective analysis of issue. On the other hand, sexual promiscuity is not ordinary even in developed societies. Except than professional whoredom, which is illegal in many developed societies, too, sexual promiscuity is recognized in psychiatry as a morbid symptom in borderline personality disorder, depressive equivalent in adolescents with major depressive disorder, or bipolar disorder. Likewise, nymphomania (excessive or pathological desire for coitus in a woman), a kind of sex addiction, is classified in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-5) [28] as unspecified sexual dysfunction. Similarly, sexual relationship with a teenage (≤ 18 years old) is equal to rape and acknowledged as a crime in developing societies. So, while, at least, psychopathology and criminology share some morbid or legal aspects of sexual misconduct in both developed and developing countries, which demands necessary treatments or punishments by associated and legitimate administrations, free and out of spousal relationship among men and women are not principally allowable in developing societies. Essentially, in a civilized society, the right of personal execution must be eradicated totally and eternally. Only, administrative or community admins, as the only administrative and jurisdiction representative of entire society, can decide, according to law, as regards the penalty of criminal citizens. On the other hand, the regime should notice that its verdicts and outlooks can act as schema for masses.

Therefore, lawful execution can be a metaphorical rationalization for next assassinations, too. So, acculturation and promotion of social graces must target both the wrongdoing of prospective honor killers and the transgression of future sufferers. Though HK is banned by law and will be penalized afterwards, the impending victim also should discern that this is not a one-sided game and must pay back if do immoral or messily. Since, brusque transgression of social standards, which are very different between industrialized and unindustrialized cultures, can cause new sequences of social problems, the legislative body or parliament, as representative of nation, can demarcate, periodically, right or wrong public conducts, based on the received feedbacks from electorates. Clichéd imitation of foreign lifestyles, even if profitable, is not a substantial and firm educational refinement. Cultural modification is a slow process, not pressurized mutation, which can be endorsed by external routes, as well. Anyhow, since love or sensual matters root deeply in human instincts, its control is not always possible through existent customs

or rubrics, and occurrence of encounter is always conceivable. So, HK, as well, cannot eradicate unacceptable sexual relationships or misconduct because it is an everlasting sporadic conduct. On the other hand, HK is not an instinctive phenomenon and is more an individual choice because there are many prostitutes, homosexuals, or youngsters with sexual promiscuity, who are in relationship with their relatives, too, and nobody, have ever hurt them due to their sexual or social misdemeanors. As another example, impotent men relatively ignore their mate's extramarital affair because they have insight about their own problem and partner's biologic passions. Similarly, studies report that by middle age, 60 percent of men and 40 percent of women have at least one extramarital affair, which are usually kept secret from the spouse, and if known, rarely account for divorce [29].

Regarding the cultural aspects of honor killing, which is a changeable target, too, a series of research were accomplished in developing countries. For example, according to a study in Pakistan, while male students were statistically significantly more likely to report that killing in the name of honor is always justified and were less equivocal about it compared to female students, cumulatively most of them believed that killing in the name of honor is not always justified [30]. Also, in another survey by Gengler, et al., while half of citizens, particularly the youngest age group, report agreement that physical violence is justified as punishment for female adultery, a third of both men and women say they would support a law permitting violence against a female adulterer [31]. A comparable outcome was found by Shaikh, et al., who showed that majority of men as well as women considered it reasonable and suitable to kill one's wife as a mean to save one's honor, and most of them did not believe in either mercy or divorcing one's wife who has engaged in extramarital sexual relationship [32]; a conclusion similar to the finding of Huda, et al. with respect to non-significant gender differences in the attitudes toward honor killings [33].

Also, while Eisner, et al. had found collectivistic and patriarchal world view, father's harsh discipline, believe in the importance of female chastity, and low education backgrounds as meaningful predictors in support of HK, which was rather like the outcomes of Payton [14], Eisner, et al. [19] and Fulu, et al. [20], Dayan found possible links between female HK frequency and social factors such as low economic status and rapid modernization [34]. Huda, et al., as well, found that people living in rural setups, in comparison with people living in urban setups, and older adults, in comparison with adults of younger age groups, and participants belonging to a joint/extended family system, in comparison with those who belonged to nuclear families, showed more affirmation to honor killing, and so, demographic variables play a role in determining and shaping the attitudes and beliefs of people about the phenomenon of HK [33]. Also, while in the study of Gengler, et al. [33] religiosity was a strong positive predictor of personal support for honor-based violence, some scholars believe that the ideology of honor is a cultural phenomenon and does not seem to be related to religion, and honor

killings likely have a long history in human societies which predate many modern religions [18,35].

Moreover, the nasty outcome of HK is not restricted to murderer and target. The other family members, as well, can be influenced, more or less, by such dreadful act. Moreover, while there is no guarantee for renewal of affection, stability, and respect in the remaining household, sometimes the reverse may come about. According to a survey by Khatib, et al., following HK, families then entered a protracted process of grief compounded by negative social interactions, which led to a form of “social death.” The road to social death was a painful and continuous social process, which, for many, never abated. HK can be passively supported by an impassive parliament, which is submissive to old-fashioned traditions, due to philosophical resemblance between congressmen and masses or electors. In such a situation, this is the duty of social activists to highlight the said dilemma and encourage the legislative body to enact favorable bills in support of right conducts.

While according to UN declaration crimes committed in the name of passion, stressing that all forms of violence against women, were obstacles to the advancement and empowerment of women; and reaffirmed that violence against women both violated and impaired or nullified the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, existing evidence show the situation worldwide remained quite contrary to the UN declaration. The close connections between all forms of family violence and HK do suggest that preventive efforts be targeted at working with families around preventing violence more generally, in addition to HK specifically. Prevention of HK needs to be an explicit development goal, and is achievable through cultural modification, expanding education, reducing poverty, and removing the immunity of perpetrators.

Conclusion

While honor killing is an illegal and vicious homicide that needs to be inhibited legally, considering its social physiognomies is not an insignificant issue. It is a double-sided problem the demands cultural and educational modification for prospective perpetrators and predictable victims, reciprocally. Justice for killing and discipline for messy behavior, anger management for the impulsive and aggressive person and proper safe shelter for the endangered person, informative strategies for traditional society and proper counseling for anarchic persons are among the helpful tactics. Moreover, teamwork between mental health services and social working organizations for vanishing harmful prototypes, and planned use of media for proper reshaping of collective behavior can be a fruitful policy.

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Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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