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When honour kills: culture justification, Legal failures, and the fragility of women's rights in Pakistan

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Abstract

By analyzing how patriarchal norms, tribal traditions, and state inaction combine to undermine women's rights, especially in the areas of education, mobility, and civic engagement, this paper provides a feminist-legal critique of honor-based violence. This paper examines several cases from Balochistan, Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the 2025 execution of Bano Bibi and Ahsan Ullah, the 2016 murder of Qandeel Baloch, and the 2023 killings of Saima and Arif, using intersectional theory, legal pluralism, and global gender gap metrics. Gender inequality is reinforced by these examples, which show how legal loopholes and cultural myths, such as Qisas and Diyat legislation, allow offenders to evade punishment. The need for reform is highlighted by Pakistan's position as 148th out of 148 nations on the Global Gender Gap Index 2025. The study goes on to examine how honor murders reinforce the gender gap in education by preventing girls from speaking up, limiting their access to education, and fostering fear. In order to eradicate honor-based violence and restore women's dignity, agency, and constitutional rights, it suggests a gender-transformative framework for legal responsibility and educational reform through comparative analysis and policy suggestions.

Keywords: Honour Killings, Gender Justice, Legal Failure, Women's Rights, Education.



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Introduction

In Pakistan, the term "honour killing" describes deliberate murder of a family member, usually a woman, who is thought to have brought shame or dishonour to the family by doing things like selecting her own spouse, filing for divorce, declining an arranged marriage, or even being sexually assaulted. In some cultural and tribal contexts, it is not only accepted but frequently justified as a type of gendered violence. The concept of "honor" turns into a moral currency that is enforced by controlling women's bodies and decisions. In the words of Pakistani human rights attorney Hina Jilani, "Honor is a concept that has been used to justify control over women's lives and to excuse violence against them." Although it is most common in places where tribal customs and patriarchal standards supersede formal law, this type of violence transcends geographical boundaries and socioeconomic boundaries. In these settings, jirgas and panchayats frequently have more power than the state and can issue extrajudicial rulings that allow murder as a way to restore community or familial honor. The cultural reasoning behind these behaviors stems from a strong patriarchal worldview in which women's independence is viewed as a danger to social order rather than a right. "The control of women's sexuality is central to the maintenance of patriarchal honor systems," according to anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod.

Honor Killing continue in Pakistan because the legislation is still structurally flawed, even after legislative changes and international scrutiny. By allowing family members to pardon the offender, who is frequently a relative of the victim, provisions like Qisas and Diyat dissolve the line between victim and judge. This legal loophole reinforces the very cultural norms that the legislation is meant to fight by turning murder into a negotiable violation. The end effect is a system where justice is deliberately thwarted in addition to being denied. Honor-based violence has many more repercussions than just killing. They have an impact on women and girls who live in silence because they are afraid, stigmatized, and always afraid of being punished. In areas where honor killing are common, females are frequently kept out of school, disenfranchised, and taught to associate safety with obedience. The educational consequences and the severe psychological toll directly contribute to Pakistan's ongoing gender disparity. In 2025, the nation came in last on the Global Gender Gap Index, which was a result of both institutional failure and a culture that still devalues the lives and freedom of women. A complex interaction between gendered power, legal uncertainty, and cultural tradition must be addressed in order to comprehend honor killing in Pakistan. It is not enough to denounce the violence; one also has to examine the legal and informal mechanisms that allow it. This article looks at the legal frameworks that do not stop honor-based violence, the cultural narratives that justify it, and the wider ramifications for women's rights, especially in the areas of civic engagement and education.

Literature Reviews

Khayam examines the ways that honor killings especially in Pakistan and other South Asian societies are culturally justified as acts of moral repair. Her research contends that honor-based violence is mostly motivated by cultural standards rather than religious dogma. She highlights how tribal codes and customary law can supersede official legal institutions, establishing a parallel judicial system that justifies violence against women. The essay criticizes the abuse of "sudden and grave provocation" as a defense in court and urges the destruction of cultural myths that link female independence to dishonor (Khayam, 2022).

Khan offers a feminist legal study of Pakistani honor killing, following the development of laws and their role in enabling gendered violence. Her study demonstrates how the rules of Qisas and Diyat permit family members to pardon offenders, so voiding the legal system. Khan contends that

the judicial system in Pakistan is structurally patriarchal and not impartial, supporting male dominance over female sexuality. She demands that obligatory prosecution be implemented, forgiveness provisions be eliminated, that judicial reform be gender-sensitive (Khan, 2024).

