

HONOUR-BASED KILLINGS: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

As honour killings tend to be prevalent in countries with a major Muslim population, many people think that the practice of such acts is based on the tenets of Islam. This view, however, is erroneous and has nothing to do with the teachings of Islam. In fact, many Islamic leaders and scholars condemn the practice and deny that it is based on religious doctrine. Therefore, the problem is not related to Islam, but rather is related to cultural practices and weak law enforcement. For example, it has been contended that in Jordan and Pakistan, the legal rules which regulate honour killings play a significant role in encouraging such crimes. Notwithstanding, it is argued that cultural practices, expectations, and traditions play an even more effective role, in spite of legal reform, in many countries. The concept of honour is very difficult to define since what is considered honourable is different from one culture or society to another. However, there is no doubt that in all societies, honour is fundamentally considered the public recognition of one's social standing.

Key words: Honour killings; family's identity; social impotence

1. Introduction:

Honour killing is defined as the murder of female or male individuals of a family by their relatives because they bring dishonour to the family name.¹ Dishonourable acts could entail refusing to enter into an arranged marriage or for having a relationship with someone whom the family considers to be inappropriate, such as a sexual partner.² Thousands of girls and women across the globe are murdered by male family members each year in the name of family honour.³ The United Nations reports that at least 5000 females are killed around the world every year in the name of honour.⁴ Honour killings have been reported in many countries in the world, but they are most prevalent in Jordan, Pakistan, Egypt, India, Morocco, Turkey, Bangladesh, Sweden, Brazil, Ecuador, USA, Italy, Germany, Uganda and the United Kingdom.⁵ However, although such crimes are not particular to Islamic countries and communities, they seem to be more common in such places. In some of these communities, males consider themselves protectors and guardians over their females relatives in their familial domain. Therefore, they believe that they have the right and obligation to protect their female relatives against any behaviour that is socially unacceptable, even if this means killing them.⁶ Women in many Islamic societies, such as Pakistan and Jordan, are believed to represent the honour of their male relatives and family.⁷ Therefore, if they are suspected of having entered into an "illicit" relationship or behaving in an "inappropriate manner", they are seen as having dishonoured the family.⁸ In this case, it is very important for men to show their family and their community their ability to protect their honour and the honour of their family. Such ability is usually represented by killing those who have damaged their family's honour and thereby restoring it.

Amal, a seventeen-year-old Jordanian girl, told her family that she had been raped and impregnated by her father's friend. The family immediately tried to raise money for an abortion in an effort to avoid the stigma that would result from a premarital pregnancy. After a doctor refused to perform the abortion, Amal's father took the money, bought a shotgun, and, along with Amal's brother, shot Amal eight times in an attempt to kill her.⁹

Mukhtar Mai was repeatedly gang-raped by four men in her village in Pakistan in front of hundreds of people from her village.¹⁰ She was then forced to walk home naked.¹¹ This was in fact ordered by a Mastoi tribal council on the grounds that Mukhtar's

¹ Y. Hassan, "The Fate of Pakistani Women", *International Herald Tribune*, May 25, 1999.

² F.K. Nesheiwat, "Honour Crimes in Jordan: Their Treatment under Islamic and Jordanian Criminal Laws", 2004-2005, 23 *International Law Review*, pp: 251, 253-54.

³ B. Dasgupta, "No Honour in Honour Killings", *Hindustan Times*, 21 February, 2004.

⁴ United Nations Population Fund, *UNFPA in the News: Killings in the Name of Honor*, Dec. 11-17, 2004. Available at: <http://www.unfpa.org/news/coverage/december11-17-2004.htm>. Retrieved July 24, 2016.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ M. Hussain, "'Take my Riches, Give me Justice': A contextual Analysis of Pakistan's Honor Crimes Legislation", 2006, 29 *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender*, p: 227.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ K.C. Arnold, "Comment, Are the Perpetrators of Honor Crimes Getting Away with Murder?: Article 340 of the Jordanian Penal Code Analyzed Under the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women", 2001, 16 *International Law Review*, pp: 1343, 1345.

