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

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**Introduction to the Special Issue on Honour Based Abuse,
Violence, and Killings.**

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Guest Editorial

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 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. Firstly, topics that relate to obstacles in formal help-seeking responses include police treatment of vulnerable 'at risk' adults (Aplin, 2018), victims' concerns about reporting to police (Gangoli et al., 2018), and professional management of collective violence (Lidman & Hong, 2018). Secondly, 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 Nesbitt and Cohen (1996), a plethora of research has examined males' readiness to aggress in "cultures of

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3 honor”, yet reference to this is uncommon despite its clear relevance. Psychologically-
4 oriented motivational models of honour violence (based on Theory of Planned Behavior, e.g.,
5 Roberts, 2014) are also likely to be valuable.
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8 Applying alternate perspectives permits a more holistic examination of questions such
9 as, *why do some males in collectivistic honour cultures use or justify extreme honour-based*
10 *violence or coercion against female kin, while others do not?* It would also be useful if
11 empirical attention focused not only on why some people aggress, but the nuances in their
12 attitudes and motivations for doing so. This would help us understand why some males
13 oppose or desist honour-based abuse, despite the powerful force of social expectations. Other
14 questions include, *why do some females endorse or perpetrate honour abuse against other*
15 *females in collectivistic cultures of honour?* This topic is often overlooked even though it
16 conflicts with traditional gender role expectations of women as non-aggressive and protective
17 of close kin. In the broader aggression literature, contemporary knowledge on female abusers
18 indicates that honour abuse by women will not be satisfactorily explained by forcefully
19 extrapolating from research on male aggression. This view is amplified by recent empirical
20 research that challenges traditional views with reports of mothers, in particular, using extreme
21 methods of honour abuse, often against their own daughters, that cannot always be explained
22 by male coercion (Aplin, 2017; Bates, 2018; Khan, 2018).
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32 To aid the myriad challenges faced by safeguarding practitioners and emergency
33 services, I am also keen for evidence-based research to bridge the gap between knowledge
34 and practice. For perpetrators, effective violence management ought to be both culturally-
35 aware and based on validated methods. A good example is the PATRIARCH (Belfrage et al,
36 2012), developed specifically to guide professionals on the assessment of honour-based
37 crime. Empirically-rooted psychological theories, currently used in interventions to promote
38 prosocial attitudes and victim empathy in comparable violent offender groups, provides a
39 framework for designing effective perpetrator programmes. If the goal of our collective
40 efforts is a change in how ‘honour’ is misconstrued (e.g., “Sharaf Heroes” programme,
41 Rexvid & Schlytter, 2012), then adopting robust models of attitudinal change seem a good
42 place to start.
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50 My final words are of gratitude to those involved in the production of this special
51 issue. I thank all authors who submitted their work to *JACPR*, the expert reviewers for their
52 meticulous and thoughtful comments, the publishing team for ensuring a quality and timely
53 publication, and finally, Editor in Chief, Jane Ireland, for the opportunity to act as Guest
54 Editor on what I believe is a laudable first special edition on this topic.
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