Furqan explores honor killings by contrasting Pakistan with Bangladesh, India, and Afghanistan in light of international human rights legislation (Ahmed et al., 2021). She contends that honor killings are against fundamental rights outlined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Furqan highlights that cultural opposition and a lack of institutional accountability are the key reasons why enforcement is still poor even after legal changes. The necessity of survivor-centered justice and rights-based change is highlighted by her work (Furqan, 2025).

Material and Methods

This study uses a qualitative, multidisciplinary approach based on structural violence analysis and feminist legal theory. Along with thematic analysis of media narratives and victim stories, it draws from scholarly literature, human rights reports, and document reviews of legal legislation. To identify trends of legal impunity and cultural justification, five sample honor killing instances from Pakistan were analyzed. The author's reflective involvement, which is influenced by scholarly study and public activism, informs the reformist perspective of the investigation, while the Global Gender Gap Index 2025 offers comparative background.

Results and Discussion

Cultural Justification of Honour Violence

Pakistani honor killings are not only violent crimes; they are culturally embedded penalties derived from tribal traditions, patriarchal standards, and moral economies that link female independence to social disgrace. To control women's conduct, especially when it comes to marriage, sexuality, and movement, the idea of "honour" (izzat) is used as a weapon. Many tribal and rural groups view a woman's apparent transgression, such as selecting her own partner or declining an arranged marriage, as a breach of family honor that calls for deadly retaliation. Honor murders in Pakistan, according to Dr. Syed Hamid Farooq Bukhari, "represent a deeply rooted cultural pathology masquerading as religiously sanctioned justice." (Bukhar, 2024). This mislabeling enables those who commit acts of violence to claim religious validity even if there is no Islamic or Quranic legal justification for them (Farid & Ashraf, 2025). Although scholars and clerics have said time and again that Islam opposes extrajudicial executions and supports women's autonomy in selecting their spouses, cultural narratives nonetheless take precedence over religious teaching.

Honor violence is largely sustained by tribal customs. Outside of the official judicial system, tribal councils (jirgas) frequently impose death sentences in Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Tribal authorities use spectacle and dread to impose honor codes, as seen by the July 2025 execution of Noor Bano Satakzai and Ehsan Sumalani in Degari, Balochistan, which was captured on camera and disseminated as a public warning (Notezai, 2025). Complicity in the media and generational silence serve to further solidify cultural justification. Honor killings sometimes go unreported or are presented as "domestic disputes," downplaying their gendered and political aspects. According to Simra Sohail, "The video that surfaced exposed an entire architecture of impunity; it did not simply show an act of violence." (Sohail, 2025).

Legal Failures and Structural Impunity

Pakistan's judicial system is still fundamentally unable to successfully prevent or prosecute honor murders, especially in the face of constitutional safeguards and punitive measures. The current

version of the law not only fails to protect women, but also frequently permits their erasure through legal loopholes, discretionary powers, and cultural deference.

One of the most significant legal flaws is found in the Qisas and Diyat laws, which permit the victim's relatives to pardon the murderer. This clause completely breaks down when the victim and the murderer live in the same home (Farid & Sarwar, 2024). Forgiveness turns become a cover for impunity in these situations. Despite changes made in 2016 to narrow this loophole by requiring life in prison for honor killings, execution is still uneven. Reduced penalties or acquittals are frequently the result of judicial discretion, a lack of witness protection, and social pressure. The court verdict in the 2016 case of Qandeel Baloch, where her brother was first found guilty but then pardoned by the family, caused national indignation and revealed the weakness of reform (Webology, 2022). Systemic impunity is still evident in recent incidents. After being married to a guy of her choosing, 18-year-old Sidra Bibi of Rawalpindi was allegedly assassinated in July 2025 on the instructions of a local council. Legal professionals caution that community pressure and procedural delays might jeopardize justice, despite the fact that nine people including her father and ex-husband were detained (Jazeera, 2025).

