



*Honour-Based Abuse in Scotland:
Evidence and pathways to strengthen
protection for victims*

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SUII KNOWLEDGE
EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

SUMMARY REPORT

MAIN OBJECTIVES AND CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

Domestic abuse is a daily fact for many women in Scotland regardless of cultural background or socio-economic status. It is a significant and persistent social problem, and a *major issue* (Scottish Government, 2009) where statistically men are identified predominantly as the protagonists and women are the victims.

Police Scotland have noted a rise in the number of incidents of domestic abuse over the past five years. In 2020/2021, 65,251 incidents were recorded identifying an increase of 4% from the previous year, of which 80% involved a female victim and male accused (Police Scotland, 2022). These figures do not, however, highlight the number of women from the minority ethnic community who were victims of domestic abuse. This is significant where women, who experience barriers to accessing support, are socially excluded, marginalised and are more vulnerable to domestic abuse due to their gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status influenced by the lack of recourse to public funds and uncertainty of their immigration status (McLaughlin, 2017).

At a strategic level, the Scottish Government “Equally Safe” (2018) policy document sets out a framework for tackling and working toward the eradication of all forms of violence against women and girls. It recognises that violence against Scottish women, children and young people is as a result of gender inequality, where historically society has afforded greater status, wealth, influence, control, and power to men (Scottish Government, 2018). Nonetheless, the Scottish Government has invested considerable resources both financially and administratively in organisations within the women’s voluntary sector. It has activated media campaigns to raise awareness of violence against women, children, and young people. Indeed, there is clear recognition that many of society’s ills can germinate or be eradicated in the home. (McLaughlin, 2017)

The Crown Office and Police Scotland (2019) work in partnership to confront domestic abuse and have developed a Joint Protocol to confront criminal conduct arising therefrom. There is also a plethora of legislation, policy, and procedure available to protect victims.

HONOUR BASED ABUSE – LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a dearth of research in Scotland in relation to violence against women, children, and young people in minority ethnic communities (McLaughlin, 2017) and more specifically in relation to the impact of honour-based abuse (HBA) upon women.

There is no evidence to suggest that women from a minority ethnic community endure greater levels of domestic abuse than indigenous Scottish women (McLaughlin, 2017). Gill argues that socio-cultural practices such as forced marriage and honour-based violence are part of a larger phenomenon of violence against women that derives from a wide range of socio-cultural values and norms, many common to both mainstream British society and minority communities that intersect to legitimise and control women by men (in Lombard & McMillan, 2013: 146).

In this research, we recognise that men may be victims of HBA, the report focuses however on women.

Within “Equally Safe”, the Scottish Government (2018) defines HBA as

“So called ‘honour based’ violence, including dowry related violence, female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, and ‘honour’ crimes.”

The statutory definition of domestic abuse within the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 specifies the perpetrator as *partner or ex-partner* of the victim. There is no specific legislative protection for victims of HBA where the perpetrators may include a combination of *males, females, partner, ex-partner, and other family or community members* of the victim. Police Scotland have nevertheless implemented an action plan for supporting victims of HBA, and between 2014 to 2020 they have recorded 949 incidents of HBA (Police Scotland, 2020).

Research of McLaughlin (2017) involved nine immigrant women who had migrated to Scotland for marriage purposes from the South Asian sub-continent. The women were marriage migrants who had entered the UK on a spousal visa and whose marriages had broken down as a consequence of domestic abuse. All of the women described being raised within an honour culture whereby allegiance to their family honour was an important factor and influential upon their decision when attempting to flee abusive behaviour. The women in the study experienced abuse and mistreatment at the hands of their husbands and other family members either singularly *or in cumulo*.

Multi perpetrator abuse involves intimate partners and others participating in abuse and victimisation (Salter, 2014). Hemat Gryffe Women’s Aid based in Glasgow and Shakti Women’s Aid based in Edinburgh are the leading and most experienced women’s organisations in Scotland providing accommodation and outreach services to women from minority ethnic backgrounds experiencing HBA. They recognise that there are women living in Scotland requiring protection from multiple perpetrators who are intimate partners, family members, friends and associates who collude in collective victimisation (Salter 2014).

