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**Men, Masculinities and Honour-Based Violence**

**Homophobic 'honour' abuse experienced by South Asian gay men in England**

Roxanne Khan, PhD\*

University of Central Lancashire, School of Psychology, UK

Michelle Lowe, PhD

University of Bolton, School of Education and Psychology, UK

**Brief biography**

**Dr. Roxanne Khan** is Director of HARM: Honour Abuse Research Matrix. A Chartered Psychologist at the University of Central Lancashire, she is a Senior Lecturer and Course Leader in Forensic Psychology. With two decades experience of working with perpetrators and victims of violence in secure and community settings, Dr Khan has a long-standing research interest in aggression and violence. She has authored work on the psychology of 'honour' abuse, intimate partner violence, child and adult sexual abuse, coercion, and exploitation.

**Dr Michelle Lowe** is a Reader in Criminological and Forensic Psychology and Chartered Psychologist at the University of Bolton. Dr Lowe has published 60 academic papers and presented at over 40 conferences in topics encompassing victimology and sexuality issues. Dr Lowe is a founding editor of the Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research, holds editorial board positions at two other journals and is a regular reviewer for several outlets.

## **Homophobic 'honour' abuse experienced by South Asian gay men in England**

### **Introduction**

*“After protracted detention and torture, the detainees were released to families, and at least some were subjected to further humiliation by being forced to “confess and repent” in front of their elder male relatives ... . Officials then shamed the relatives for having gay family members and made the relatives shame the victims, thereby fuelling a climate in which family abuse, including honor killings, might occur”*  
(Andreevskikh, 2017).

Since April 2017, media groups across Europe have reported on what has been called a “gay genocide” and “antigay purge” in Chechnya; it is alleged that men, suspected of being gay, have been victimised by the authorities and been threatened with so called ‘honour’ killings by their families (Beard, 2018; Castro, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2017). Further disconcerting is that homophobic ‘honour’ based violence is reported in other countries where homosexuality is condemned or considered ‘a sin’ - this includes South Asian nations where same-sex sexual activity is not only taboo but a criminal offence with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment (Carroll & Mendos, 2017).

With a focus on female victims, studies with South Asian and Middle Eastern populations have identified a range of sociodemographic factors that explain why some people endorse ‘honour’ abuse and killings (e.g., Eisner & Ghuneim, 2013; Gengler, Alkazemi, & Alsharekh, 2018; Khan, 2018; Lowe, Khan, Thanzami, Barzy, & Karmaliani, 2018). As the victimisation of girls and women is far more frequent, this has attracted a greater share of scholarly and public interest. Investigations into homonegative ‘honour’ based victimisation are still sparse (Khan, Hall & Lowe, 2017; Lowe, Khan, Thanzami, Barzy, & Karmaliani, 2019). Thus, very little is known about the psychological, social and cultural factors associated with different types of ‘honour’ abuse specific to gay men of South Asian origin in England.

To gain insight into lived realities and perceptions of homophobic honour abuse, this chapter draws together the fragmented literature in this area to provide a context for qualitative data collected from 10 South Asian gay men living in England. Using an online questionnaire, three themes were explored, including: (1) respondents’ demographic, social and familial background; (2) the homophobic victimisation experienced and witnessed and how this affected respondents’ psychosocial wellbeing; (3) perceptions of the efficacy of emergency services and welfare agencies to respond to homonegative ‘honour’ abuse. These findings indicate that extensive work needs to be undertaken to improve awareness of the difficulties faced by gay South Asian males at risk of ‘honour’ abuse and violence in the UK.

### **Background**

*Ahmet Yildiz was just 26 years old when he was shot dead on 15 July 2008, in what has been widely regarded by Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) rights activists as a gay "honour" killing.*

*Seven years on, his killer or killers are still at large and the lack of progress in bringing about justice is viewed by LGBTI organizations in Turkey as an indictment of the lack of protection of LGBTI individuals and a symbol of impunity for homophobic violence.*

Amnesty International, Public Statement (2015)

'Honour' abuse is a broad category that includes psychological, physical and sexual maltreatment, the most extreme of which is 'honour' killing (Oberwittler & Kasselt, 2014). In the United Kingdom (UK), there is no statutory definition of 'honour'-based violence and the term is used broadly to define criminal acts committed in defence of, or to protect, the honour of an individual's family or community (Crime Prosecution Service, 2018). To understand the causes, characteristics and situational contexts in which this abuse occurs, we draw from the established psychological and criminological literature to explain the powerful role of honour and shame as fundamental values in collectivist orientated cultures. This is important to understand as it explains the motives of people who inflict harm on others in the name of so-called 'honour' as well as those who approve of it; understanding how they think, act and behave towards victims is the key for unpicking this seemingly paradoxical form of abuse. This chapter focuses on gay male victims of 'honour' abuse (including forced marriage) and violence, a poorly understood topic on which the empirical research base is only recently emerging. To evolve this line of investigation, we also draw from a larger body of research that has explored the aetiology of homophobic abuse more broadly, to identify the nature, characteristics, and the circumstances in which this abuse is experienced specifically by South Asian gay men in England.