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), 405 honor murders occurred in 2024, with women making up the majority of the victims. However, many cases are resolved out of court or never get to trial, and convictions are still uncommon. "Despite existing legal provisions within the Pakistan Penal Code, the implementation faces substantial challenges, including legal loopholes, societal pressures, and inadequate protection measures," (Shahid Ali, 2024). The judiciary itself is susceptible to cultural prejudice. Honor murders are frequently seen by judges as acts of communal peace, moral restoration, or family reconciliation rather than as constitutional rights breaches. A larger judicial culture where gender justice is subservient to patriarchal values is reflected in this interpretative leniency. In addition to legal shortcomings, Pakistan's judiciary frequently exhibits cultural prejudices that undermine the fairness of honor killing cases. Judges may view such offenses not as constitutional rights breaches but rather as a means of promoting moral rehabilitation, family harmony, or reconciliation. According to this interpretation, the idea of equal protection under the law is compromised and patriarchal standards are strengthened. The way that the courts handle honor killings frequently reflects the views of society, where the crime is viewed as a regretful necessity rather than a crime that may be punished (Khan, 2024).

The legal response is further undermined by enforcement loopholes. Due to personal bias, fear of tribal reprisals, or community pressure, police personnel may be reluctant to file complaints, particularly in rural and tribal communities. There is no strong structure for relocation or protection, and survivors and witnesses frequently experience intimidation. FIRs are frequently postponed, evidence is falsified, and investigations are discreetly abandoned. The Pakistani Human Rights Commission has frequently chastised law enforcement for not considering honor murders to be grave crimes (HRCP, 2024). Innocence is also a result of procedural delays. Trials can stretch on for years, giving offenders the opportunity to influence the outcome with cash settlements or societal pressure. Saima and Arif, who married against their family's desires in Sindh in 2023, were slain. Despite the arrests, the jirga that gave the order for the murder was not prosecuted, and the matter is still pending (Webology, 2022). International groups have demanded immediate change. The World Economic Forum, UN Women, and Amnesty International have cited Pakistan's poor performance in defending women against honor-based violence and connected it to the nation's lowest rating in the Global Gender Gap Index. Legal professionals contend that honor killings would remain seen as negotiable violations rather than crimes against

humanity in the absence of institutional reforms, such as the elimination of pardon provisions, obligatory prosecution, and survivor protection (HRCP, 2024).

Gender Gap in Justice and Education

In Pakistan, honor Killing have an effect that goes much beyond the actual violent act. The environment of fear, secrecy, and exclusion that these crimes perpetuate disproportionately impacts women and girls, especially when it comes to civic engagement, legal access, and education. In Pakistan, the gender gap is not only a statistical issue; it is also institutional, cultural, and intricately linked to violence based on honor. The Global Gender Gap Index 2025 places Pakistan at number 148 out of 148 nations, with just 56.7% parity in important areas including political empowerment, health, educational achievement, and economic engagement (Tribune, 2025). This rating takes into account both the societal normalization of gendered violence and institutional failure. In areas where honor murders are common, females are frequently kept out of school, excluded from public life, and taught that keeping quiet is safer (Aslam, 2024). This cultural reasoning deters girls from going to school, particularly in rural and tribal places where mobility is viewed as dangerous. Aspirations are silenced and reliance is reinforced by the fear of retaliation, whether it be through violence or social exclusion. Access to the law is similarly restricted. When seeking justice, women who endure honor-based threats or violence may encounter stigma, skepticism, and procedural obstacles. Many people are deterred from complaining, and those that do are usually coerced into quiet or reconciliation. The justice gap is further widened by the lack of survivor protection, community support, and gender-sensitive legal assistance. Educational establishments are also involved. The infrastructure, instruction, and legislative frameworks necessary to combat gender-based violence are frequently lacking in schools. Instructors could perpetuate patriarchal standards, and curriculum frequently leave out references to political engagement, gender rights, and legal literacy. Because of this lack of transformational education, honor murders are still supported by the same ideology. Therefore, in Pakistan, the gender disparity both contributes to and results from honor-based violence. Women's rights are negotiable and their protection is conditional in our culture. In addition to legislative reform, a cultural and educational revolution that upholds the autonomy, dignity, and constitutional rights of all women and girls is necessary to close this gap.

Case Studies of Honour Killings in Pakistan

In Pakistan, honor murders have place in all regions and groups, but recorded examples provide important insight into the intersection of legal failure and cultural justification. These are only a few examples; there are hundreds of incidences documented each year, and many more go unreported because of shame, fear, and institutionalized silence. Every instance highlights the insufficiency of women's rights under the official and informal legal systems, patterns of impunity, and tribal enforcement.