Research by McLaughlin (2017), where the participant were marriage migrants, identified family honour as a concept linked to respect for one’s parents, family, community members and authority. Prior to migrating to Scotland, the women described being raised to recognise its importance and behave in a manner respectful to the honour of the family. Upon closer examination, it is a powerful concept that can impact upon the autonomy of women in many areas of their lives. For example, there were occasions where women had to conform to the opinions and wishes of their parents by agreeing to the selection of a husband chosen by their parents, often with the involvement of extended family and community. The women did not have any influence in that decision and neither their thoughts nor views were considered in relation to the selected suitor. Some of the women proceeded with the arrangement believing their parents to have their best interests at heart and also because their individual and family reputation would remain untarnished in the eyes of the wider community.

Patrilocal migration meant the women join their husbands in Scotland after marriage. Upon arrival the women described being treated in a dishonourable fashion in the extended family home whereby the practice of family honour was unreciprocated given the manner in which they were treated by their husbands and/or in laws. It was difficult for women to separate themselves from the abusive behaviour for fear of repercussions and response from their own family in their country of origin for potentially damaging their family honour and own reputation (McLaughlin, 2017).

Family honour was central to family life and as a consequence it consumed their decision-making. After migration it interfered with their personal autonomy as women hesitated in relation to their personal safety

preferring to put the reputation of their family first. The practice of family honour operated within a patriarchal ideology where women were shunned, ostracised, subjected to attempted intimate partner-femicide and extreme violence for failing to conform to expectations and behave in a manner acceptable to the male members of the family and community. The honour code silenced women and rendered them incapable of speaking about abuse and mistreatment. Adhering to a strict code of honour is a powerful discourse, which left women subordinate to coercive control at the hands of multiple family members including the female family members. (McLaughlin, 2017).

Research by McLaughlin, Wheate and McGowan (2018) examined the interaction of police officers with South Asian women victims-survivors of domestic abuse. The data provided the foundation to enhance the confidence of police officers when responding to women from the South Asian community experiencing domestic abuse. Qualitative interviews showed that abused women experienced increased confidence after contact with Police Scotland, whilst also highlighting barriers they faced preventing them contacting with the police including family pressure, immigration status, financial, cultural, educational, language, and childcare-related obstacles.

A significant finding of this research was the impact that family honour had upon the decision-making ability of victim/survivors of HBA. Women faced a choice of family protection versus police protection when attempting to access support or to leave. Women experienced family pressure before, during or after making a report to the police, including being discouraged from reporting rape and sexual assault, pressured to drop court cases, encouraged to stay with their abuser(s) within an extended family home, pressured to return to the perpetrator, prevented from calling the police as the issue was a “*family problem*” not requiring police involvement. Significantly, the cultural competence of police officers when called to a domestic abuse incident, and the cultural difference between police officers and victims was considered important by the women. This research identified a gap in violence against women from South Asian backgrounds. In particular where cultural practices such as family honour (*izzat*) controlled the behaviour of women and constricted their choices, especially in relation to help seeking within close knit family networks. (McLaughlin *et al*, 2018).

Family honour has negative connotations for women who do not adhere to it. It imposes a level of fear on women as it controls them emotionally. Women experiencing HBA are criticised, shamed, ostracised from the family and community and in the worst-case are likely to experience extreme harm or danger. The women were tied to it, and it influences women when deciding whether to leave or stay with their abuser(s) (McLaughlin, 2017).

This new research categorises the real-life circumstances of victim survivors of HBA at the hands of multiple perpetrators. The research will identify that honour abuse affects women from a range of cultural backgrounds and does not happen in isolation within specific communities. It is different from domestic abuse as the intersectionality of factors: *gender, ethnicity, cultural background, social status, socio-cultural and ancestral traditions* contribute to why HBA occurs, trap victims in abusive situations which makes it so difficult to police and to escape from.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the research identified at the outset were as follows:

- To consider patriarchal behaviour, customary practices, and socio-cultural traditions that may lead to HBA of women, and how these factors intersect with the victims’ contact with Police Scotland.