### **Social context: The importance of family honour in collectivist cultures**

Although 'honour' based abuse and violence is commonly linked with Muslim communities in Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian (MENASA) and Turkish populations worldwide (Chesler, 2010; Cooney 2014; Grzyb, 2016), punishments of sexualised behaviours are also reported in other 'moral' collectivist orientated communities and territories. For example, honour crimes are reported in Catholic orientated Italy as well as Gypsy Roma Traveller communities (Araji, 2000; Asquith, 2016; Caffaro, Ferraris, & Schmidt, 2014; Giuffrida 2019).

To unravel the intricate processes underpinning 'honour' based abuse, rather than a narrow focus on religiosity as a singular cause, it perhaps prudent to adopt a holistic, less myopic approach to understanding its origins. Religiosity is undoubtedly significant, yet this should not underplay the influence of another core tenet binding all collectivist honour cultures – that is, the *maintenance of family bonds* and *attaining and upholding a respectable social image* (Kellet, 2016). These twin principles help explain why the public maintenance of family honour is of paramount importance in collectivist cultures (Rodriguez Mosquera, 2016). The concept of honour is a pervasive and powerful social construct that underpins collectivist ideologies (Rodriguez Mosquera, 1999; 2013). These shared beliefs are associated with a broad spectrum of attitudes, norms, roles, emotions, behaviours and cultural practices that prioritises socially prescribed values - especially that of family honour - above that of personal beliefs and ideals. There is also an expectation that members within collectivist cultures ensure that honour norms are being observed by their own family and wider community (Vandello & Cohen, 2003). As Cooney (2014: 407) suggests "...from a purely explanatory point of view, family honor is most profitably viewed as a type of social control".

In MENASA and Turkish communities, honour functions as an important social currency. Having honour in these communities may lead to fruitful personal and social benefits, such as greater marital prospects and business opportunities, and likewise, there is a heavy personal and social cost for the loss of honour or failure to restore it including loss of self-esteem, social ostracisation, and economic boycott (Bond, 2014; Brandon & Hafeez, 2008; Mosquera, Manstead, & Fischer 2002). Ultimately, the loss of honour brings personal and social shame to the individual, their family and wider community (Bagli & Sev'er, 2003). Understood in this way, it becomes easier to understand why some individuals from collectivist honour cultures have been reported to use force or to aggress against others in response to what is perceived to be threats to their family's honour (Brown et al, 2009; Cohen et al, 1996; Nisbet & Cohen, 1996; Rodriguez Mosquera et al, 2014; Vandello & Cohen, 2003).

With this in mind, it is dispiriting that over 5,000 women are reportedly murdered every year in the name of 'honour' (United Nations Population Fund, 2000) and that these so called 'honour' killings are recorded in over 30 countries (Chesler, 2010). Any estimates are most likely a vast underestimation of the true extent of 'honour' killings as they do not include cases "...camouflaged as suicides, accidents, disappearances or deaths from natural cause" (Cooney, 2014, pp. 407), yet it is still notable that many are committed in South Asian territories. In collectivist-orientated Pakistan, for example - where one-quarter of all global 'honour' killings

are reported to occur - over 700 women were reportedly murdered in one year alone and nearly two thousand women were estimated to have been murdered between 2004 and 2007 (Fatima, Qadir, Hussain, & Menezes, 2017; Nasrullah et al. 2009). Internationally, 'honour' killings in South Asian diaspora were recorded in communities across North America (Chelser, 2009; Hayes, Freilich, & Chermak, 2016) and Europe, including Germany (Grzyb, 2016), Finland (Keskinen, 2009), Sweden (Wikan, 2008), and in England (Dyer, 2015). This information helps to gauge the scope of these murders, while recognising that as they are sketchily based on unreliable data, they only reflect the extreme end of a much larger problem.