- **Bano Bibi and Ahsan Ullah (Balochistan, 2025)**

Ehsanullah Samalani and Bano Satakzai were put to death on June 4, 2025, at Sanjidi, Degari, close to Quetta, Balochistan, for reportedly getting married without the tribe's approval. In a ritualized act of honor violence, the couple was allegedly lured to the hamlet under false pretenses and then shot in public. After a horrific video of the murder went viral on social media, the Balochistan High Court issued an unusual suo motu notice, calling for high officials to explain why law enforcement had failed (TheNation, 2025). Although no convictions have been announced as of October 2025, police have detained 20 individuals, including tribal leader Sherbaz Satakzai, and filed a case at Hanna Urak police station (ARYNews, 2025). The case demonstrated

the performative character of honor killings in tribal areas as well as the long-lasting strength of parallel legal systems. Despite what some first said, the viral video did not show Bano begging for forgiveness; rather, her mother subsequently admitted to the murder in a another video, explaining that she had acted out of honor and citing tribal conventions (TheNation, 2025). Legal experts contend that these homicides are ritualized executions intended to uphold patriarchal rule rather than being spontaneous. Honour killings will be considered negotiable offences rather than crimes against humanity in the absence of structural changes, such as the removal of pardon provisions and the imposition of obligatory prosecution (ARYNews, 2025).

- **Qandeel Baloch (Punjab, 2016)**

Social media activist Qandeel Baloch was killed by her brother for reportedly embarrassing the family. Despite confessing to the crime, he was eventually granted a pardon under the laws of Qisas and Diyat. Due to the case's widespread publicity, laws requiring life in prison for honor murders were changed in 2016. Nonetheless, Qandeel's killer was freed in 2022, and the legislation still permits discretionary forgiveness (Webology, 2022).

- **Saima and Arif (Sindh, 2023)**

Due to their legal marriage rather than a familial arrangement, the couple was slain. Their death was authorized by a local jirga, and although some people were arrested, the jirga itself was not held legally responsible. The case brought to light the vulnerability of couples who disobey patriarchal standards as well as the impunity enjoyed by informal legal systems. Result: Arrests were made; the matter was not decided; the jirga was not punished (Webology, 2022).

- **Sidra Bibi (Rawalpindi, 2025)**

The father and ex-husband of an 18-year-old girl are accused of killing her after she married a guy of her choosing. Nine people were taken into custody, including influential members of the community and family members. Procedural delays and societal pressure might jeopardize justice, legal experts said. As of October 2025, the matter is still being looked into. The outcome is unknown; the trial is still ongoing and the arrests have been made (AlJazeera, 2025).

- **Karachi Sisters (2022)**

After returning from Spain, two sisters were killed because they refused to be forced into marriages. Despite receiving international notice, the case was soon overshadowed by local news. No official inquiry was started, and it was said that family elders shielded the offenders. The result: no arrests, no media coverage, and the matter being buried (Times, 2022).

Fragility of Women's Rights in Pakistan: A Structural Crisis

Pakistani women's rights are not only weak; they are deeply ingrained in the same structures that are supposed to safeguard them. Women's rights continue to be under risk from institutional neglect, legal loopholes, and cultural override, despite promises to gender equality made internationally and constitutional obligations under Article 25. In situations of honor killing, where patriarchal ideas of family honor take precedence over the rights to life, autonomy, and dignity, this fragility is most apparent. A parallel justice system is created when formal law and unofficial tribal institutions like jirgas coexist, frequently denying women access to the judicial system (Sarwar & Farid, 2025). The rights of women are not safeguarded in these situations; rather, they

are negotiated, subject to conditions, and often compromised in order to maintain male leadership and the reputation of the community (Muhammad Aftab Fakhir Ahmad, 2023).

Honor murders reveal Pakistan's moral and legal commitment to women's rights to its limits. It is evident that a woman's rights are brittle, subject to change, and subordinate to cultural norms when her choice to marry is greeted with deadly violence and the offender is granted a pardon under Qisas and Diyat legislation. Social complicity, media euphemism, and official silence all contribute to this fragility. Women's rights in Pakistan are frequently viewed as incidental to morality and national identity, rendering them disposable during perceived instances of dishonor. Honor killings are therefore more than simply violent crimes; they are political declarations about power dynamics, the importance of individual rights, and the extent to which the state would go to safeguard its women. In this way, the vulnerability of women's rights serves as both the breeding ground for honor violence and the victims it leaves behind (Zahra, 2021).