¹⁰ M.D. Castetter, "Note, Taking Law into Their Own Hands: Unofficial and Illegal Sanctions by the Pakistani Tribal Councils", 2003, 13 *Indian and International & Comparative Law Review*, pp: 544-545.

brother was accused of having sexual relations with a woman from a higher Mastoi tribe. Therefore, in order for the honour of the higher Mastoi tribe to be restored, the council ordered that the accused sister (Mukhtar) be raped. After the horrifying act was committed, it was discovered that the accusation against Mukhtar's brother was fabricated by members of the Mastoi tribe in order to cover up their own sexual relations with the women of the tribe.¹²

Because of the fact that honour killings tend to be dominant in Muslim countries,¹³ many people think that the practice of such acts has something to do with the teachings of Islam. In fact, such practice is denied in Islam,¹⁴ it is related to cultural practices,¹⁵ and weak law enforcement.¹⁶ For example, in both Jordan and Pakistan, honour killings are still widely committed. In Pakistan, it is reported that in 2006 alone, at least 565 women were killed in the name of honour.¹⁷ Therefore, in order to examine the concept of 'honour killing', it is important to clearly understand what is generally meant by honour.¹⁸ Campbell (1964), in referring to Greek society, states that the concept of honour functions in southern Europe as the link between the individual and community. In this context, honour provides "a moral framework for behaviour, norms and rules that provide a basis for acceptance in collective life. It is through the holding of honour that individuals find a place in their community, and thus the concept of honour is imbued with great power."¹⁹ This paper will pay attention on the fact that there is a complex set of traditional, social and cultural elements that explain the practice of honour killings.

1.1. Definition of Honour Killing with Different Perspectives

In general, honour crimes can be defined as acts of violence committed against individuals, in most cases women, by male members of the family, in defence of the family honour.²⁰ However, despite the fact that such violence is mostly perpetrated by males against females, there are some cases where women have also carried out murder in the name of honour.²¹ Human Rights Watch groups define 'honour crimes' as acts of violence usually perpetrated by male members of a family against female relatives who are thought to have brought dishonour on the family.²² This dissertation will only focus on the worst form of honour crime, which is honour killing.

In most Islamic countries, including Pakistan and Jordan, honour killing is excused because it is believed to remove some imputed stain on the family's honour.²³ It is committed in order to redeem the family name. As mentioned above, actions which may bring dishonour differ from one society to another, even among Islamic societies. Therefore, the basis for honour killings varies. In many societies, females are taught that the first and most important thing in their lives is their honour. A female remains honourable by remaining a virgin and abstaining from any behaviour that may result in sexual relationships. For example, it is shameful for a female to have a male friend.²⁴

Sometimes women are killed because they are victims of sexual crimes, such as rape.²⁵ A woman who is raped brings shame to her family and community.²⁶ A woman may even be killed if her husband dreams that his wife has betrayed him. Moreover, many women are murdered based solely on rumours and speculation within their community.²⁷

Furthermore, actions such as refusing to submit to an arranged marriage and demanding a divorce are considered dishonourable in countries such as Pakistan. For example, Nagina Bibi was a seventeen-year-old girl from Pakistan. Her father arranged her engagement to her cousin, but her brother wanted her to marry his wife's brother. On April 14, 1999, after her brother saw her

¹¹ Ibid at 543.

¹² Ibid at 545.

¹³ F. Faqir, "Intrafamily femicide in defence of honour: the case of Jordan", 2001, Vol. 22, 1 *Third World Quarterly*, pp: 65 and 70.

¹⁴ See Y. Asamoah-Wade, "Women's human rights and 'honor killings' in islamic cultures", 1999, 21 *WOMEN'S Law Journal*, pp: 21-22.

¹⁵ A. Wasim, "Two Bills on Honour Killing Tabled in NA", Mar. 9, 2005, Down: The Internet Edition. Available at: <http://www.dawn.com/2005/03/09/top2.htm>. Retrieved July 31, 2016.

¹⁶ The Islam Awareness Homepage, *Honour killing outside the world of Islam*, 2006. Available at: <http://www.islamawareness.net>. Retrieved June 24, 2016.

¹⁷ The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan report, 2006. Available at: <http://www.hrcp-web.org>.

¹⁸ H. Moxnes, "Honour and Shame", 2005, p: 21. Available at: www.apollos.ws/social-world-of-the-new-testam/moxneshalvorss1.pdf. Retrieved July 2, 2016.