### **Antigay 'honour' abuse, violence and killings in collectivist cultures**

*A catalogue of serious mistakes and negligence by the Turkish authorities include the failure to investigate threats Ahmet Yıldız had received from members of his family in the months leading up to his murder, despite these threats having been reported to the authorities. After Ahmet Yıldız' murder it emerged that his complaint had not been investigated .... There has not been an investigation into the failure of the authorities to act on Ahmet Yıldız' complaints since the murder. An arrest warrant was only issued ... three months after the killing, by which time the only named suspect in the case, Ahmet Yıldız' father was believed to have left the country and could not be apprehended, and seven years on, still hasn't been despite an Interpol red alert issued for him to be arrested. A prosecution was initiated in April 2009, naming Ahmet Yıldız' father as sole suspect.*

Amnesty International, Public Statement (2015)

'Honour' based abuse and violence is rooted in the rigid gender roles prescribed in patriarchal collectivist cultures that promote hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 2005). In this way, males are legitimised to use forceful means to maintain their dominant social position over female counterparts – this is reflected in girls and women's familial, cultural, fiscal, relational, and legal subordination. Therefore, it is a social expectation of hegemonic masculinity for males to use macho force to defend or restore honour, including the use of aggression and violence against females. Robust support for the relation between masculine ideology and men's perpetration of aggression toward women is shown in a meta-analysis of 39 studies (Murnen, Wright & Kaluzny, 2002).

Hostility and aggression are also used to control and deter other 'marginalised' expressions of masculinity, including gender identities perceived to defy culturally idealised forms of manhood, including homosexuality as this is thought to be 'not masculine' in collectivist orientated cultures (Connell, 2005). In linking expressions of misogyny and homophobia, Kupers (2010:112-113) argued that they "are two sides of the same coin"

manifested as toxic masculinity, which he described as "the constellation of socially regressive male traits that serve to foster domination, the devaluation of women, homophobia and wanton violence". Thus stemming from illiberal cultural norms, males and females who do not adhere to rigid, stratified gendered codes may face collective aggression for deviating from socially acceptable conventions (Lowe et al, 2019; Steinke, 2013; Vandello & Cohen, 2003).

In both national and migrant South Asian collectivist-oriented communities, 'honour' abuse and violence often occurs when it is perceived that sexually 'improper' behaviour has brought *sharam* (shame) on an individual, their family or community. Samad (2010) explains that in the main, same-sex intimacy and relationships are considered in South Asian cultures to reflect a serious social and sexual indiscretion that can be rectified via coercive control, forced marriage, verbal threats or physical violence.

This is most starkly illustrated at the extreme end of the spectrum, in the analysis of data in Turkey that shows 22 'honour' killings, from 2007 to 2009, were attributed to the victims' sexual identity (Democratic Turkey Forum, 2011). With reference to cultural perceptions of homosexuality in Turkey, Hurtas (2017) highlighted parallels between the brutal "gay honour killings" of two young gay males, Ahmet Yildiz (aged 26) and Rosin Cicek (aged 17) which "..... reveal a similar pattern of deep-rooted prejudice and social codes that override even the closest family bonds". In both cases, the victims' families were thought to have been involved in their murders. This feature demarcates 'honour' violence and killings from other forms of interpersonal violence, that is, victims' families often endorse abuse, violence, and sometimes, even torturous murder to restore family honour. As Khan (2018: 217) stated, "...the victim's kin and community were often the instigators of the abuse, and in many instances, they organised or committed these murders themselves". Indeed, the sole suspect in Mr. Yildiz's brutal murder was his father and, to add insult to injury, Mr. Yildiz's family did not claim his body (Bilefsky, 2009). This is particularly poignant as in Islamic teachings, the burial of the deceased is regarded as a collective obligation and "the entire Muslim community will be guilty if a Muslim body is not buried, unless the burial was beyond their knowledge or capacity" (Al Dawoody, 2018).

These reports of antigay 'honour' killings cast a dark shadow, not least because they represent a specific form of familial abuse that is imbedded within wider structural processes where expressions of prejudice, abuse and violence are used for the dual aim of marginalising 'difference' and espousing hypermasculinity. In light of this, it is unsurprising that homosexual men in South Asian collectivist territories and diaspora are reported to be at risk of antigay

'honour' abuse from their immediate and extended kin, tribal and community leaders and groups (Mahendru, 2017). This feeling is sensed in the words of Dasgupta (2018) when he writes about growing up in India:

*I grew up in Calcutta under the shadow of Section 377 which effectively criminalised homosexuality and has been used almost exclusively against LGBTQ individuals who continue facing harassment and blackmail. Growing up as a queer teenager in the early 2000s I often heard harrowing tales from friends who had been beaten up by gangs when they went out cruising, or in some instances even taken to prison where police officers demanded a bribe before letting them off with a warning that they would tell their parents about their "immoral lifestyle". Academics ... have rightly used the term "India's shame culture" whilst referring to this. If one's sexuality is made public it not only brings "shame" to the individual but also to their family and larger society".*

### **Homophobic 'honour' abuse in England**

Piecing together these fragmented reports, concerns have been emerging about South Asian gay males at risk of 'honour' based abuse (particularly, forced marriage) in England (Jaspal, 2014; Khan, Hall & Lowe, 2017; Lowe et al, 2019; Razzall & Khan, 2017; Samad, 2010). Since the first official 'honour' killing in England in 1999, the majority of recorded 'honour' crimes have been committed against females of South Asian origin (Aplin, 2017). As so few studies have examined 'honour' based male victimisation, little is known about the abuse gay men experience. However, charities in England have reported concerns that South Asian males might be facing abuse that is comparable to their female counterparts, including forced marriage, threats or actual violence, sexual assault, and imprisonment (Razzall & Khan, 2017; Tri.x, 2017).

