

## **Patriarchal Violence**

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Patriarchal violence has been described as a pattern of behavior by men perpetuated against women in order to maintain control over women and their behavior. Ultimately, it is meant to oppress them; resulting in women being relegated to a lower position in society. The need for men to exert control over women via Patriarchal violence has roots in one's cultural, societal, and moral beliefs. Such beliefs pertain to what is considered appropriate and what is considered inappropriate in a cultural context. One of the burgeoning examples of this form of violence against women is the "honor killing", the killing of a female who has been perceived as having brought dishonor to her family. The emphasis on morality and culture is what differentiates honor killing from domestic violence or other forms of violence against women.

It has been estimated that as many as several thousand honor killings are committed each year. However, this number speaks to killings only in Pakistan, and is not being tabulated on a wider scale, which would likely draw a larger number of deaths per year. In terms of one's motivation to engage in violence against women, common reasons include women being labeled as disrespectful of their culture including overstepping sexual boundaries by participating in extramarital affairs, having been a victim of rape, or simply interacting in a nonsexual manner with males who are not related to them.

Additional examples of women being viewed as disrespectful of their cultural and moral values include a female wanting to advance her education/career, her refusal to dress in cultural garb (i.e., covering one's hair), taking action to end an abusive marital relationship, as well as the desire to choose her own romantic partner are all actions that have been and continue to be the

catalyst for the murder of women. Typically, not only are the methods for death brutal such as beating, burning, stabbing, or decapitation, but there is another layer of brutality in *who* are committing these acts of violence against women.

With regard to honor killings, this form of patriarchal violence is one that has a tendency to be committed by one's own family member(s) (i.e., male siblings, male cousins, and the father of the victims). In North America, it has been shown that over half the perpetrators in honor killings, are the biological fathers of the victims. Although, honor killings are one form of Patriarchal violence that focuses on the male as an active instrument of violence against women, a surprising finding has demonstrated that women have been documented as perpetuating this form of violence passively by participating in gossip about the behavior of other women. That gossip ultimately results in violent acts being perpetrated against the identified female. However, research has shown that women also take an active role by committing the murder of other women (i.e., a mother murdering her daughter in order to restore honor to the family after her daughter has initiated divorce proceedings from her husband).

Patriarchal violence has also been used as a way for men to exert control over a females' sexuality. One form of this is through the practice of Female Genital mutilation (FGM). In FGM, a female's outer genitalia are fully or partially excised, leaving small openings for urination and menstruation. This has become a cruel tradition that women from various cultures, as well as women in the U.S. have been subjected to in order to discourage intercourse outside of marriage. The consequences for girls and women from this procedure include infection, infertility, pain during intercourse, and some may even die due to excessive blood loss during the procedure. This decision is made to control the women's sexuality and her choice of when or whom she will be intimate with.

While Patriarchal violence is most commonly thought of in the context of men perpetrating violence against women, research also demonstrates that women are not the only ones who suffer or lose their lives when a man feels there's been an affront or challenge to his masculinity. For example, men who identify as homosexual have been physically assaulted and even killed because of their sexuality, and the fact that these males are viewed as nonconformists with regard to the role and duties that are expected of a man. Homosexual females are not exempt either. In certain countries, only heterosexual couples are given the option to receive artificial insemination when they wish to start a family. In those particular countries, to want to start a family in which the parents are both women, is made nearly impossible. In conclusion, Patriarchal violence remains an ongoing danger to women, as well as other individuals, and interferes with their safety and quality of life as a whole.

#### References

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