¹⁹ P. Sen, "'Crimes of honour', value and meaning" in S. Hossain and L. Welchman (eds), *'Honour': Crimes, Paradigms and Violence Against Women*, 2005, Zed Books, p: 44.

²⁰ Hassan, *supra* n.7.

²¹ According to a study conducted by the Women's Information and Cultural Centre in Sulaimaniya, many women not only condone 'honour crimes'; they will often participate practically in carrying out the offence. N. Begikhani, "Honour-based violence among the Kurds: the case of Iraqi Kurdistan" in S. Hossain and L. Welchman, (eds) *'Honour': Crimes, Paradigms and Violence Against Women*, 2005, Zed Books, p: 209. See, also, R.R. Faraj & S. Hana, 'Statistics on Violence Used against Women with an Article', *Women Information and Culture Center*, Publication 4, 2003.

²² Human Rights Watch, *Violence against Women and 'Honor Crimes*, 2001.

²³ Dasgupta, *supra* n.5.

²⁴ See K.L. Kinnear, "Women in the third world, Santa Barbara: ABD-CLIO", 2001, p: 279.

²⁵ See Haeri, *supra* n.20 at 163-66.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ V. Plant, "Honor Killings and the Asylum Gender Gap", 2005-2006, 15 *Journal of Transnational Law & Policy*, 109, p: 111.

talking to the cousin chosen by their father on the street, he and another brother reportedly tied her with a rope to a wooden post in their home, sprinkled kerosene over her and set her on fire. She was taken to a hospital with burns over 75% of her body. After 23 days, Nagina died. Her family claimed that her death was due to a stove explosion, but she told doctors that her brother had set her on fire because she had disobeyed him.²⁸

In addition, women may be killed for less serious transgressions, such as flirting with or receiving phone calls from men,²⁹ having male friends, leaving the home without permission,³⁰ violating dress codes and failing to serve a meal on time³¹ (two). It is evident that many of the aforementioned actions, which are thought to bring dishonour against a family, are viewed as sexual in nature.³² In all of these examples, women are thought to have transgressed the limits of social behaviour imposed by traditions; therefore, punishing them is justifiable.³³ It is believed that females who do not act according to pre-defined standards viewed as pathological require treatment; they must be 'cured' or 'removed'.³⁴

2. Theoretical Perspective of Honour Killing

2.1. Gendered Expectations

In some Islamic societies, such as Pakistan, women are perceived as sexual objects and are expected to remain within male-dominated ideologies, performing as homemakers and nurturers, always remaining subordinate to men.³⁵ Moreover, in Pakistan,³⁶ women are considered as 'property' of men, and domestic violence is viewed as the right of men over the women with whom they live.³⁷ Even today, in some areas of Pakistan, males believe that if a female is defiant, there is nothing morally or legally wrong with beating or even killing her. If men do engage in violence, they believe that they will not face prosecution.³⁸ In these societies, the unequal position of women results from social oppression, as well as economic dependency on men.

In fact, violence against females by their male relatives is at times accepted by society and her family if they consider her to have violated the traditional gender roles in her society. Because of these views, men who engage in violence against their wives, sisters, or other female relatives, believe that they will not be prosecuted.³⁹ This is because of the weak laws established to punish such crimes. For instance, the Honour Killings Bill, which has been established in 2004 in Pakistan, has been considered ineffective.⁴⁰ Since it does not declare an honour killing as first degree murder and does not dictate punishment for those who support, encourage, conspire in, or validate the commissioning of an honour killing.⁴¹

Women are considered as property that belongs to their male relatives. Therefore, men have the right to decide what is right and wrong. Nafisa Shah states: "In the tribal society of Sindh and Baluchistan, a woman is equated with money....But although she has monetary value, her worth is essentially that of a commodity and this view goes far towards creating a situation when she may be butchered if she transgresses the conditions under which she is bound to a man for life."⁴² It is not easy to explain the practice of honour killings; it is based on a complex set of traditional, social and cultural factors. In societies such as Jordan, and Pakistan, for example, any kind of sex outside of marriage is illegal; even conversations and meetings between people other than relatives is socially unacceptable.⁴³ Such acts by females are perceived to harm a family's honour. The female family member's chastity is the most important form of honour because once lost, it cannot be salvaged. Women within these societies are expected to actively safeguard their sexuality before marriage.⁴⁴

²⁸ Amnesty International, 'Honour Killings in Pakistan', September 21, 1999. Available at: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa330171999>. Retrieved July 26, 2016.