Although the prevalence of 'honour' based violence in England cannot be easily or reliably ascertained, it is widely accepted that any figures are likely to represent only the tip of the iceberg (Khan, Saleem & Lowe, 2018). Despite this, official data indicates that like their counterparts in South Asia, diasporic populations who identify as LGBT in England are also at risk of 'honour' based violence. An examination of police recordings from 39 forces across England showed that 11,000 cases were recorded from 2010 to 2014 (Iranian and Kurdish Woman's Right Organisation, 2015). Only four police forces provided information on victim gender that, when combined, showed 271 male victimisation cases were recorded between 2010 and 2017 (Razzall & Khan, 2017). In the annual review of crimes in the UK from 2015-2016, almost a quarter of 'honour' based violence victims (where gender was recorded) were males (Crown Prosecution Service, 2016). Statistics from the British Home Office's Forced

Marriage Unit (FMU) for 2014 and 2015 show that of the approximate 1,220 forced marriages reported, around one-fifth were males (FMU, 2016). Similarly, the most recent statistics available show that for 2018, of the 1,764 forced marriage reports, 17% involved males (FMU, 2019). Official homicide statistics also show that annually, males represent one-third of 'honour' killing victims in the UK (Dyer, 2015). Almost entirely, these figures represent South Asian victims.

Although victim sexual orientation was not reported in these data, it is most likely that at least a proportion of these cases were victimised because of their sexual orientation. Data from the FMU supports this proposition, with reports that 30 (2%) victims in both 2015 and 2016 were South Asian gay men. Sexual orientation or sexual identity are only recorded by the FMU if victims volunteer this information at first contact, and victims are not routinely asked to disclose this personal information. Therefore, it is reasonable to estimate that 'honour' based violence is most likely occurring at a higher rate than currently reported by gay South Asian males.

A number of small-scale studies conducted in the UK indicate that while gay British Asian males live in a country that is broadly tolerant of their sexuality identity, they tend to live in families and communities that frown upon their sexual orientation. For example, in a poll of 500 British Muslims, not one person believed that homosexuality was "morally acceptable" (Gallop Coexist Index, 2009). Another study reported that of the 70 men interviewed about their experiences of 'honour' based abuse and violence, a proportion were victimised due to their sexuality (Razzall & Khan, 2017). One interviewee stated that "*I feared for my life. I felt I could be killed... I would be disowned, kicked out of the house and forced to marry a woman, definitely*". This interviewee disclosed that once the news of his homosexuality spread to his wider community, he was warned that he would be punished for dishonouring both his family and his culture; he was threatened with the humiliation of being sexually violated by an electric hand drill. A recent police study of South Asian LGBT populations in northern England (Khan, Hall & Lowe, 2017) found that a majority of participants reported both family and community 'honour' based abuse and violence due to their sexual identity. Although the number of participants in these studies are small, they indicate that gay males are likely to be at risk for this abuse.

## **Methodology**

This quantitative study used online questionnaires to explore the following areas:

- 1) Demographic background: For example, individual, family, social and cultural background including age, gender-identity, sexual orientation, relationship status, ethnicity, education, occupation, religion, family/community affiliation with honour culture, and adherence to honour codes.
- 2) Type, extent and psychosocial impact of homonegative 'honour' abuse: For example, any form of aggression (e.g., verbal threats and physical violence) committed against, or witnessed by, respondents as a direct result of their sexual identity including their refusal to enter a forced marriage.
- 3) Perceptions of available support: For example, respondents' perceptions of emergency services and welfare agencies in England, in terms of their ability and efficacy to meet their needs as a vulnerable group at risk for 'honour' based violence.

Precautionary measures were taken to ensure the privacy, confidentiality, and safety respondents participating in this study. Potential participants viewed a briefing page, prior to opening the questionnaire. This detailed the study's full aims, explained the procedures involved, and emphasised the anonymous nature of the study, as well as there being no obligation to participate. Participants were advised that they could withdraw from the study by closing the browser (and deleting their browser history), at any point. The last page debriefed participants by summarising the study aims and listing professional support agencies that offer professional and confidential support and advice to those affected by 'honour' abuse and violence and other related issues raised in the questionnaire.

