

HONOUR-RELATED VIOLENCE (HRV) IN SCOTLAND: A CROSS- AND MULTI-AGENCY INTERVENTION INVOLVEMENT SURVEY.

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Abstract

This paper documents the results of a small-scale pilot study, which represents the first step towards further research in this overlooked area of violence against women and represents a first step towards responding to widespread calls for multi-disciplinary research to be conducted in this area. 'Honour' killings and 'honour' related violence is a neglected area in criminology. Such killings and acts of violence are assaults committed against women both by female and male family or community members, for what is considered 'immoral behaviour,' that might include women choosing their own marriage partner, allegations of premarital or extramarital sex, being a victim of sexual abuse or rape and even talking innocently with a man who is not a relative. This paper highlights the lack of provision for females facing this specific type of family violence and problems faced by agencies who attempt to help them. This Primary Research Paper provides insights that will remind/inform readers that because this form of violence is shrouded by notions of 'honour', there are girls and women living in the UK who are outwardly living calmly in what are effectively dangerous and violent family- and community-governed environments.

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Background

'Honour' killings and 'honour' related violence (HRV) have been largely overlooked in terms of both theoretical research and practical intervention. Such killings and acts of violence are assaults committed against women both by female and male family or community members, for what is considered 'immoral behaviour'. These behaviours range from women choosing their own marriage partner, seeking a divorce, disobeying a husband's orders, allegations of premarital or extramarital sex, for being a victim of sexual abuse or rape and even talking *innocently* with a man who is not a relative (Goodwin, 1995; Sen, 2001).

HRV has been an established feature in the lives of many women in numerous South Asian and Middle Eastern nations, but governments have inconsistent opinions on how to deal with these crimes (Amnesty International, 2004). For many young British born females from immigrant families, the circumscribed tradition of maintaining family 'honour' has been used as a coercive and often extremely violent means of acquiring submissive obedience (Lindisfarne, 1998; Tickle, 2006). Many women, who are aware of the violent treatment of women in their homelands obey their family's demands due to threats and violence and are often involuntarily forced to *consent* to arranged marriages (Goodwin, 1995; Kassam, 1997). However, some who have resisted honour related indoctrinations have faced severe consequences. For example, 'honour' killings and HRV have recently been brought to light in the West due to media reports on such crimes committed in the UK, USA, Canada, Germany and Sweden (Bird, 2007; Tickle, 2006). With regards to the UK, Scotland Yard reported that there were 12 recorded 'honour' killings in the UK during the period between January to September 2003 and further stated that such murders were not restricted to Muslim families, but had also occurred in Christian and Sikh families (BBC News, 2003). This highlights the large *territorial* base where these crimes are committed.

In England, as a result of a high profile HRV murder of a young female by her father, London's Metropolitan Police reported that her death was the impetus towards setting up a strategic working group to find ways to ensure such crimes were prevented in the future (The Job, 2003). More recently, the head of the homicide division at the Metropolitan Police, Commander Andy Baker stated that approximately 120 'solved' murder cases were being re-examined as 'honour' killings (BBC News, 2004). As such, a total of at least 117 cases from England and Wales (52 in London and 65 in other parts of England and Wales) have been reviewed or else remain under review (Manchester News, 2004) at the time of writing this paper. The re-examination is part of a wider project to increase understanding of 'honour killings' which culminated in a conference in June 2004 at The Hague, consisting of senior police chiefs from most of the 25 European Union countries. At the conference, Commander Baker revealed that of the 13 London murders reviewed in depth so far, four were certain to be honour killings, and another six probably were related (BBC News, 2004).

A police community officer working with Asian women in Bradford estimated 120 women covertly contacted him for help after being subjected to violence within the family, a quarter of which were assaults by family members other than their husbands in 1999 (Burke, 2000). This has implications for the highly feasible postulation of underreporting and unrecorded honour-related assaults and indeed, murders in the UK.

The Scottish Household Survey for 1999/2002 revealed that there were 36,656 Indians and South Asians (aged between 18 to 80+ years) residing in Scotland. Groups from the Indian Sub-Continent were the most concentrated in Glasgow: 42% of Indians and 50 per cent of South Asians lived in the Glasgow area. At the time of writing this article, no action has been taken by Scottish Police Forces to directly address HRV and it is difficult to establish whether steps have been taken by other relevant agencies including victim support/women's welfare groups, refuge shelters, social support services, housing/relocation associations, legal professionals, courts and prisons. However, the Scottish Executive recently formed a Forced Marriage Network which incorporated guidelines for cases of 'forced marriages' based on instructions by The Foreign and Commonwealth Office for use by the Scottish Police (ACPOS, 2003).

In England, Commander Baker has called for research into these killings and HRV and stated "...people can help us look at the work that we are doing already and suggest what, in their view, we could be doing. If we can stop the assaults, we can stop the continuum and we can prevent murders" (quoted in *The Job*, 2003, p. 2). The directors of the International Campaign against Honour Killing, and the South Asian Development Partnership have called for police to work alongside other teams to prevent these killings and for all agencies to share information (BBC News, 2004). The Centre of Islamic and Middle Eastern Law (CIMEL) and the International Centre for the Legal Protection of Human Rights (INTERIGHTS) have coordinated a project on strategies to address 'crimes of honour' which seeks to facilitate cooperation and increase knowledge among academics, lawyers, police and others in related fields. Kvinnoforum (2005) a Swedish NGO, appealed for academic research to be undertaken as an essential component to implement practical work to prevent such violence or deaths from occurring. Via personal communication, the head of The Metropolitan Police Force's 'Murder in the name of so called honour' strategic homicide prevention working group (Dehothar, 2006) and Crime Directorate (Rehman, 2006) welcomed more research to further develop their Homicide Strategy and Tactical Plan that would enable effective HRV intervention at early stages and help prevent homicides. The research project described in this paper aims to be a first step towards responding to these calls for further multi-disciplinary research.