²⁹ Dasgupta, *supra* n.5.

³⁰ Sen, *supra* n.24 at 47.

³¹ K. White, "Honour Killings", 2003, *The Prince of Wales Collegiate World Youth Manifesto Project*. Available at: http://www.pwc.k12.nf.ca/cida/manifesto/honor_killings.htm. Retrieved July 2, 2016.

³² Nesheiwat, *supra* n.8 at 251, 253-54.

³³ F. Khafagy, "Honour Killing in Egypt", 2005, *The Association of Legal Aid for Women*, Cairo, Egypt. Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vawgp2005/docs/experts/khafagy.honorcrimes.pdf>. Retrieved July 22, 2016

³⁴ *Ibid*.

³⁵ A. Oakley, *Gender and Society*, 1984, Adlershot Gower, London. P: 56.

³⁶ Approximately 70% to 90% of females in Pakistan are subjected to domestic violence. See Human Rights Watch, *Crime or Custom? Violence against Women in Pakistan*, 1999. P: 1.

³⁷ I. Nooruddin, "Blind Justice: 'Seeing' Race and Gender in Cases of Violent Crime", 2006, p: 4. Available at: <http://psweb.sbs.ohiostate.edu/faculty/nooruddi/research/nooruddin.pg2007.pdf>. Retrieved April 24, 2016.

³⁸ A. Bettencourt, *Violence Against Women in Pakistan*, 2000, Human Rights Advocacy Clinic, Litigation Report, p: 4. Available at: <http://www.du.edu/intl/humanrights/violencepkstn.pdf>. Retrieved April 24, 2016.

³⁹ *Ibid*.

⁴⁰ Kashmala Tariq, Member of the government-endorsed Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) proposed amendments to the Bill in early 2005. See "Pakistan Rejects Pro-Women Bill", BBC NEWS, Mar. 2, 2005. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/south_asia/4311055.stm. Retrieved July 30, 2016.

⁴¹ Wasim, *supra* n.16.

⁴² N. Najam, "Honour Killings in Pakistan, Feb 1999. Available at: http://www.crescentlife.com/articles/social%20issues/honor-killings_in_pakistan.htm. Retrieved July 4, 2016.

⁴³ See S.H. Hammond, *Essay: Civil Society*, 1998, pp: 17 and 19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*.

Females in some families within societies like Pakistan and Jordan are constantly under suspicion. Thus, leaving the home without permission is not allowed and their friendships and conversations are controlled. More importantly, their life partners are chosen for them, without their input, by their male relatives⁴⁵. If these rules are breached by any female at any age or even if such violations are only suspected, this may be enough for her relatives to have her killed.⁴⁶ Family honour depends upon the sexual conformity of its female family members.⁴⁷ Therefore, they must 'refrain from any sexual activity before marriage, and from any act that might lead to sexual activity....Every prohibitive demand she complies with constructs her simultaneously as female and a virgin.'⁴⁸ A woman's sexuality is at the heart of a society's concern of women's actions and the way in which she manages her engagements and relationships.⁴⁹ In order to protect a woman's virginity for her husband, limits are placed, not only on her sexual behaviours, but on individuals whom she may contact outside of her family.⁵⁰ However, it is not only men who play a central role in ensuring that women abide by gender norms and expectations; women themselves also play a key role.⁵¹ In some cases, they play a central role in issuing punishment for deviating from expectations and may even make the decision to kill their daughters or sisters.⁵² For example, Salwa was a sixteen-year-old Palestinian girl who was killed by her sister after confessing to her that she was pregnant with her fiance's child. Salwa's sister put ten bags of detergent into a large plastic bag, placed the bag over Salwa's nose while she was sleeping, and smothered her to death.⁵³