## **Findings**

To gain insight into lived realities and perceptions of homophobic honour abuse, this study provides detailed qualitative analysis collected from 10 South Asian gay men living in England. The online questionnaire explored three themes including: (1) participants' demographic, social and familial background; (2) the homophobic victimisation experienced and witnessed and how this affected respondents' psychosocial wellbeing; (3) perceptions of the efficacy of emergency services and welfare agencies to respond to homonegative 'honour' abuse.

### *Theme 1 –demographic, social and familial background*

#### **Gender and Sexual Orientation**

Participants were asked whether or not they identified as LGBT and whether or not they engaged with the wider LGBT community. Of the ten gay males who took part in the study, none self-identified as transgendered. Seven participants stated that they identified as LGBT and three did not, while six stated they engaged with the LGBT community, but four did not.

### **Age and Relationship Status**

Participants varied in age from 21 to 45 years (Mean age = 31 years). Two participants were single, three dating, two co-habiting, and three separated or divorced. No participants were married.

### **Educational Status**

Participants were mainly highly educated, with seven achieving Higher Education qualifications and three Further Education.

### **Location**

Participants were asked to reveal whether or not they were born in the UK, how many years they had resided in the UK if born outside, and their ethnic/national origin. Five participants were born in the UK, and five elsewhere. Of those not born in the UK, three were born in Pakistan, 1 in Bangladesh and one in the United States. Participants born elsewhere had resided in the UK between 7 and 37 years (Mean = 17 years). Regarding ethnic/national identity, five participants were Pakistani, two Indian, and one Bangladeshi. One participant stated "other" and one did not answer this question.

### **Religion and Family Ties**

A total of four participants stated that they were religious; six participants were not. Religious denomination varied, with four stating their religion as Islam and two as Christian. Six participants did not, and four participants did not answer this question. Two participants actively rejected their faith.

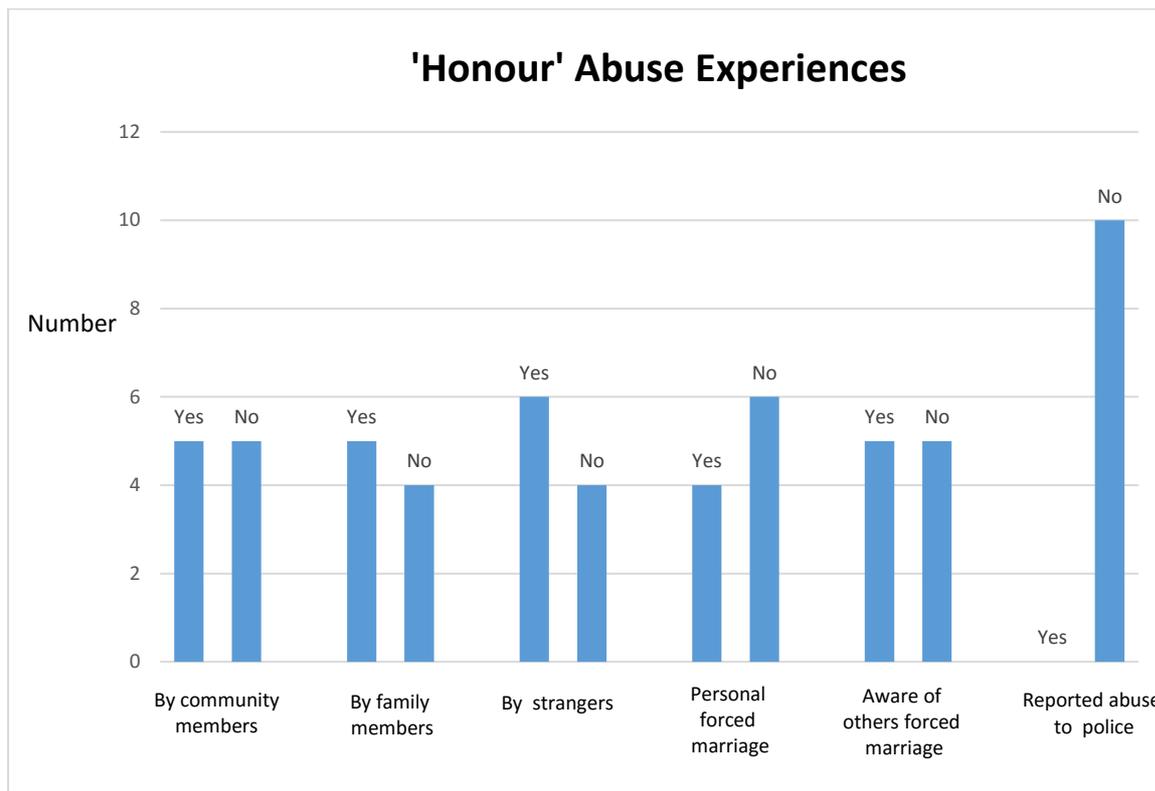
Participants were asked to respond to three questions relating to the strength of their religious conviction, and that of their family, and how strongly/committed their family identified with the South Asian community (on a scale of 0 to 4, with 4 being very much). Participants overall revealed that their religious conviction was relatively low (Mean = 1.7), but that of their family

was high (Mean = 3.7). Participants felt their family's commitment to the South Asian community was high (3.2). Participants were also asked (on a scale of 0 to 4, with 4 being very much), how important maintain *izzat* was to their family, and to what extent participants felt their family was shamed by their LGBT identity. Mean scores on both questions was high: 3.5 and 3.9 respectively.