- To consider whether the Scottish definition of domestic abuse protects victims of honour-based abuse and whether action is required to improve the current definition e.g., through explicit HBA legislation.

METHODOLOGY

The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 introduced protection for victims of domestic abuse where they suffer abusive behaviour at the hands of their *partner and ex-partner*. The legislation also includes regulating or monitoring of day-to-day activities of the victim, limiting freedom of action, and frightening or punishing behaviour. This legislation is not accessible, however, to victim-survivors of *honour-abuse* where they may be suffering similar behaviours, but at the hands of *multiple perpetrators*.

The term Honour Based Abuse (HBA) embraces a variety of incidents or crimes including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, abduction, forced marriage, imprisonment and murder (not an exhaustive list), where the individual, their family or their community is punished for actually, or allegedly, undermining what the family or community believes to be the correct code of behaviour, and which could bring shame to the family or community (Police Scotland, 2020). There is no statutory crime of HBA in Scotland; HBA is currently an 'aggravator' for other crimes. The research team recognised that the abuse of women from minority ethnic backgrounds is rarely discussed in relation to HBA, there is a lack of empirical data, research, and recorded debate concerning HBA at a strategic level. At the outset the aim of the study was to ascertain whether specific HBA legislation was required to protect victims. An analysis of current legal and policy frameworks concerning HBA were considered as well as the protection available from Police Scotland.

Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Strathclyde to facilitate three online focus group sessions. Event one with professionals working in the field of HBA, a second event with victim survivors of HBA and a third session to produce the findings of the research. To garner interest and recruit participants the research was advertised throughout Scotland by members of the research team across violence against women networks using email communication. A radio advert ran for a few months in English and two minority ethnic languages (Urdu and Punjabi) via the popular minority ethnic radio station Radio Awaz as well as the creation of a HBA website (www.honour-abuse-research.org.uk).

Using a computer orientated platform as a mechanism to obtain qualitative data in this study was radically different from the typical feminist methodology normally recommended when interviewing female victims in relation to a sensitive topic such as gender-based violence which involve an in person, face to face meeting with the researcher and the research participant enabling rich data to be captured (Reinharz, 1992). Interviews with women from a minority ethnic background on a one-to-one basis may require inclusion of an interpreter in the language of the interviewee. In this scenario more time has to be set aside during the interview as the answers to questions raised involve a three-way method of communication between the researcher, interpreter, and research participant (McLaughlin, 2017). Interviews conducted on a one-to-one basis allows the researcher to communicate directly with the woman, is more personal whereby women can narrate their experiences privately to the researcher and allows the researcher to observe more acutely the emotions of the interviewee which is unlikely to happen during an online focus group involving a number of women. (Reinharz, 1992).

Archibald *et al* (2019) recognise advances in technology provide a platform to conduct qualitative research. Using video conferencing in research is advantageous due to improved internet access, increased use of electronic devices worldwide, convenience, time and cost effectiveness balanced against in person

interviews enabling focus groups to be conducted across large geographical areas. Since the coronavirus pandemic a greater use of computer technology has become the norm in workplaces with staff having access to online platforms as a facility for meetings, webinars, and training. More and more people are using online platforms for personal use for ordering food, clothing and paying bills. The use of Zoom video conferencing in this study enabled the individual focus group sessions to be recorded in real time.

ONLINE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The research team are women experienced in all forms of violence against women as well as academics from a range of backgrounds: Law, Psychology, Social Work and Social Policy. The team members have experience of using online platforms for discussions and research purposes in their own workplaces and independent from this specific piece of research. Despite not being from a minority ethnic background, the team did not foresee a barrier or difficulty when conducting research of a culturally sensitive subject area given their level of expertise and experience in the field (McLaughlin 2017; Renzetti and Lee, 1993). Prior to the online sessions with victim-survivors, the research team ensured interpreters were available to allow women to communicate in their first language. The data collected involved video recording of the discussions in the three focus groups and transcription of data using NVivo qualitative data analysis software.