Unfortunately, the social rules and norms that dictate the killing of females, as well as control over their behaviour, are enforced in legal systems. This can be clearly seen through court decisions ruling on cases concerning violence against women. In such cases, courts always 'offer a scope for mitigation of a sentence'.⁵⁴ In fact, writers and reporters have noticed that in countries where honour killings are common, there is a complicity in the way that the legal systems explicitly give killers 'exoneration' for their crimes.⁵⁵ This is evident from lenient sentences meted out to male members who have killed female members of a family for reasons such as dating a new person, moving out of a shared home or even failing to have dinner ready at a given time.⁵⁶

All women's actions are thought to reflect on their male family members because women are believed to be representative vessels of male honour. As a result, men accord themselves complete authority and control over their female family members in order to protect their interests in the bodies of women. Therefore, if a woman makes any decision related to her sexuality, or even exercises independent freedom in her actions, she will disturb this equilibrium; the male then believes himself responsible for forcing her "back into line."⁵⁷

In spite of the fact that in most cases women are the victims of honour killings, men are also at times killed in the name of honour.⁵⁸ For instance, in Pakistan, killing a woman when she dishonours her family by alleged or real sexual behaviour infractions does not completely restore a family's honour.⁵⁹ In order for honour to be completely restored, the man who is involved in the relationship (karo, black man) must also be killed. However, the kari (female) must be killed first, as she carries the family name. Therefore, the karo often hears about it and manages to escape before his sentence is carried out.⁶⁰ For example, Zuleikha, a young woman of the Banglani tribe in Pakistan, was reportedly shot dead by male relatives in Sindh in 1999. She was killed because she had married a husband of the Khosa tribe, who escaped after he married her and knew that her family was going to kill him.⁶¹ However, even if males do escape from such incidents, they will be unable to return to their normal lives. As Amnesty International was told by Baloch activists, "Nobody will give such a man shelter; he remains on the run until he and his family are ready to negotiate with the victim, the man whose honour the *karo* defiled and who had to kill his wife or sister or daughter."⁶² So, in spite of the fact that females have less of a chance to physically escape, both men and women may be victims of honour killings.

2.2. Cultural Expectations

According to tribal customs in some Islamic countries, the woman is the repository of her family's honour and honour is closely related to respect and standing in a society. For example, in most Arab societies, a man's ability to protect his female relatives'

⁴⁵ The director of Pakistani NGO Aurat Foundation.

⁴⁶ Sen, *supra* n.24 at 48.

⁴⁷ Khafagy, *supra* n.42.

⁴⁸ L. Abu-Odeh, "Crimes of Honor and the Construction of Gender in Arab Societies", in M. Yamani and A. Allen (eds), *Feminism and Islam: legal and literary perspectives*, 2000. P: 371.

⁴⁹ Sen, *supra* n.24 at 48.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Sen, *supra* n.24 at 49.

⁵² D. Hoyek, R.R. Sidawi and A. Abou Mrad, "Murders of Women in Lebanon: 'Crimes of Honour' between reality and the law" in S. Hossain, and L. Welchman, (eds) *'Honour': Crimes, Paradigms and Violence Against Women*, 2005, Zed Books, p: 112.

⁵³ N. Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "Femicide and the Palestinian Criminal Justice System: Seeds of Change in the Context of State Building?", 2002, 36 *LAW and Society Review*, pp: 577, 589.

⁵⁴ Sen, *supra* n.24 at 49.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Hussain, *supra* n.11 at 227.

⁵⁸ See Amnesty International, *Pakistan: Honour killings of girls and women*, 1999, ASA 33/18/99.

⁵⁹ Hussain, *supra* n.11 at 228.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Editorial in *The News*, 6 February 1999.