*Theme 2 - Homophobic victimisation experienced and witnessed and how this affected respondents' psychosocial wellbeing*

Participants were asked to respond to a series of six questions regarding their experiences of 'honour' based abuse and violence that was committed due to their identifying as LGBT. Three questions covered abuse, violence and threats from their community, their family and strangers. Additionally, two questions addressed forced marriage: whether they themselves had been married (or expected to marry) without their consent; knowing of anyone in their community who identifies as LGBT being forced to marry. The final question asked participants whether they had reported 'honour' based abuse or violence to the police. Participants were asked to respond "yes" or "no" to each question. The numbers of participants reporting "yes" and "no" to each question are displayed in Figure 1.

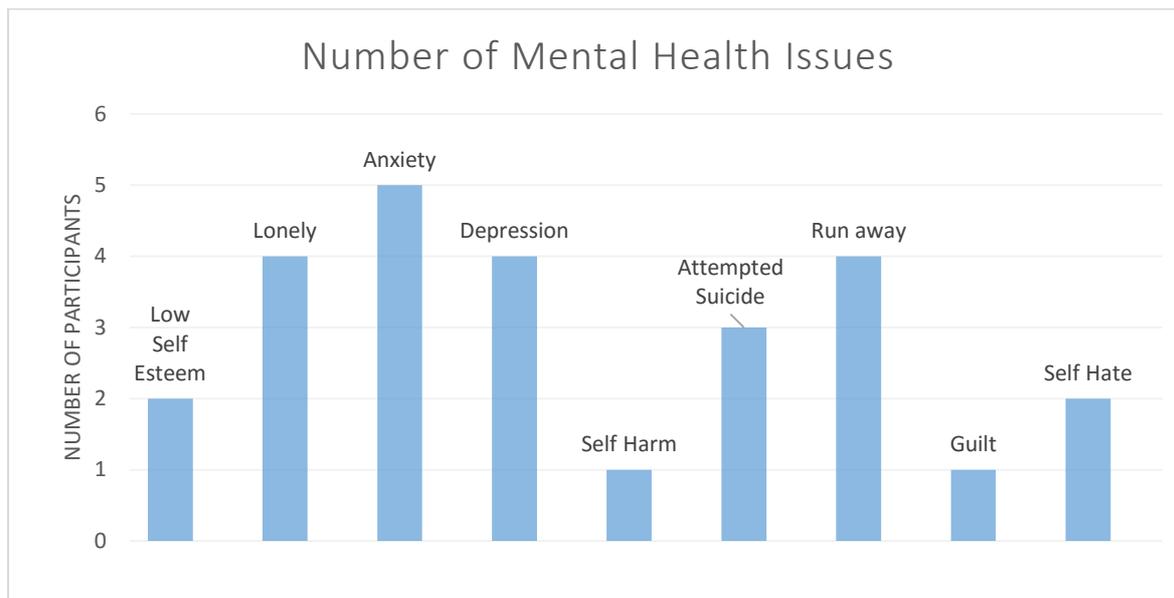
Figure 1



**Mental Health**

Participants were asked to state whether they had been affected by nine different mental health issues. Figure 2 shows the number of participants affected across each domain. Most participants stated that they had more than one mental health issue. The number of issues raised by each participant ranged from one to six mental health domains.

Figure 2



*Theme 3 – perceptions of the efficacy of emergency services and welfare agencies to respond to homonegative ‘honour’ abuse.*

Participants were asked to respond in their own words to three questions, broadly addressing how they perceived the support efforts of emergency services and welfare agencies in England, in terms of ability and efficiency to meet the needs of LGBT people within the South Asian community at risk of honour based abuse and violence.

1. The first question in this section asked participants to say why they felt so few reports of honour-based abuse were made to the police from LGBT individuals. Eight participants gave their opinions, which, for some participants, focused around fear of damaging family reputations and/or being ‘outed’ within their community. One participant commented, for example: *“South Asian people dont [sic] accept LGBT people ... I think that's why there is more police reports from south Asian LGBT people”, “Because they feel by telling the police it would out them”, and “Fear of family (being disowned etc)”*.

