



Attitude Towards “Honor Killing” Among A Community Sample in Pakistan: The Role of Personality Traits

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Abstract

Honor killing persists as a deeply rooted sociocultural issue in Pakistan, shaped by culturally rigid, complex traditions, patriarchal gender norms, and moral beliefs. The current study examined the association of personality traits with attitudes toward honor killing among a community sample in Pakistan. A convenience sample of 600 individuals (304 males, 296 females) with a mean age of 29 years (Range= 18-44 years, *S.D*= 13) was recruited from various urban and rural areas in Punjab (Pakistan). The participants completed the Urdu version of the Attitude towards Honor Killing Scale (Affirmation of Honor Killing and Deterrents of Honor Killing Subscales), the Urdu version of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised Short-form (Psychoticism, Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Social Desirability Subscales), along with several demographic questions. The results demonstrated that higher scores on Psychoticism and Neuroticism were significantly associated with greater affirmation of honor killing, while higher Extraversion was linked to lower affirmation. Gender differences were also observed; males scored considerably higher on affirmation toward honor killing than females. Regression analysis indicated that Psychoticism, Neuroticism, and Extraversion explained 49 %, 33 %, and 9% of the variance in affirmation towards honor killing. Moreover, people living in rural areas showed higher affirmation towards honor killing scores than people living in urban areas. Findings of this study suggest that personality dimensions and several demographic factors substantially contribute to either the acceptance or disapproval of honor-based violence within specific cultural contexts. The findings highlight the need to incorporate personality-focused assessment and community-driven interventions to address rigid social norms and promote attitudinal transformation towards honor-based violence in Pakistan.

Keywords: attitude towards honor killing, personality traits, gender

Introduction

In certain Pakistani areas, the honor killing is commonly termed as *karo kari*, is the act of relatives murdering a family member, usually a woman, alleging that she brings dishonor to the family. Such acts are frequently connected with presumed moral deviations such as premarital

relationships, contracting marriage without familial consent, improper dressing, or defying patriarchal conventions (Nasrullah et al., 2009; Zafar & Ali, 2020). In Pakistan, the notion of *izzat* (honor) is profoundly linked with the actions of women, and when this honor is believed to be compromised, families often commit acts of extreme violence to reclaim their lost reputation (Zafar & Ali, 2020). Although legal reforms, including the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2016, which abolished provisions promoting family pardons, the incidents of honor killing still occur and are largely concealed and underreported. Data from the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan revealed an escalation in the number of reported cases, rising from 226 to 405 in 2023 and 2024. Nonetheless, the actual annual figure is believed to be around 1000 (Sarwar, 2024). A considerable body of research has explored demographic and social correlates of honor-based violence, particularly rural background (Mayeda & Vijaykumar, 2016), poverty (Javanmard et al., 2020), inadequate education (Beller et al., 2021), and dependence on tribal judicial systems (Anwar, 2019). Despite this, comparatively fewer studies have addressed psychological correlates, more specifically, personality traits that may influence the acceptance and rejection of honor-based violence (Ceylan, 2016). Recognizing these personal differences is essential, as attitudes toward honor killings are shaped by both culturally embedded factors and personality-related emotional and cognitive mechanisms (McGonigal, 2024). Research in Pakistan emphasizes that honor killing is still consistently attaining social acceptance; for instance, in Islamabad, a survey documented that only 36.6% of the sample perceived divorce as an appropriate option for socially unacceptable actions of a wife, while 57.1% of research participants viewed honor killing as a justified alternative (Shaikh et al., 2006). Similarly, in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, a study among university students revealed that the majority of the male participants considered honor killing could be acceptable sometimes, while the ratio of disapproval was higher in comparison to approval (Shaikh et al., 2010). These investigations have tended to explore sociodemographic and cultural determinants, whereas personality and psychological variables have received minimal research attention. Attitudes are generally conceptualized as relatively enduring psychological dispositions that systematically influence both behavior and judgments of individuals (Ajzen, 1991). Favorable attitudes towards honor-based violence enable the individual to sustain gender-based disparities, moral disengagement, perpetuate repressive traditional norms, and allow them to rationalize violent behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This discussion focuses on an important question: which type of variables motivates people to hold such attitudes more than others?

