

Chapter 11

Demystifying the Culture and Causes of Honor Killings in Canada

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ABSTRACT

The chapter aims to unfold the mishaps of honor killings in the Canadian context comprising its key causes, and issues leading to honor-based offenses against the women in the family. Although, honor killings in Canada are rare to notice, but are prevalent majorly due to immigrant communities. The chapter also demystifies the case studies which witnessed honor killings in Canada. The Shafia case which is one of the landmark cases of the honor killing in Kingston, Canada led to the painful demise of three daughters and the first wife of Mohd. Shafia. Furthermore, it also explores the Canadian media reports on honor killing and how they create a biased view regarding the incidents surrounding these crimes in the public domain. In conclusion, several ways are highlighted upon which the Canadian government should act in order to diminish the prevalence of honor-based violence throughout Canada such as introducing effective immigration policies and making aware the youth of the laws concerning gender equality, freedom, and fairness.

Honor killings in Canada have been rare but still its incidents are prevalent. The cases and data of such honor crimes remain limited in Canada but they may generally lie under the broader homicide statistics with regards to domestic violence and cultural violence. However, it is observed that around thirteen or fifteen honor

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-7240-1.ch011

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killings have been witnessed since 2002 in Canada (Aujla & Gill, n.d.). In 2021, the homicides increased to the rate of 2.06 per 100,000 people which denotes a 3% rise compared to 2020 (David & Jaffray, n.d.). In Canada, 27% of victims who belong to Indigenous communities faced violence during 2022 including homicide (Infographic: Homicide in Canada, 2022, 2023). Around 874 homicides were reported in 2022 in Canada which increased to 8% in comparison to 2021, resulting in a rate of 2.25 homicides per 100,000 population (Infographic: Homicide in Canada, 2022, 2023). The causes for this rising rate mainly remain the lack of proper support service from the authorities to help the victims and strict control over the autonomy of women. Deviation from strict cultural beliefs or norms by the female members of the family also resulted in increased no. of honor killing cases in Canada.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this chapter employs a qualitative approach in order to understand the culture and causes of honor killings in Canada, including the intersection of immigration and gender-based violence. Some high-profile cases such as the Shafia Case, the murder of Jaswinder Kaur Sidhu, and the Aqsa Parvez murder case were explored to analyze the factors liable behind the honor killings in Canada within the immigrant communities. The research also involves the quantitative approach by utilizing multiple data collection methods including case studies, media reports, government publications to gather statistical data on reported cases of honor killings, legal documents, and scholarly works pertaining to the honor crimes in Canada. These sources provide the perspective on how honor killings are committed, reported, and addressed in Canada. They also show that it is frequently the case for someone to be the victim of abuse and torture when a community believes that they have violated cultural norms and values. Reports from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, judicial decisions, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms emphasized the legal framework for the treatment of honor killings in Canada. The scholarly work alongside the intersection of culture and immigration also outlined the challenges faced by immigrant women in Canada. Therefore, this methodological approach adds to a more nuanced understanding of the issue in Canada's multicultural society by demystifying the social, legal, and cultural perspectives.

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