In Pakistan, women's fundamental rights, including the rights to life, liberty, and personal choice, are routinely exploited and suppressed under the rhetoric of "honour." Women are denied control over their own bodies, relationships, and destinies on the pretense of preserving tribe or familial dignity. Patriarchal traditions that view female liberty as a danger to societal order sometimes supersede the freedom to select a partner, which is protected by Islamic and constitutional law. Honor turns become a weapon of coercion, where any departure from expected gender norms is punished under the pretext of moral guidance. In addition to physical abuse, this exploitation also involves forced marriages, limitations on movement and education, and the silence of survivors. To defend the deterioration of women's rights, patriarchal actors alter cultural narratives by presenting murder as justice and control as protection. By doing this, they change honor from a personal virtue to a weapon used by all, one that validates inequity and, in reality, makes constitutional safeguards meaningless (Bukhar, 2024).

Honour Killings in Pakistan: When Silence Screams, Who Listens?

Silence in Pakistan is not the absence of sound, but rather the manifestation of dread. The final echoes of a girl's breath, the silent nod of a jirga, and the silence of a courtroom that never opens are what ultimately determine her fate. Honor killings are statements as well as crimes. declarations that a woman's life is negotiable, that her decisions carry consequences, and that tradition may be used as an excuse for her murder.

But who listens when silence screams?

Hundreds of women are killed every year in the sake of honor. Seldom do their names appear in the news. Euphemisms like "tribal custom," "family matter," and "domestic dispute" obscure their tales. Justice is promised by the state, yet the law is lenient. Although equality is guaranteed by the Constitution, pardon is permitted under the Qisas and Diyat laws, frequently by the same family that gave the order to murder. The outcome? a judicial system that provides murderers with ways out and a cultural framework that refers to it as dignity. In Balochistan, a woman pleads for forgiveness while holding the Quran. Anyhow, she gets shot. A brother murders his sister in Punjab because she is too noticeable. He is forgiven. In Sindh, marriages are consummated in court. They are put to death by a jirga order. An eighteen-year-old girl in Rawalpindi selects her spouse. Her father selects her funeral

These are not isolated tragedies. They are patterns. They are proof that honour is not a virtue it is a weapon. A weapon used to silence, to control, to erase.

Still, the stillness endures. Girls are not taught about their rights in schools. When they are asserted, courts do not defend them. After reporting on the crime, the media goes on. If at all, communities grieve in whispers. It is a systematic silence. It is a generational issue. It's a calculated move. However, stillness may sometimes be a battlefield. Every time a woman writes, talks, educates, gets married voluntarily, or enters a trial, she breaks the quiet. She turns into the scream. A listener is required for every scream. This essay is not only a scholarly investigation. It is an act of defiance. It's an appeal to tear down the honor system. to question the forgiving laws. To challenge the killing customs. to make the remaining voices heard louder. Because when silence screams, we must listen. And when we listen, we must act.

Gender Gap in Pakistan: Why Are We Still Last?

Pakistan's ranking of 148th out of 148 nations (WEF, 2025), near the bottom of the Global Gender Gap Index 2025, is more than simply a statistic. It's a mirror. Decades of policy failure, cultural opposition, and institutional negligence are reflected in this mirror. Now when economic participation, education, health, and political empowerment are only 56.7% equal, the question is not what went wrong, but rather why we still allow it to happen. This rating is expected. It's a result. a result of honor murders, which prevent women from entering classrooms. (One of the main problems with the gender gap) a result of tribal laws superseding constitutional rights. A result of institutions that penalize survivors and laws that pardon killers. Gender inequality is systemic in Pakistan rather than accidental. Girls are frequently pulled out of school in rural and tribal communities because of social shame, forced marriage, or fear of violence. Honor-based threats are common, not uncommon. And the outcome? Girls of that generation were taught that ambition equals disobedience and quiet is protection.

Women encounter several obstacles in the workplace, ranging from sexual harassment and pay disparities to limited childcare options and limited mobility. Even individuals who are successful are frequently denied financial autonomy, leadership, and policy-making opportunities. In addition to being low, economic involvement is unstable. Politics uses symbolic representation. Power is rarely held by women, even if they may possess seats. Budgetary resources for women's welfare are still quite little, and legislative objectives seldom ever take gendered realities into account. The cycle of exclusion is maintained when women are not present in decision-making settings. In terms of health, which is the most fundamental indicator of dignity, maternal mortality is still high, women's reproductive rights are not adequately safeguarded, and mental health facilities are essentially non-existent in areas where honor is a concern.

So why are we still last?

because inequality has become the norm. due to the politicization of change. Due to the fact that we have let quiet triumph over justice and culture over policy. due to the fact that gender parity has not yet been prioritized nationally.

But we can. And we must.