The online focus group discussions took place using the online platform Zoom and all of the events were facilitated by a member of the team.

EVENT 1

Event 1 took place in May 2022 and thirty-three people joined the online discussion. The session included an international multi-disciplinary group of stakeholders from a range of professional backgrounds expert in violence against women, practitioners and experts in law, psychology, social work. The participants received information in relation to the discussion as well as joining information via MS Teams prior to the session. The participants also received a Costa Coffee voucher in advance of the session to thank them for participating.

EVENTS 2 & 3

Two events were held with victim-survivors given the level of interest in women wanting to participate. The online focus group discussions with victim-survivors took place in August 2022 and September 2022. At the commencement of each session the facilitator ensured that the women were put at ease, they were asked to take their time when responding to specific questions and assured that their information would not be shared beyond the research team. The women were told that information shared would be stored securely, and they would not be identified. The women were asked to change their name, use a pseudonym and to keep their cameras off to protect their identity, although some preferred to keep the camera switched on. The facilitator asked the same questions during each session.

Fifteen women participated from across Scotland in the online discussions. The women were from a range of ethnic backgrounds and communities. All the women were victims or survivors of HBA. During the session in August 2022, one woman became upset when recounting her experiences, stopped speaking and turned her camera off. She was contacted by a member of the research team immediately who provided support to ensure she was able to continue. During the September 2022 online discussion a few of the women raised questions and asked for help relative to their individual experiences, unrelated to the research. To alleviate immediate concerns, the facilitator asked a specialist women's support worker at the session to speak to the

women and contact was also made after the event with Hemat Gryffe Women's Aid and Shakti Women's Aid who had referred these women to ensure their wellbeing.

Prior to the commencement of the online discussions with the women they were issued with a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form to be signed. Staff members from Hemat Gryffe Women's Aid based in Glasgow, Shakti Women's Aid based in Edinburgh, the Iranian Kurdish and Women's Rights Organisation, based in Dundee, and the Daisy Project based in Glasgow acted as gatekeepers in the successful recruitment of some of the participants and managed the completion of the paperwork with women in order to participate in the online discussions.

Grateful thanks are extended to the staff within these women's organisations for their support and assistance to the research team for taking them to explain the written information required to satisfy Ethical considerations. At the request of some participants, the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form was further simplified as the women considered the language too technical, complex and without meaning. Fourteen women who participated in the online discussions received a Scotland Loves Local Voucher and one woman received an Amazon voucher (as she moved out with the Scottish jurisdiction) to thank them for their participation in the research.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE INSIGHTS RESULTING FROM THE PROGRAMME

The findings reveal that HBA is a deeply complex phenomenon with significant levels of nuance and depth. We found that accounts from both primary experience (victims) and secondary exposure (professionals working with victims) often dovetailed to produce an understanding of HBA as an ecological system of harm situated within a framework of embedded norms and patterns of behaviour. In most cases, these dimensions are sewn deeply into the fabric and structure of family and community life. Whilst individual experiences of HBA have a number of complex elements, we found consensus across participants in their understanding of what HBA is and how it operates as a disciplinary mechanism. Core themes emerged as follows:

Dimensions of Abuse

Abuse and mistreatment featured as a strong theme throughout all discussions. Physical, emotional, and controlling behaviours emerged across victim accounts and professional understanding. For some women, this abuse was said to be ingrained from an early age where their experiences were restricted based on their gender, e.g., education opportunities and choice of partner from their own families:

"Female honour-based abuse is a kind of domestic abuse because it runs in the family basically and we suffer as woman or girl, suffer abuse because if we do something [behaviour that deviates from the norm] it will bring a shame to the family and to maintain the integrity or dignity of the family".