Other participants commented on lack of police resources to make reporters safe, perceived lack of support, trust or racism from the police. For example: *“Lack of resources to make it safe after reporting; Lack of help to move away from prejudiced family; Lack of re-*

*accommodation options; Lack of prosecutions; Lack of action against zealots; Lack of real action against community promoting harmful honour traditions”, “What can they do to help?... no one really trusts the police and they do not understand what it is like. I know there are asian [sic] police now but can we trust them, and what can they do anyway?”, and, “Because the police are intuitively [sic] racist and brown people hate/fear them...”*

2. Next, participants were asked their opinion on what local support agencies (e.g., community, crime and safety, education, and faith groups) could do to encourage and support more open and transparent LGBT South Asian communities. Seven participants responded. Most comments related to more awareness of LGBTQ issues in places of worship. For example, *“Ensure LGBT posters are placed in mosques”, and, “Have more open discussions in temples/mosques/churches about LGBTQ issues and that they exist in every community and it is nothing to be ashamed about; Try to separate sin from homosexuality”*. One participant commented on wider issues, such lack of integration of Asians and fear of being blamed: *“encourage asians [sic] to come out and integrate more. so much bad stuff has happened with terrorism and so asians [sic] are scared of being blamed for this so it is a good time to get them out more. asians [sic] are so traditional and family obsessed but they are judgmental and need to integrate more.”*
3. Finally, participants were asked their opinion on what is important for South Asians who identify as LGBT. Four participants responded to this question. Comments related to more support being needed within South Asian communities to support coming out and for mental health concerns to enable LGBT individuals to have a voice within their community, and better laws to protect LGBT people. For example, *“well, I see teenage boys who might be gay and they are religious and look so depressed. It is so sad. They will probably be married to women against their will and pretend to be straight just to get by”, and, “...there certainly needs to be a voice for LGBTQ South Asian people. Someone to normalise being gay not only to themselves, but to their families.... I think mental health in the South Asian community is vastly understated and more research and support should be given in general as well as for the South Asian LGBTQ community. If we have more support groups, more openly gay south Asian people that people can identify and relate to that would be wonderful....”*

**Lessons learned: Where do we go from here?**

These findings indicate that extensive work needs to be undertaken to improve awareness of the difficulties faced by gay South Asian males at risk of ‘honour’ abuse and violence in England and across the UK. The literature review and study findings overviewed in this chapter highlight a number of salient areas that research, policy, and practice should focus on. One critical area for development includes improved education as part of the national schooling curriculum. It is encouraging that LGBT-inclusive teaching is now taking place to tackle anti-LGBT bullying in the UK. Indeed, from 2020, all secondary schools are obliged to teach pupils about sexual orientation and gender identity, while all primary schools are obliged to teach about family diversity – this may include LGBT families (Twocock, 2019).

Yet recent efforts to improve LGBT awareness and inclusivity in schools have been partially thwarted by large scale and high profile protests, led by parents and other, mostly religious, objectors across a number of schools in England’s second largest city - Birmingham. One leading protester claimed that homosexuality was not a “valid sexual relationship” (BBC News, 2019a). Another argued that the British government’s inclusivity policy was a “totalitarian endeavour to indoctrinate our children in sexual ideologies”, an “assault on the family” and a “war on morality”. The number of names on a petition set up by this demonstrator, signed over 11,400 times, illustrates the scale of these protests (Parveen, 2019). It is notable that a large proportion of the parents involved in this protest are British Asian Muslims (BBC News, 2019a, 2019b; Parveen, 2019), born and raised in England. The tenet of these parents’ protests reflect the complex and multifaceted issues that underpin hostile attitudes towards homosexuality in many collectivist cultures, as reported by participants in this and other studies (see Lowe et al, 2019). For these reasons, efforts to improve awareness about LGBT inclusivity in schools would do well to consider the specific challenges faced by British gay people from South Asian backgrounds raised in religious families. Above all, the design and delivery of school educational programmes need to be culturally sensitive to protect the well-being of young people vulnerable to antigay ‘honour’ abuse who may feel the way participants in this study described – anxious, guilty, afraid, depressed, ashamed, self-hating and suicidal.

