

Female Victims of Murder in Sindh: Cultural Criminological Perspective

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Abstract

Females have increasingly been victims of murder due to cultural and patriarchic nature of Pakistan society. This qualitative study concludes that females belonging to poor sections of society, married and young one become victims of violence like murder in Sindh. Criminal victimization of females is committed by blood relatives and even by law enforcement agencies like police and court officials. Lack of education, unawareness of the rights and status of females further help victimization go uncontrolled.

Key words: *Pakistani society, Culture, Females, Criminal Victimization.*

Introduction

Pakistan counts a female as third one victim of murder and females are almost the victims of same crime as the males. Female victimization includes physical, psychological and social. According to the WHO statistics, one out of three females becomes the victim of crime and violence in her life, 10 to 69% female are physically assaulted in some part of world (Krug, 2002) and more than three, females are murdered by their intimate partner in the United States (Pennison, 2003). One out of 348 citizens in Pakistan becomes victim of crime every year in Pakistan, while 40% of the females were found victims of crimes in early 1990s in Pakistan (HRCP, 2000). A survey conducted on 1000 females in Punjab reveals that 35% of admitted females in hospitals were beaten by their husbands, 65% of the reported cases all over Punjab died because of the infliction of injuries on them and 885 females were murdered in 1998 (HRCP, 2000). A Karachi based survey reported that females in large proportion are put to physical victimization that also results in psychological consequences (Fikree, 1999). Honor killing a form of murder, is committed all over the world, Pakistan, and especially Sindh is the victimizer of the females in this concern. More than 4000 people including females have been murdered on the pretext of honor killing during the years of 1998 to 2004. Out of the 86 cases of murder of honor killing, 56 were females murdered in Larkana, Sindh in 1997 (Reference).

Victimization refers to the antisocial experiences and other alternative labels imposed justifying the victimization including accidental conditions, deliberate and neglect of the rights and status of persons of all ages and sex. Women as wives, mothers, single parents, lovers, co-workers, consumers and citizens suffer impact of victimization in the society. Venues for female victimization can be public, private, street, home, institution, work place battlefield and spaces where female is put to any form of criminal abuse and socio-economical duress (Davies et al, 2007).

Victimization is divided into two types: primary and secondary victimization. Primary victimization includes the experiences by females underwent through the source of male perpetrators and secondary victimization includes the empathy and negligence committed by criminal justice to the females (Wolhuter et al, 2009).

Female victimization has long cultural and religious root and is considered as private matter of the family. Various factors trigger the problem of female victimization especially of murder in Sindh. Historically Sindh is deemed as protector of the values and esteem of the females but in practice, females are married to old persons and exchanged in order to solve the family and economic problems within and outside the family. Male is a dominant and controlling source of the family and social issues. Female is even tortured and killed in the pretext to save the status of male and man-made values in the society (Bettencourt, 2000, Zuhur, 2005). Feudal system further aggravates the victimization conditions of females in Sindh. As Sindh is predominantly rural based populated area, females are denied the rights of freedom, education and social status. They are still treated as slaves in rural areas and some extent in the urban areas.

Victimization resulting from violence is closely related to cultural values and situational provocation in Pakistan (Kanwar, 1989, Waheed, 2010). Understanding of criminal behaviour and its associated result victimization can be explored in relative cultural and social values of the society. Culture exhibits social and psychological characteristics, and the reactions, of the individuals and groups (Carol & Ember, 1993, Wood, 2009), and has been of much interest to criminologists (Ferrell, 2009, Anderson & Howard, 1998, Visano, 1998).

Table1. Cases of female victimization in Sindh during 2009 to October 2010

Category of Crime against females	Year 2009	Year Oct., 2010	Difference
Murder	288	310	+22
Honour killing	284	294	+10
Abduction/kidnapping	160	206	+46
Domestic violence	134	116	-20
Suicide	176	158	-18
Rape/gang rape	122	190	+68
Sexual assault	122	134	+12
Acid throwing	42	54	+12
Miscellaneous	407	477	+70
Total	1735	1988	+253

Source: Violence against Women Annual Report, 2009

The above table indicates that female victims of murder have increased and there is noticeable difference of increment in the cases as +22 from the year 2009 to October

2010. Abduction, rape, sexual assault and honour killing cases have increased to the considerable level, while there is decrement in suicide and domestic violence. This data portrays little different as compare to the data of whole Pakistan, where in other provinces domestic violence, gang rape and sexual assault is increasing while murder cases are decreasing.

Table2. FIR Status of Female Victims/Survivors in Sindh, 2009

FIR Status	Total
Registered	859
Not- Registered	665
No Information	235
Total	1762

Source: Violence against Women Annual Report, 2009

The above table shows that RIRs are registered but the maximum ratio of cases of the female victimization are not given status of registration, the police should take efforts and victims' relatives too to register the FIRs against the criminals.

Table3. Marital Status of Female Victims/Survivors in Sindh, 2009

Marital Status	No. of Females
Married	998
Unmarried	634
No information	428
Total	2060

Source: Violence against Women Annual Report, 2009

Like over all Pakistan, Sindh also indicates the data that married females are victimized in maximum number.