There was some discussion around education and life lessons taught at an early age within families to prepare women for what was ahead in their own marriages:

"And I think [own family] was preparing me for my future. You know, when I go to somebody's house, it should be like this ... It should be like that. You are carrying our family's pride on your head to the next house."

Once an arrangement was made, and women transitioned to their 'new family,' or as referred to in this summary 'his family,' women were often controlled and isolated from friends and other forms of communication. Some women reported physical harm by their husbands, but often discussed this type of abuse in relation to their mothers-in-law involvement in their relationship, and rules not being followed:

"My in laws, they're calling my husband, feeding him wrong things about me and he will come and torture me".

Such roles were intertwined with responsibility of the household and the role of looking after the whole family. Abuse would be increased if women were seen to speaking to anyone outside of the family or seeking support. If women had managed to break away from the family, they often had nowhere to go and would seek refuge with their own families. A woman who had broken away from her marriage was told she was not welcome back in her own family home as she had 'brought shame upon the family'. Women were subject to blackmail and were more vulnerable if they had children. Professionals spoke about the differences between DA and HBA, and recommended that an understanding of this is required amongst key professionals and those likely to have first contact e.g., the police or social workers. In one example, a participant referred to her own situation where she did not seek help or support for the abuse she was enduring, due to a lack of understanding of police roles and lack of awareness of support services that were available:

"If she's in trouble, whom she would have to first ask for the help, how could she take help from the social workers? How could she know [about services]. In my case where I have been suffering from the second month or third month when I came here, and I have no idea where to go. And I have nothing. No one's number"

One important sub-theme that emerged – particularly in Event 3 - was dimensions of coercive control linked to domestic servitude within relationships. Women discussed their husband's expectation that it was the duty of their wives to run the home, be a mother and work full time, giving him all her money, identifying a progression of control from the start of a relationship (or marriage):

"Step by step, he starts controlling me financially with bank accounts..."

It was evident that some husbands were stripping their wives of their identity, but identity that even the women do not control i.e., their own culture. One woman spoke of her Nigerian background and her husband telling her she was not allowed to mix with 'black' people when she arrived in Scotland. The participant states that he went on to 'ban' her from cooking traditional home dishes:

"He warned me. He said I don't want your friends, black people. I don't want to see you with black people, black women".

"Even if I cook my food, he doesn't like my kid to eat my African food, my country, that was racism from my husband".

Most women discussed restrictions their husbands placed upon them in relation to their physical appearance:

"So, when I get my money, I buy everything I want like a woman, buy lipstick, watch, clothes. So, I have my money when we go out when I'm looking beautiful. He will first tell me, don't wear this, this is for prostitute. And I said, do I look like a prostitute? He told me, I don't want my friends to see you're wearing that."

Other women discussed their husband's devious behaviour, with one woman discussing how she was 'tricked' into becoming pregnant to prevent her from progressing in her career:

"He wanted me to quit the job. He made me pregnant during probationary period, purposely so that I don't get into a job."

Some women tried to rationalise their husband's behaviour, discussing how they were perhaps insecure and jealous, which then resulted in a need to exert entitlement or power and control, often by actively isolating women from friends:

"You know, he is insecure that if I go out, I will have more friends. I will be independent. I will start living my life and that is a breach of culture. They don't want to see a woman independent, living her life colourfully."

"So, he started controlling me... he started chasing away my friends. That one hurt me. I told him no; those are my friends."

Despite most women being aware of their husbands controlling and abusive behaviour, they often felt they had little support and were 'trapped' in their marriage. Some women discussed seeking support from their own families, only to be reminded of the shame they would bring to their family name:

"But my Mum.... stopping me. No, you can't do this. No, you won't do this. My sisters are stopping me, so if I speak about something they get angry with me, they don't talk to me for days... Now this is how you're going to ruin the family's reputation."

