

Introduction to the special issue on honour-based abuse, violence and killings

In acknowledgement of the many efforts made to increase our knowledge on honour crimes, the *Journal of Aggression, Conflict, and Peace Research (JACPR)* is publishing this special edition on honour-based abuse, violence and killings.

In the past two decades, a series of high-profile honour killings has raised awareness of an archaic form of abuse occurring not only behind closed doors but also within closed community walls. Despite their historic and ubiquitous occurrence, honour crimes are now more commonly associated with Middle Eastern or South Asian families living in patriarchal collectivist cultures in countries of origin and diasporic communities worldwide. Honour abuse victims – mostly young females – are reportedly controlled, coerced, forced into marriage, humiliated, beaten, tortured and even murdered by close relatives in the name of so-called “honour”. This cultural conceptualisation of honour is both powerful and pervasive. Built upon rigid gender-based hierarchies, it is often used to promote and excuse aggressive hypermasculinity and female dehumanisation. It is in this context that an influential first wave of scholarly research has been articulately produced, dismantling honour-based abuse using a gendered lens.

Due to their focus on peripheral topics, this collection of papers perhaps reflects the beginning of a second wave of research, adding new dimensions to our empirical knowledge on honour abuse. These papers, submitted from across Asia, Europe and North America, reflect two broad themes. First, topics that relate to obstacles in formal help-seeking responses include the police treatment of vulnerable “at risk” adults (Aplin, 2018), victims’ concerns about reporting to police (Gangoli *et al.*, 2018) and the professional management of collective violence (Lidman and Hong, 2018). Second, novel issues that explicitly broaden current knowledge include comparisons with anti-LGBTQ homicides (Henry *et al.*, 2018), perceptions of abuse from multiple nations (Lowe *et al.*, 2018) and female perpetrators (Bates, 2018). As a collection, these papers indicate avenues for future research. Therefore, I would like to use them as a starting point to offer suggestions for how research in this area may best advance.

As a psychologist, I am eager for empirical research to use established, social psychological theories to explain honour-based abuse. Since first proposed by Nisbett and Cohen (1996), a plethora of research has examined males’ readiness to aggress in “cultures of honour”, yet reference to this is uncommon despite its clear relevance. Psychologically oriented motivational models of honour violence (based on theory of planned behaviour, e.g. Roberts, 2014) are also likely to be valuable.

Applying alternate perspectives permits a more holistic examination of questions such as “why do some males in collectivistic honour cultures use or justify extreme honour-based violence or coercion against female kin, while others do not?” It would also be useful if empirical attention focused not only on why some people aggress but also the nuances in their attitudes and motivations for doing so. This would help us understand why some males oppose or desist honour-based abuse, despite the powerful force of social expectations. Other questions include “why do some females endorse or perpetrate honour abuse against other females in collectivistic cultures of honour?” This topic is often overlooked even though it conflicts with traditional gender role expectations of women as non-aggressive and protective of close kin. In the broader aggression literature, contemporary knowledge on female abusers indicates that honour abuse by women will not be satisfactorily explained by forcefully extrapolating from research on male aggression. This view is amplified by recent empirical research that

Roxanne Khan is Senior Lecturer in Forensic Psychology at the School of Psychology, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK.

challenges traditional views with reports of mothers, in particular, using extreme methods of honour abuse, often against their own daughters, that cannot always be explained by male coercion (Aplin, 2017; Bates, 2018; Khan, 2018).

To aid the myriad challenges faced by safeguarding practitioners and emergency services, I am also keen for evidence-based research to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice. For perpetrators, effective violence management ought to be both culturally aware and based on validated methods. A good example is the PATRIARCH (Belfrage *et al.*, 2012), developed specifically to guide professionals on the assessment of honour-based crime. Empirically rooted psychological theories, currently used in interventions to promote prosocial attitudes and victim empathy in comparable violent offender groups, provide a framework for designing effective perpetrator programmes. If the goal of our collective efforts is a change in how “honour” is misconstrued (e.g. “Sharaf Heroes” programme, Rexvid and Schlytter, 2012), then adopting robust models of attitudinal change seem a good place to start.

My final words are of gratitude to those involved in the production of this special issue. I thank all authors who submitted their work to *JACPR*, the expert reviewers for their meticulous and thoughtful comments, the publishing team for ensuring a quality and timely publication and finally, Editor in Chief, Jane Ireland, for the opportunity to act as Guest Editor on what I believe is a laudable first special edition on this topic.

References

- Aplin, R. (2017), “Exploring the role of mothers in ‘honour’ based abuse perpetration and the impact on the policing response”, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, Vol. 60 No. C, pp. 1-10.
- Aplin, R.L. (2018), “Honour based abuse: the response by professionals to vulnerable adult investigations”, *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 237-38.
- Bates, L. (2018), “Females perpetrating honour-based abuse: controllers, collaborators or coerced?”, *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 293-303.
- Belfrage, H., Strand, S., Ekman, L. and Hasselborg, A. (2012), “Assessing risk of patriarchal violence with honour as a motive: six years’ experience using the PATRIARCH checklist”, *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 20-9.
- Gangoli, G., Gill, A., Mulvihill, N. and Hester, M. (2018), “Perception and barriers: reporting female genital mutilation”, *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 251-60.
- Henry, T.K., Hayes, B.E., Freilich, J.D. and Chermak, S. (2018), “Comparison of honor killings to anti-LGBTQ homicides”, *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 272-82.
- Khan, R. (2018), “Attitudes towards ‘honor’ violence and killings in collectivist cultures: gender differences in Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian (MENASA) and Turkish populations”, in Ireland, J.L., Birch, P. and Ireland, C.A. (Eds), *International Handbook in Aggression: Current Issues and Perspectives*, Chapter 6, Routledge, London, pp. 216-26.
- Lidman, S. and Hong, T. (2018), “Collective violence’ and honour in Finland: a survey for professionals”, *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 261-71.
- Lowe, M., Khan, R., Thanzami, V., Barzy, M. and Karmaliani, R. (2018), “Attitudes toward intimate partner ‘honor’-based violence in India, Iran, Malaysia and Pakistan”, *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 283-92.
- Nisbett, R.E. and Cohen, D. (1996), *Culture of honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO.
- Rexvid, D. and Schlytter, A. (2012), “Heroes, hymen and honour: a study of the character of attitude change among male youth with their roots in an honour-based context”, *Review of European Studies*, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 22-32.
- Roberts, K. (2014), “Towards a psychologically oriented motivational model of honour-based violence”, in Gill, A.K., Strange, C. and Roberts, K. (Eds), *Honour Killing and Violence: Theory, Policy and Practice*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY, pp. 69-88.