Personality theories provide a proper guideline of the underlying variations in the extent to which individuals support these practices. Eysenck's Three-Factor Model divided Personality into three traits: psychoticism, neuroticism, and extraversion (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991). Psychoticism is defined as impulsive, aggressive, morally disengaged, and lack of empathy type of traits that show approval of violent acts (Sahni & Karishma, 2021). Neuroticism offers a tendency of increased anxiety and emotional instability, which can promote immoral principles and less tolerance towards the behavior perceived as violating ethical standards (Costa & McCrae, 1985). Traits that are aligned with extraversion are sociability, openness, and tolerance, which motivate people to disapprove of violence-based acts (Costa & McCrae, 1985). Research that investigates the link between personality traits and attitudes toward honor killing is scarce; previous studies on general violent behavior show consistent trends. Individuals who show greater approval of violent practices always score higher in neuroticism and psychoticism. However, extraversion may have multiple influences, heightened aggression in relationship with power, and reduced when linked with empathy and social warmth. For example, in Northern Iraq, a study found that both neuroticism and extraversion were associated with young individuals' participation in violent activities (Mohamedamin & Fatahi, 2022). Although research on personality within Pakistan is

relatively limited, it offers an important contribution to the field. An investigation on adolescent gamers identified a significant association between neuroticism, extraversion, and violent behavior, indicating that certain personality traits may cause aggression even in non-serious and recreational contexts (Alvi et al., 2023). These findings were not directly linked with honor killing, but they emphasize the contribution of certain personality characteristics in shaping violent behavior. Within Pakistan's patriarchal and informal justice systems, such as jirgas, personality traits correlate with sociocultural forces in the formation of responses and moral judgements (Farooq & Shehzad, 2025). People who score higher in psychoticism may display greater acceptance of violence when it is legitimized by society (Campion & Colvin, 2025). However, individuals who exhibit an elevated level of neuroticism may adhere to traditional norms to avoid social disapproval, rejection, and criticism (Kwiatkowska & Strus, 2021). Whereas, more extraverted individuals are more likely to demonstrate resistance to oppressive norms and values (Dollbaum & Robertson, 2023). Extending this line of inquiry, it is noteworthy that despite extensive research on social and cultural variables of honor killings, no study has examined the impact of personality traits on the formation of attitudes toward honor killings. This study addresses this gap by investigating which personality dimension may be positively or negatively associated with approving or disapproving attitudes towards honor killings. By identifying these associations, the study seeks to advance the understanding of the psychological dynamics that underlie honor-based violence within specific cultural context.

Method

Research Design

A cross-sectional research design was employed to examine the relationship between attitude towards honor killing and personality traits. Data were obtained using a self-administered questionnaire booklet. The convenient sampling technique was applied as it involves selecting participants on the basis of their availability and willingness to respond (Robinson, 2014).

Sample

The sample consisted of ($N = 600$) community population, including rural ($N = 300$) and urban ($N = 300$) areas. An equal number of males ($N = 150$) and females ($N = 150$) were included in the sample from both areas. The age range was 18 to 44 years. Different cities were selected for the collection of data, i.e., Multan, Jhang, Bahawalpur, and Lodhran according to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2021). Furthermore, rural areas data were collected from different villages, i.e., Rahme Shah, Samundari villages of Faisalabad and Channan Pir village of Bahawalpur.

Instruments

The following scales were used to measure the study variables.

Attitude towards Honor Killing Scale

The Attitude towards Honor Killing Scale was developed by Huda and Kamal (2020) to assess individuals' perceptions of honor killing. The instrument consists of 17 items divided into two subscales, rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *1 strongly disagree* to *5 strongly agree*. The first subscale, Affirmation of Honor Killing (AHK), comprises 11 items (e.g., "There should be no punishment for honor killings in the law"). Higher scores reflect stronger endorsement and justification of honor killing, with a possible range of 11–55. This subscale demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency ($\alpha = .79$). The second subscale, Deterrents of Honor Killing (DHK), includes six items (e.g., "As per state law, killing in the name of honor should be punished

like any other murder”). Higher scores indicate greater disapproval of honor killing as a means of preserving morality or family honor, with possible scores ranging from 6 to 30. The internal consistency for this subscale was also in an acceptable range ($\alpha = .61$) (Huda & Kamal, 2020).

Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised

Eysenck, Eysenck, and Barrett (1985) developed a short scale of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised. This 48-item personality scale was developed primarily in order to assess extraversion ($\alpha=.80-.90$) (Colledani et al., 2018), neuroticism ($\alpha=.80-.90$) (Colledani et al., 2018), psychoticism ($\alpha=.60-.70$) (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1984), and the lie scale ($\alpha=.70-.80$) (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1984), and all sub-scales contain 12 items in each trait. The lie scale is considered a control scale in which the whole measure is tested for social desirability bias. The response is yes or no, which is dichotomous in nature. Every dichotomous item was scored 1 or 0, and each sub-scale maximum possible score of 12 and a minimum of 0. Amjad and Kausar (2001) have translated EPQ-R into Urdu, which is used in this study. This scale has already been used in several studies in the Pakistani cultural context. (Afzal & Arshad, 2013; Ajmal et al., 2024; Munir, 2018; Musharraf et al., 2021; Zahid & Arshad, 2018).

Procedure

To obtain data from the community sample, participants representing both rural and urban regions of Punjab were contacted. The data collection was obtained directly from the general public using a traditional paper-and-pencil survey method. APA ethical standards were strictly followed during the research process to preserve the participant’s confidentiality and ensure ethical conduct. Prior to participation in study, the respondent received informed consent and detailed information about the research purpose and processes. The participants were assured that all their responses would be kept confidential and would be used exclusively for research-related objectives. Participants were informed that their withdrawal from the study at any point was permitted without any form of penalty. After providing informed consent, respondents were instructed to fill out an anonymous questionnaire booklet within small group settings, and were encouraged to respond sincerely to each question. Participants were genuinely thanked at the end of the session for their time, collaboration and valuable involvement in the study.

Results

The analyses for this study were conducted using SPSS (version 21). In accordance with the study objectives, the preliminary analyses were performed to examine the reliability indices of the scales and to compute descriptive statistics. Further, Pearson’s correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the directionality and magnitude of relationships among study variables. Independent samples t-tests were used to examine gender and residential differences. Moreover, multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the extent to which personality traits predicted attitudes toward honor killing.

Table 1 Mean, Standard Deviation, and Range of Study Variables (N = 600)

Variable	M	SD	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
			Potential	Actual		
ATHKS	49.72	9.87	17-85	17-68	.092	.917
AHK	30.85	12.79	11-55	11-44	.731	-.526
DHK	18.86	7.16	6-30	6-24	-.502	-.683
EPQ	26.19	5.56	0-48	0-24	.121	-.757

EPQP	5.19	3.45	0-12	0-12	1.050	-.128
EPQE	5.53	3.57	0-12	0-12	-.260	-1.086
EPQN	7.78	3.21	0-12	0-12	-.213	-1.018
EPQL	7.68	3.01	0-12	0-12	-.387	-.839

Note. ATHKS = Attitude towards Honor Killing Scale; AHK = Affirmation of Honor Killing, DHK = Deterrence of Honor Killing, EPQ = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, EPQP = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Psychoticism, EPQE = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Extraversion, EPQN = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Neuroticism, EPQL = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Lie Scale.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the study variables, including mean, standard deviation, potential and actual range, skewness, and kurtosis. All variables showed acceptable normality, with skewness values within the ideal range of -1 to +1 (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Kurtosis values also fell within the acceptable range (-2 to +2), indicating that the data were approximately normally distributed (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Table 2 *Correlation Coefficients for Study Variables*

Variable	Cronbach's α	1	2	3	4	5
1.AHK	.92					
2.DHK	.86	-.64**				
3.EPQP	.85	.57**	-.59**			
4.EPQE	.85	-.40**	.39**	-.64**		
5.EPQN	.83	.33**	-.31**	.47**	-.44**	
6.EPQL	.78	.41**	-.26**	.39**	-.32**	.05

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. ATHKS = Attitude towards Honor Killing Scale; AHK = Affirmation of Honor Killing, DHK = Deterrence of Honor Killing, EPQP = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Psychoticism, EPQE = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Extraversion, EPQN = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Neuroticism, EPQL = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire.