Some women discussed the support and reassurance often given to their spouse from their families that they were, in fact, 'good husbands' - despite having knowledge and awareness of abuse being present in these relationships:

"He's doing something. His parents are approving of his behaviour because they're not stopping him from doing that, and especially when it like it runs in the family, the abuse thing, the violence thing, then they try to normalise it, they try to shut your mouth and keep you quiet."

In one example, a participant spoke about being completely cut off and isolated from her family, friends, and in-laws with extreme threats of violence:

"My husband was so controlling that he didn't let me speak to any of his family members. Neither my family members. He wanted me to isolate from everybody so that I don't tell them what is happening with me, because that will put him down. I remember once, he said, you should not tell anything to anybody, even if you're threatened you are to be killed in the house, you're not supposed to go and tell anybody."

The impact of this level of control and isolation for some women led to declining mental health and suicidal ideation:

"It's mental torture, you know, you are left with nothing. Finally, in the end, what a girl feels is she feels depressed. She feels killing herself. She feels, you know, you cannot speak to your kid. Everything. There's a barrier. You cannot speak to him. You need some adult to talk to."

Honour, Respect, and Hierarchy

Professionals and victims were of the view that family honour, the name and reputation of the family held significance in relation to position and standing within communities. Most participants recognised that they were not just marrying one person but entering a broader contract with a whole new family with expectations of upholding honour and reputation:

“Our elder - they give their time, and they give their whole life to build a name and sometimes we also have to help them to make his name and make it honour as in honourable”.

“Most of the people work so hard and make their name in their society or in their family and you know it's a very big thing in our country”.

For most participants, honour in families was closely associated with ‘respect’, but for some this was challenging if their new family had different values and traditions to their own:

“I didn't like them. No. Because of their gatherings. Because of their language is totally different from us. Their habits and each and everything... totally different.”

Across discussions, it was clear that a family’s name and reputation takes time to build, and it was evident too that certain positions within a family hold power and dominance over others, contingent in most cases with age, education, and gender. A particular role that was discussed at length and considered at the top of the hierarchy amongst female family members was the position of mother-in-law:

“So, mother-in-law is the most important thin, mother-in-law and after that is sister-in-law. They the main two characters, is mother-in-law and sister-in-law.”

Families of each spouse also take a position within a hierarchy with a husband’s family having dominance here:

“Mother-in-law family, father-in-law family is higher. And girls’ family, they are thinking low.”

Such positions are central to the values, rules and control a family has, particularly of a wife who enters from the ‘outside’. A number of participants referred to the immediate expectations placed upon them by families after marriage:

“They treated me like a helper.”

“They think the girl have responsibility to look after all like the members in the home and even a mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law and the husband.”

Submissive relationships

A common pattern emerged across discussions in Events’ 2 and 3 where women presented as very much the submissive partner in all types of relationship. Many women discussed the lack or absence of control they had over their own decisions, and that permission was often sought and required from other family members:

“If she wanted to study and go abroad for the study, if her mother says no, then she will talk with her brother, with her sister, if they say no, then we can't do anything.”

“Sometimes they used to beat me, sometimes I used to hide in the home. She did not allow me to meet someone... she didn't allow me to use the mobile phone. She didn't allow anything. I am just like in a cave.”

Participants frequently referred to having challenging relationships with their mother-in-law, who often played a significant role in the abuse they endured, due in part to the perceived control they had over their sons and protection given to sons from their mothers:

“And she said no, I'm your mother. I'm talking to you. I mean, you have to be aware you have to respect, then the son is, you know, he is helpless. And he said no I can't do anything because my mother says these types of things.”

“One time my husband abused me physically, she [his mother] said no don't go, go outside. No need a doctor. No need to go out anywhere. Just stay home.”

Women discussed the reactions of the family members when trying to break away from their marriages and attempting to seek support:

“But my Mum, stopping me. No, you can't do this. No, you won't do this. My sisters are stopping me, so if I speak about something they are angry with me, they don't talk to me for days or say this is what you're going to do. This is how you're going to ruin the family's reputation.”