Table4. Age Group of Female Victims/Survivors in Sindh, 2009

Age-group	No. of Females victim /survivors
00-18 years	612
19-36 years	547
37 & above years	419
No information	482
Total	9743

Source: Violence against Women Annual Report, 2009

The above table indicates that the females less than 18 years are victimized in Sindh in maximum number while age group of 19 to 39 is also victimized to a great extent.

2. Purpose of the study

As the cases of female victimization especially of murder are increasing in Sindh and females face multiple conditions of victimization in their society, so it is imperative need of today to launch studies to explore various factors related to this matter. Murder of young females is of serious nature and requires deep study. Main objective of this study was to explore and gain in-depth understanding of the problem of female victimization related to murder in cultural context. This qualitative study selects purposively the professionals of criminal justice system who have dealt with such kind of cases and possess significant experience, which can be beneficial to gain in-depth analysis of the problem.

3. Methods

This study aims to investigate the problem of female victimization especially female victims of murder in Sindh. Open ended questionnaire was filled in by 24 professionals including police and advocates. These professionals belong to different districts of Sindh, Karachi, Larkano and Shahdadkot.

4. Major findings: Views of the professionals

Female victimization leaves greater impact directly on children and indirectly on the society. Female victimization results in orphanage of the children who in most of the cases become neglected and psychological problems like trauma. Females are victimized on many contexts; their basic rights are ignored and neglected. Females in Pakistan face discrimination and victimization (Niaz et al, 2003) on their social, economic and cultural basis. They may be exposed to various types of violence like murder by family members and state agents. Professionals agree that married more than unmarried females of lower and lower middle class are increasingly victimized and murdered in Sindh. There was consensus on the arguments that disputes related to property and family which are valued and triggered on petty issues in culture of Sindh, are the main causes of female victimization, females are exchanged for the loss of the property or given in marriage within same castes of sometimes outside, to solve the problems. Young females are given even to older male members. It is also argued that illiteracy within females cause their victimization. Other factors like low-esteem, no law, Sindhi traditional culture, male dominance, poverty, outdated customs, feudal system, economical weak position of the females cause them target of the victimization of murder in Sindh. There was consensus on the views that victimizers and murderers of the females are blood relatives like brother, father and sons and there is majority of life partners (husbands).

Females are increasingly killed because of the family disputes (HRCP, 2000). They are denied of their rights of choice of marriage and forcibly given to unwanted males in marriages (Niaz, 2003). Cultures where masculinity and male dominance is found associated with values and norms, females are increasingly victimized and murdered by direct and indirect agents like husbands in family context, community and media (Cambell, 1985, Dobash et al, 1992). Anthropological and cross cultural studies (e. g., Levinson, 1989 and Counts, Brown and Cambell, 1992) reveal that social and cultural beliefs in many nations help female victimization face multiple kind of violence including beating, physical torture and murder. Professionals argued that fire arms, sharp cutting instruments like dagger, axe and pistols, guns, acids are found used injuring or killing the females. Availability of weapons in homes of Sindh province, further help killing of the females in most of the cases. Killing of females is also executed by other means like strangulating and suffocating. To talk about the role of the criminal justice system, most almost all the professionals were disappointed and argued that justice system has completely failed in doing justice to victims especially females in Sindh. Cases are not tried in court with due justice and even FIRs are not registered against the murderers. Over all in society of Sindh, females are ignored and cases of murder are not disclosed to police, so there are least chances of attention of justice to the female victimization of murder. Though NGOs have played their little role to highlight the issue in press and public, but in true way, justice is not done to females in Sindh. There need to be massive change in social structure and economic structure of Sindh. Government and law enforcement agencies must exert their role of controlling crime and education standard must be enhanced to maximum level, positive social norms, values and customs must be exercised without discrimination and biases. Females should be valued and respected by the male family members and society, and criminal justice system should play their assigned role to provide justice to the every individual of the society without any discrimination and delay. Females are victimized on many contexts; their basic rights are ignored and neglected. Females in Pakistan face discrimination and victimization (Niaz et al, 2003) on their social, economic and cultural basis. They may be exposed to various types of violence like murder by family members and state agents. Though police is protector and safe guards of the society, but in Pakistan, it is additional structural agent for promoting and instilling violence to females. It is argued that police possess same patriarchal psyche and contribute to violence against females helping feudal and dominant groups in Pakistan and Sindh, and females are killed in many cases (Iqbal, 2006 Ali, 2001, Hussain, 2006) before the presence of police, females are forcibly silenced to bear the violence.

Conclusion

Female victimization cause significant damage to society. Married females when are murdered leave their children easy prey to social ills and further victimization ensue. Females are not respected and their rights are not considered as of males in Sindh society. Law enforcement also contributes to the female victimization of murder as FIRs are not registered and cases are not tried in the court, justice is not done to females. Education is not provided to the females of Sindh because the social and feudal system. It is time that relatives of the female victims of murder and victim survivors should know their rights and status in society, and stand against all criminal discriminations. NGOs and governmental organs should pay extra attention to intervene into the matter, and criminal justice system should proceed with its due role as social and victim justice may be done to the victims of murder in Sindh. Cultures which exhibit masculine, gender discrimination and domination, females are increasingly victimized and killed without consideration of their rights and respect.

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