Table 2 shows correlation coefficients among study variables. Results showed that attitude towards honor killing were significantly positively correlated with psychoticism and neuroticism, and significantly negatively correlated with extraversion. According to Cronbach (1951), alpha coefficients can be interpreted as follows: unacceptable ($\alpha < 0.50$), poor ($0.60 > \alpha \geq 0.50$), questionable ($0.70 > \alpha \geq 0.60$), acceptable ($0.80 > \alpha \geq 0.70$), and excellent ($\alpha \geq 0.90$). As shown in Table 2, all instruments used in the present study demonstrated satisfactory to excellent internal consistency.

Table 3 *Independent Samples t-test for Gender Differences on Study Variables (N = 600)*

Scale	Male (n = 304)		Female (n = 296)		$t(598)$	p	Cohn's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
AHK	34.65	14.29	26.96	9.62	7.76	.001	0.63
DHK	16.23	7.76	21.58	5.29	-9.90	.001	0.81
EPQP	6.26	3.95	4.09	2.42	8.16	.001	0.66
EPQE	4.67	3.81	6.43	3.07	-6.23	.001	0.51
EPQN	7.79	3.61	7.78	2.77	-0.06	.952	0.01

EPQL	8.10	2.95	7.26	3.02	3.45	.001	0.28
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Note. AHK = Affirmation of Honor Killing, DHK = Deterrence of Honor Killing, EPQP = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Psychoticism, EPQE = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Extraversion, EPQN = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Neuroticism, EPQL = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Lie Scale.

Table 3 revealed that Males scored higher on the Affirmation of honor killing subscale ($M = 34.65$) than females ($M = 14.29$). Conversely, females scored higher on the Deterrence of honor killing subscale ($M = 21.58$) than males ($M = 16.23$).

Table 4 Independent Sample *t*-test for Residential Differences on Study Variables ($N = 600$)

	Urban ($n = 300$)		Rural ($n = 300$)				
Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> (598)	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohn's d</i>
AHK	24.83	7.42	36.88	14.15	-13.06	.001	1.07
DHK	21.32	5.18	16.42	7.99	8.91	.001	0.73
EPQP	3.77	1.68	6.61	4.13	-10.99	.001	0.90
EPQE	6.48	3.11	4.59	3.75	6.72	.001	0.55
EPQN	6.97	2.97	8.60	3.26	-6.40	.001	0.52
EPQL	6.60	2.74	8.77	2.89	-9.43	.001	0.77

Note. AHK = Affirmation of Honor Killing, DHK = Deterrence of Honor Killing, EPQP = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Psychoticism, EPQE = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Extraversion, EPQN = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Neuroticism, EPQL = Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Lie Scale.

Table 4 shows significant residential differences in attitudes toward honor killing. Rural participants scored higher on the Affirmation of Honor Killing subscale ($M = 36.88$) than urban participants ($M = 24.83$). Conversely, urban participants scored higher on the Deterrence of Honor Killing subscale ($M = 21.32$) than rural participants ($M = 16.42$).

Table 5 Multiple Regression Analysis for predicting impact of Personality traits on Acceptance towards Honor Killing ($N = 600$)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Constant	55.069	3.546	15.531	.001	[48.106,62.033]
Psychoticism	3.481	.266	13.099	.001	[2.959,4.003]
Extraversion	-.631	.244	-2.586	.010	[-1.110,-.152]
Neuroticism	2.570	.236	10.872	.001	[2.106,3.034]
Lie Scale	.109	.238	.458	.647	[-.358,.576]

Note. CI = Confidence interval, *** $p < .001$.

Table 5 presents the impact of personality traits on attitudes toward honor killing. The model explained 60% of the variance in attitudes ($R^2 = .596$), $F(1, 598) = 219.34$, $p < .001$. Psychoticism emerged as the strongest positive predictor of pro-honor killing attitudes, followed by Neuroticism. Extraversion showed a significant negative association with attitudes toward honor killing.

Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the accepting attitude towards honor killing and its relationship with personality traits in a community sample in Punjab. The findings indicate the association of psychoticism, neuroticism, and extraversion personality traits with the acceptance of honor killing. Furthermore, significant differences were observed based on gender and geographical regions (urban vs. rural areas). Findings revealed a significant positive correlation between acceptance attitude towards honor killing and personality traits such as neuroticism and psychoticism. Contrary to this, analysis showed significant negative associations between acceptance of attitude towards honor killing and extraversion. These findings are consistent with the prior study conducted among Arab Israelis, which found a positive association between neuroticism and supportive attitudes toward honor killings, as well as, individuals high in psychoticism are more prone to antisocial and criminal attitudes (Boduszek et al., 2013; Ne'Eman Haviv, 2020). In contrast to this, Ne'eman Haviv (2020) reported a negative but insignificant relationship between extraversion and accepting honor killing attitudes among Arab Israelis. However, the findings of our study indicated a significant negative association between extraversion and acceptance of honor killing. These findings can explain that in the Pakistani context, where extraversion appears to be a mitigating factor against the favorable attitude towards honor killing, and in line with the previous literature (Barlett & Anderson, 2012), which shows that extraversion interacts with social/emotional processes that could mitigate violent attitudes.

Further, findings showed that acceptance toward honor killing was significantly positively predicted by both neuroticism and psychoticism and negatively predicted by extraversion. The findings were consistent with a previous study conducted by Boduszek et al. (2013), in which links existed between neuroticism and psychoticism with criminal cognitive styles. This also supports the notion that these personality constructs may provide both a foundation for the development of an individual's criminal thought patterns and the justification of that behavior as justified by the norms of a culture. Also, extraverts are less likely to support violence as a bystander role. This was found to be particularly true with the case of interpersonal violence (Banyard, 2008). With reference to gender differences, Males were found to have higher acceptance towards honor killing, while females showed stronger deterrence attitudes. These results are in line with the study by Ne'eman Haviv (2020), which reported that 29.8% of male participants supported honor killings, compared to only 15.5% of female participants. This reflects consistent findings regarding gender-based perspectives on honor-related violence. Moreover, concerning differences based on geographic locations (rural vs. urban), findings revealed that respondents from rural areas were more likely to support honor killing, while participants from urban areas showed stronger deterring attitudes. These findings are congruent with the existing literature from Pakistan, as highlighted in Huda and Kamal's (2022) research study, which highlighted consistent rural-urban differences in attitudes towards honor-based violence. These differences can be explained in terms of differences in education, exposure to diverse worldviews, and community norms.

The current study presents several implications both in terms of theory and applications, with respect to honor-based violence in collectivistic cultures such as Pakistan. Firstly, the findings of the present study will enable researchers to identify culturally centered personality characteristics associated with positive attitudes with honor-based killings, thereby indicating the significance of personality and individual differences in the development of context-specific violent behaviors. Secondly, the findings are also important for future developments of community-based interventions, community education programs, and policy initiatives designed to end honor-based

violence in Pakistan. Furthermore, promoting social skills and open-mindedness in communities may reduce the prevalence of societal acceptance of honor-based killing.

Limitation and Future directions

The findings of the present study provide a limited understanding of accepting attitudes toward honor killing, which primarily focuses on a community sample from Punjab, Pakistan, with urban participants recruited from specific areas, and rural participants were drawn using a convenience sampling method. Future research should be conducted with a larger, more varied sample across all provinces of Pakistan, and it should also consist of participants with different educational backgrounds. Moreover, comparing a variety of cultural as well as ethnic groups and investigating cultural, religious, and socioeconomic factors could provide a deeper understanding of such attitudes. Studies should also focus on biasing social desirability, especially when exploring culturally and socially sensitive topics. Additionally, identifying a diverse range of psychological factors, for example, cognitive dissonance, social identity, and moral reasoning, together with the social norms, may clarify the phenomena that shape the attitudes toward honor killing. To examine how social, cultural, and political changes affect these views, longitudinal studies should also be conducted in the future.

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