Because every victim who is denied justice, every woman who is silenced by fear, and every girl who quits school are more than simply statistics. She's a citizen. She has a voice. She is the future that we are not doing enough to safeguard.

“In a country where silence is safer than truth, every woman who speaks becomes a catalyst for justice.” *Amna*

Policy Recommendations and Reform Framework

In order to address honor murders in Pakistan, structural change in the areas of law, education, and culture is needed, not just denunciation. The guidelines that follow provide a framework for gender transformation with the goals of eliminating impunity, re-establishing justice, and reducing the gender gap.

1. Legal Reform: From Loopholes to Accountability

- Remove forgiveness provisions from instances involving honor killings. To stop family members from forgiving offenders, particularly when the victim and the accused are related, the Qisas and Diyat clauses need to be changed.
- Regardless of family healing, mandate prosecution in all cases involving honor killings. These crimes must be handled by the state as public transgressions rather than personal conflicts.
- Create gender-sensitive courts with prosecutors and judges who have received training and are aware of the cultural factors that contribute to honor-based violence.
- Establish survivor protection units to provide relocation assistance, legal assistance, and psychiatric treatment to women who are at risk.

2. Educational Reform: Teaching Rights, Not Silence

- Include civic education and gender rights in school curricula, particularly in rural and tribal areas. Students need to understand that honor does not excuse violence.
- Educate educators and administrators on how to spot and handle gender-based risks, such as early warning indications of coercion or school dropout.
- Start nationwide initiatives to advance girls' education as a social necessity and a constitutional right.

3. Media and Cultural Reform: Changing the Narrative

- Adhere to ethical reporting guidelines that portray honor killings as human rights abuses rather than family conflicts.
- Encourage the use of narrative platforms that elevate alternative masculinities, question patriarchal conventions, and elevate survivor voices.
- Dismantle misunderstandings of honor and faith by including religious experts and tribal elders in public discourse.

4. Institutional Reform: Building Gender Equity

- Create a National Commission on Honour-Based Violence, whose duties include keeping an eye on cases, recommending policies, and organizing interagency responses.
- Set aside specific funds for gender justice initiatives, such as education, survivor assistance, and legislative change.
- To include gender views into governance, make sure women are represented in legislative, judicial, and policy-making bodies.

5. The Age of Awareness: Integrating Honour, Rights, and Respect into Middle School Curricula

Reform must start at the educational level, especially through early gender sensitization, in order to destroy the cultural rationale that justifies honor murders. The age of 13 is a crucial time for

forming moral thinking, empathy, and social standards, according to developmental psychology research (UNESCO, 2023). Therefore, it is essential to address males during this formative time by introducing organized civic and gender rights education in middle schools. Modules on consent, respect, legal rights, and the perils of honor-based violence should be included in the curriculum. These topics should be presented from both a religious and constitutional perspective. We can raise a generation that opposes violence and supports equity by teaching males that honor is found in protection rather than control and that women's autonomy is a right rather than a danger. This early intervention is preventive as well as educative. When awareness spreads, justice becomes a shared value and honor loses its ability to be used as a weapon.

Conclusion: From Silence to Reform

Honor murders in Pakistan are not isolated incidents; rather, they are institutionalized manifestations of gendered power that are supported by institutional silence, legal loopholes, and cultural narratives. The cultural rationalization of honor violence, the shortcomings of the legal system, the gender disparity in justice and education, and the lived experiences of victims whose names are frequently interred beside their bodies have all been covered in this article. Not only does Pakistan's low rating in the Global Gender Gap Index represent bad data, but it also reflects a society in which women's rights are still negotiated and their safety remains contingent. Despite international obligations and constitutional safeguards, honor murders continue to occur, which indicates a crisis of morals as well as the law. But change is achievable. It starts with breaking down the system of impunity, which includes removing forgiveness provisions, making honor crimes public offenses, and integrating gender justice into all institutions. The media must become a forum for truth rather than euphemism, education must become a place of rights rather than quiet, and culture must become a discourse of dignity rather than dominance.

Above all, transformation requires that the voices that have been suppressed be heard - really heard. Every woman who talks, lives, educates, or rebels is a force for change rather than merely someone shielded from harm. Her scream is a demand rather than an interruption. Keeping Pakistan last is not an option. It must take the lead not in a quiet way, but in transformation. It is about honoring life, not honor murders.

“A society that forgives murder in the name of honour has already betrayed its daughters.”
Annarisis.

Conflict of Interest

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