Aims

This primary research aims to collect data and, where possible, collate existing databases to gain preliminary information on the extent and the nature of agency responses to HRV in Scotland, with emphasis on assessing the extent of multi- and cross-agency collaboration that exists currently. And a study-specific questionnaire used at the start of the project aims to ascertain the following: (1) Do contacted organisations consider HRV to be deserving of recording as a separate crime category? (2) When is it recorded? (3) What steps have these agencies taken to network across agencies and work as part of a multi-disciplinary team? (4) If there are any existing guidelines that relevant agencies use, are they standardised or created by the agency workers for each independent HRV case? (5) Would relevant agencies welcome any standardised information on how to deal with HRV crimes and/or victims, including a database of HRV resources?

Methodology

Sample

A total of 35 women's aid organisations across Scotland were contacted via standardised postal questionnaires and 13 of them returned completed questionnaires providing quantitative data.

Design and Measures

Representatives of the contacted organisations were required to complete a fixed response 20-item questionnaire². The items were designed with the aim of collating HRV frequency, victim-contact, cross-agency collaboration and existing guidelines data. Definitions of HRV, provided by the Metropolitan Police Service, were listed in order to maintain consistency. As such, HRV was defined as including "[A]ctual incidents or verbal threats of violence including: acid attacks, arson, child abuse, domestic violence, dowry, female genital mutilation, female infanticide, forced marriage, forced repatriation, 'honour' killings and/or trafficking" (Homicide Prevention Unit, 2005).

Results

Survey data

Of the 13 agencies who participated in this survey, 61.5 per cent (n=8) had dealt with at least one case of HRV. The number of HRV cases these agencies had dealt within in a 12 month period prior to the questionnaires being completed are shown in Table 1. This shows that 46.2 per cent of agencies who responded had dealt with one or more HRV cases in Scotland in the year prior to completing the questionnaire, two of which had done so on eight or more occasions.

Table 1: Number of HRV Cases in Previous 12-Months

Number of HRV Cases	Frequency [N]	Percentage [%]
1	1	7.7
2	2	15.4
4	1	7.7
8	1	7.7
>9	1	7.7

HRV cases were not recorded in a separate category by respondent organisations. Instead, the categories of 'domestic abuse/violence' (38.5%), 'forced marriage and domestic abuse/violence' (15.4%), and 'forced marriage' (7.7%) were used by these agencies to record HRV incidents.

² This questionnaire can be obtained from the author upon request.
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Overall, 61.5 per cent of the agencies who responded stated that they considered HRV specific enough to warrant a new recording category separate from domestic abuse or violence. However, all but one agency had existing guidelines on how to deal specifically with victims of HRV, although one other organisation was looking into designing specific guidelines. In the absence of HRV-specific guidelines, there was a variety of responses adopted when faced with HRV cases. These included culturally sensitive advice/support, counselling, refuge for women and their children, new identities provided and/or the Inland Revenue was contacted to hide victims' identities. In many cases, the same procedures for dealing with domestic violence were employed for HRV (61.5%). Over half of the participating organisations convened with other relevant organisations for advice and guidelines when faced with HRV cases (53.8%). These included the Home Office, Forced Marriage Unit, social services, police units, councils and three UK-based voluntary organisations who were set up to deal primarily with cases of HRV and forced marriage. All those who sought advice found the support and advice given to be useful. Furthermore, all 13 of the participating organisations stated that they would welcome any further guidance on HRV, more specifically, with regards to definitions, statistics, networking and multi-disciplinary collaboration.

Discussion

This paper has provided information on how relevant aid agencies in Scotland deal with victims of HRV. It is important to highlight the low response rate when reviewing these findings. However, this was not highly unanticipated when considering that agencies might not have dealt with HRV cases, the resource restraints facing many voluntary aid agencies, and/or concerns regarding the culturally and politically sensitive nature underlying many cases of such acts of violence. Nonetheless, it is considered the first paper to report on such findings. Furthermore, it reveals that HRV is a prevalent issue within such a small group of Scottish women's aid organisations and that it consequently needs to be addressed in Scotland in much the same way as England and Wales. This pilot study is just the first step in many areas of research in this overlooked area of violence against women. This survey data, and consequent planned investigations, aims to provide police, lawyers, courts, aid organisations, clinicians, academics and researchers with information on how to better deal with this specific area of family violence.

Consolidating information from this pilot study, research is currently being conducted to explore (via focus groups and semi-structured interviews) the types, frequency and severity of HRV used by male family and community members against their female counterparts. Statistical analysis will provide previously unreported data regarding frequency and severity of HRV rates. Correlates and predictors of HRV will enable the production of a report from a psychosocial perspective in an attempt to explain the underlying dynamics in occurrences of HRV. Additionally, a standardised database of victim, perpetrator, and intervention data is being planned to assist UK and European agencies dealing with HRV cases.

While this paper has highlighted the lack of provision for females facing this specific type of family violence and problems faced by agencies who attempt to help them, it has also provided an insight into another form of 'invisible' family violence. It is hoped this paper will remind or inform readers that as this form of violence is shrouded by the notion of 'honour', there are girls and women living in the UK who are outwardly living calmly in dangerous and violent family- and community-governed environments.

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