⁶² Amnesty International, *Pakistan: Violence against women in the name of honour*, 1999.

honour defines his social status and maleness. His peers will view him as 'inferior' if he cannot sufficiently protect his family's honour.⁶³ In order to preserve his honour, a man must be able to defend the chastity of the women who are under his dominance and protection. If they lose their chastity, it implies shame on the family as a whole. Women are therefore looked upon as potential sources of shame.⁶⁴

In most Islamic societies, an individual's identity is closely tied to his or her family's name.⁶⁵ Nesheiwat states that the family's honour is viewed as a personal reflection on each member of the family.⁶⁶ If the name of a family is damaged by a dishonourable action committed by a woman, the family's identity is damaged.⁶⁷ However, if such an action is committed by a male member of the family, it only relates to himself. This is because of the fact that a female is considered dependant, while a male represents that dependency. In other words, females are viewed as followers, whereas men are the protectors and controllers. This explains why family members, particularly males, in many cases violently respond to such actions by committing honour killing crimes.⁶⁸

In accordance with tribal traditions, a man whose honour has been damaged must demonstrate, in public, that he can, and has the power to, safeguard his honour by killing those that damage it and therefore restore it.⁶⁹ His ability to protect his honour is observed by his family first, then by his neighbours, and finally, society in general.⁷⁰ In other words, committing an honour killing is believed to restore "social impotence." After such a crime is committed, the killer will be supported by his kinsmen. However, if he fails to kill a woman of his household who has damaged his honour, the family status in their particular society will remain stained.

In such societies, women who are killed, or who flee a killing, are viewed as criminals rather than victims,⁷¹ while the killers are considered victims, since they have suffered both the loss of honour and the woman who has been killed. Honour killing is not considered a crime, but instead as a justifiable action. It is seen as a necessary and appropriate response to those who contravene the rules of honour.

3. Islamic Perspective of Honour-Killing

In spite of the fact that honour killings are more common in Islamic countries (which are subject to the Islamic law), Muslim scholars generally agree that such acts are prohibited in Islam.⁷² The two main sources of the Islamic law are the *Quran*⁷³ and Hadith.⁷⁴ Even though there is one Holy *Quran*, there are many books written by Muslim scholars who interpret its chapters. The most popular and reliable books include Tafseer Ibn Katheer, Tafseer Al-Galalain, Tafseer Al-Tabri and Tafseer Al-Qurtobi.⁷⁵ Therefore, there are many interpretations of many of the *Quran*'s orders. As a simple example, when reading an interpretation of the Quranic order where Allah says "And stay in your houses and do not display your finery like the displaying of the ignorance of yore...",⁷⁶ some Muslim scholars, such as Shaik Abdullah Jabreen, believe that it is not allowed for women to go out at all without a Mahrem (relative male).⁷⁷ Others, such as Shaik Mohammed Al-Othaimeen, state that it is a woman's right to go out, even without a male relative at her side.⁷⁸ It is true, however, that all Muslim scholars agree in the prohibition of sexual relationships outside of marriage,⁷⁹ which is the most common reason behind honour killings. Nevertheless, this prohibition does not distinguish between standards for men and women. Moreover, in order for a case to be brought before a Muslim court, strict

⁶³ R.A. Ruane, "Murder in the name of honour: violence against women in Jordan and Pakistan", 2000, 14 Emory International Law Review, p: 1523.

⁶⁴ Moxnes, *supra* n.23 at 21.

⁶⁵ Nesheiwat, *supra* n.8 at 251, 253-54.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Abu-Odeh, *supra* n.57 at 149.

⁶⁸ Kinnear, *supra* n.33 at 279.

⁶⁹ Najam, *supra* n.51.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Asamoah-Wade, *supra* n.14 at 21-22.

⁷³ The Quran is a complete record of the exact words revealed by Allah through the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad. It's the principal source of every Muslim's faith and practice. It deals with all subjects that concern us as human beings; wisdom, doctrine, worship, and law. But its basic theme is the relationship between Allah and His creatures. At the same time the Quran provides guidelines for a just society, proper human conduct and equitable economic principles. Apart from the Quran, Muslims also refer to the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Extracted From: <http://www.cometoislam.com>. Retrieved July 27, 2016

⁷⁴ Hadith or Sunah is the record of an individual saying or action or approvals of Muhammad taken as a model of behavior by Muslims. The sayings and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad are called Hadith. These are the real explanation, interpretation, and the living example of the Prophet for teachings of the Quran. His sayings are found in books called the Hadith books. Some famous collectors of Hadith are Imam Al-Bukhari, Imam Muslim, Imam An-Nasa'i, Imam Abu Dawood, Imam At-Tirmizi, and Imam Majah. From: *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ See <http://quran.al-islam.com>. Retrieved July 27, 2016

⁷⁶ Quran (33:33).