Another important lesson gleaned from this work is the importance of raising general awareness as well as professional awareness, with specific regard to the ways in which South Asian gay males might experience ‘honour’ abuse. For example, both the literature review

and study participants indicated that one of the most common ways in which gay South Asian males experience homophobic 'honour' abuse is the use of coercive control and verbal abuse to force them into marriage (FMU, 2016,2018; Jaspal, 2014; Khan, Hall & Lowe, 2017; Razzall & Khan, 2017; Samad, 2010). With this in mind, it is important to note the Forced Marriage Unit (2019, pp. 7) reported that:

*“...the majority of referrals (around 60%) come from professionals as well as other third parties e.g. non-governmental organisations. The other 20% of calls come largely from colleagues, friends or family members of the victim. The fact that victims self-reporting represents only a fifth of cases may reflect the hidden nature of forced marriage and the fact that victims may fear reprisals from their family if they come forward.”*

These findings indicate that there may be particular value in encompassing information on homophobic 'honour' abuse against South Asian males in future public awareness campaigns. Indeed, increased awareness of forced marriages in the UK, for both males and females, most likely explain the two-fold increase in cases reported to the FMU in 2018 (N=1,764), representing a 47% increase compared with 2017 (N=1,196). This increase was partly credited to increased media attention and high profile governmental campaigns.

Another important factor in raising awareness lies with religious and community leaders in collectivist communities in the UK. The extent to which 'honour' based abuse and religiosity are associated is often debated (Lowe et al, 2019). Some have found support for this link (e.g., Chesler and Bloom, 2012; Gengler et al. 2018) and while others argue any links are tentative and misleadingly conflated with Islam in particular (e.g., Bhanbhro, Cronin De Chavez, & Lusambili, 2016). What is undisputable, however, is that 'honour' based abuse, violence and killings are often justified by perpetrators, on religious grounds. Thus, there is a clear need for religious and community leaders to be involved in openly condemning these abusive acts and to play a visible part in changing patriarchal norms of hypermasculinity and rigid gender roles. A good example and role model is a leading imam from Manchester in the north of England, Irfan Chishti, who, in a leading newspaper (McVeigh, 2009), stated:

*It is not an Islamic issue, it's more of a tribal tradition that cuts across several faiths, but I can say categorically that it is not acceptable. It's difficult to ascertain the extent of this problem but I like to think that faith leaders are speaking out against it. Honour is a way of measuring dignity and respect and it is a very individualistic thing. Dishonour to one person is not the same as to another but we have to be very clear that there is never any justification for such horrific crimes.*

## Conclusions

In this chapter, the literature reviewed and study findings presented indicate that antigay 'honour' abuse is a real and lived problem for gay males of South Asian origin living in England. The homonegative 'honour' abuse they experienced appears to stem from the complex interplay of multiple factors, including the power of honour and shame in culturally collectivist communities, institutionalised patriarchy, and other societal influences such as traditional families, cultural norms and institutional systems.

It is no surprise that respondents in this study reported myriad negative psychological effects resulting specifically from aligning their sexual identity with their cultural orientation, including shame and low psychological well-being. The impact of this conflicting-identity has been explored by Jaspal (2014), whose study of British Asian gay men found that they experienced a host of negative emotional experiences including invisibility, loss of control, sadness, humiliation, embarrassment and self-loathing. Also troubling are findings that a person's adherence to honour-related cultural values - such as *izzat* and *sharam* - and fears that they have dishonoured their family may predispose a person to suicide (Roberts, Miller, & Azrael, 2019). Indeed, research studies have found an association between honour cultures that emphasises strict gender-roles and hypersensitivity to reputational threats with higher rates of suicide (Crowder & Kemmelmeier, 2014). The volatility of this is further demonstrated when added to the mix are findings from others studies that highlight the vulnerability of British Asian gay men in the UK at risk for abuse from family members, with a third being victim to domestic abuse by a family member since the age of 16 years (Varney, 2013).

At time of writing, the protests at schools in Birmingham show no sign of abating. This suggests that despite progress in the domains of academia and social policy, there are clear pockets of homophobic familial and community resistance that impede efforts to achieve equal rights for LGBT people in the UK. It is in this milieu that the findings of a survey of school and collage aged young people ought to be of great concern, as 3 in 4 gay and bisexual boys from ethnic minorities reported thoughts of taking their own life (Gusap & Taylor, nd). In light of these findings, we think a fitting end to this chapter are the words of Matt Mahmood-Ogston (nd), who set up the *Naz and Matt Foundation*, after his Birmingham born fiancé took his own life:

*On 30th July, 2014, my fiancé, my partner in everything, and eternal soulmate Naz (Dr Nazim Mahmood) sadly passed away, two days after his religious family confronted him about his sexuality. It was the first time they had heard about our 13-year relationship and our plans to marry. They told Naz to go to a psychiatrist to be*

*'cured'. They treated him like a disease that needed to be got rid of. The day after Naz passed away I was told by his family that he was living in 'sin' because of their religious beliefs. In the same breath I was also told that I was living in 'sin' because of 'my religion'. They told me not to tell anyone that Naz 'liked men' as it would bring 'shame' on their family. Out of respect I followed their wishes, until it reached a point and I decided I could not sit back and let this happen to anyone else ever again.*

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