⁷⁷ Extracted From: <http://www.alsaqr.com>. Retrieved July 24, 2016

⁷⁸ Extracted From: <http://portal.wahati.com>. Retrieved July 26, 2016

⁷⁹ See N.A.S. Kakakhel, "'Honour Killings': Islamic and Human Rights Perspectives", vol: 55, 2004, 1 *Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly*, pp: 78-89.

criteria must be met.⁸⁰ In most cases, acts brought before the court are impossible to prove. The most important criterion is that any accusation of illicit sexual behaviour must have been clearly witnessed by four witnesses.

From an Islamic perspective, the practice of 'honour killing' is a form of murder without trial, which is contrary to Islam.⁸¹ Islam upholds the sanctity of human life; the Holy *Quran* makes it clear that killing an innocent human being is akin to killing the entire human race.⁸² Moreover, Islam considers all forms of life sacred;⁸³ there is no justification for the practice of "honour killing" in Islamic law (*Sharia*).

4. Conclusion

This paper defined honour killing as the most barbaric and inhumane kind of violence against women that still exists in its worst form in many states in the world. Such a traditional custom gives parents, brothers, husbands, cousins and other male and female relatives the right to kill any member in their family who is suspected of bringing dishonour to that family.⁸⁴ Dishonour may be perceived through different reasons, such as refusing to enter into an arranged marriage, being the victim of a sexual assault, seeking a divorce or committing adultery.⁸⁵ Although honour killings can be committed against male individuals, such crimes are rarely committed by females. In most cases, honour killings take place when a female family member is thought to have brought dishonour to her family.⁸⁶ Thus, honour killing is always defined as an act of murder where female individuals are killed by their male relatives for their "actual or perceived immoral behaviour."⁸⁷

The reasons for honour killings vary from society to society and depend on the cultural and social values of that particular society. However, the most common reasons cited are shame brought on by rape, infidelity or flirtations.⁸⁸ The majority of women are killed based on the suspicions of a family member and are not given the chance to defend themselves.⁸⁹ The allegation itself is considered enough to defile a man's or family's honour and is, therefore, used to justify the killing of the woman.⁹⁰ Moreover, the men who commit such murders typically go unpunished or receive reduced sentences.⁹¹ Thus, honour killings are seen as crimes against women.⁹² This study will critically analyse the causes of such crimes and the reasons of why they are more prevalent in Islamic communities than other communities. Furthermore, this study will argue that there is no place for such crimes in Islam. Honour killings, without doubt, remain among the most prevalent physical threats to women in many countries in the Mediterranean and Muslim worlds. It is assumed that honour killings are supported by Islam as such acts are most prevalent in Islamic countries and communities. However, Islam clearly prohibits such acts. In fact, there is a complex set of traditional, social and cultural elements that explains the practice of honour killings in Islamic countries and communities. To understand such elements, it is important to identify the causes of honour killings and how Islamic law explicitly bans such acts.

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⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid at 82.

⁸² Quran 5:32, 6:151, 17:33.

⁸³ The Islam Awareness Homepage, *supra* n.16.

⁸⁴ R. Manzoor, "Pakistan: Musharraf's Hypocrisy Won't End Violence against Women", 3 November 2004. Available at: www.socialistparty.org.uk. Retrieved July 24, 2016

⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Violence against Women and 'Honor Crimes*, 2001.

⁸⁶ Nesheiwat, *supra* n.8 at 251, 253-54.

⁸⁷ Hassan, *supra* n.7.

⁸⁸ T. Khan, "Honor Killings: A definitional and contextual overview", March 9, 2000, Paper presented at the International Conference in Istanbul Turkey

⁸⁹ Arnold, *supra* n.1 at 1369.

⁹⁰ See S. Haeri, *The Politics of Dishonour: Rape and Power in Pakistan* in Faith and Freedom, 1995, Mahnaz Afkhami, pp: 163-66.

⁹¹ Amnesty International, *Pakistan: Honour Killings of Girls and Women*, Sept. 1999, AI Index ASA 33/018/1999, p: 2. Available at: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/engindex>. Retrieved July 22, 2016.

⁹² Hassan, *supra* n.7.