Barriers to support

There were many barriers to seeking support disclosed by women who were aware of their situation and abuse they were enduring. The women discussed how they were ‘scared’ and ‘fearful’ of repercussions if they themselves were caught asking for or seeking support.

They discussed how the family, in particular the mother-in-law, would lack respect for authority and the police. A number of women felt they did not know who to trust in fear of information being passed back to their mother-in-law or husband:

“But if a lady or if a mother she's not free to talk with them because she scared all the time and if she's new here, she has no idea, she thinks twice.”

“So how can she take help from others if she's scared all of the time. Even if she talks with the school, the child's schoolteacher, she worried that maybe they called the family”.

Interestingly some professionals in Event 1 suggested that women are not fully aware of what HBA is, but the conversations with women in Events 2 and 3 suggested otherwise. Women clearly understood behaviour that was considered to be deviating from the family rules or family honour could lead to them being ostracised, they knew they were being abused but felt trapped in most cases. A number reflected they could have left earlier and held their husbands accountable for their actions. However, some women felt that their own families should also be accountable for the abuse they endured because they did not help stop it or help them to escape. Some participants reported that although their families would be emotionally supportive over the phone, they would still not encourage them to leave their marriage:

“In a way, this supports his behaviour as well. It encourages him to treat you like this and I would say everybody in our culture, in our community is playing their role in one way or the other.”

One woman spoke of seeking support from her sisters who had witnessed the physical abuse and her injuries. However, when they (participant's sisters) went to speak to their husbands and ask 'permission', it was denied so they could not step in and support their sister in court:

"My sisters are witness to my bruises and my injuries. Although they've seen that in person in real life. I had the emotional support, but I think that was not enough when it came to reality. When it came to the court case, they were an eyewitness to that but because their husbands don't approve, they didn't have the support from their husbands, so they did not, they were not able to provide me the support."

Language was mentioned by almost all women as being a barrier to seeking support as it relates to understanding and communication. It was evident that some women had minimal English when they arrived in Scotland, so it is likely they may also find it challenging to read signs too. As such, they quickly become reliant on their husbands and therefore relying on all forms of communication through them. This made accessing support particularly challenging and goes beyond just seeking support for the abuse but also for basic health needs too:

"Thing with the doctor is women are always accompanied by a family member, so when they go in, the husband is there. I mean, and mother-in-law, sister-in-law, they are not allowed to go on their own".

Professionals added more representation in third sector organisations and mainstream services would assist women feel they have a connection with their identity, which could help with building rapport/trust, as well as addressing basic language barriers:

"Going forward, adequate funding for BME organisations needs to be addressed, and we need more BME staff in mainstreams services as well. In discussions with service users, women tell us how important it is to be able to access support in their own language, and what a difference it can make when there are support workers from their own culture/ background".

Interesting, most initial contact with services appeared to be with the police. Due to language barriers, it was clear that such experiences were stressful for participants. Many said they would often prefer to not say anything in fear that nothing would be done, and most highlighted difficulties with speaking to a translator over the phone for confidentiality reasons, who they have never met or could not see:

"The translator, they are asking questions and I am already scared and don't speak or even understand. Then sometimes they [the Police] call and through the call they said we arrange the translator. Can you speak about this in phone?"

Police presence can be an intimidating experience as the women discussed that in their own countries some police may be corrupt and you would not usually seek help from them, so it is unfamiliar to them when the Scottish police arrive when called to an incident.

"Because our culture, because we already scared and the police when here... we scared because my country police behaviour very bad reputation. Very bad."

MAIN OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Honour abuse can be distinguished from domestic abuse as it involves more than one protagonist. HBA is excluded from Scottish domestic abuse legislation which recognises perpetrators of abuse as the partner, or ex-partner of the victim. It is a practice that is not confined to one specific culture or community as evidenced by the participants in this study who contributed from various ethnicities and cultural backgrounds.

Family honour evolves *inside* a woman's family from birth but also extends *outside* to other family members and individuals in the wider community. It requires respect for family members at a senior level in the family hierarchy and controls behaviour inside the family. It is unique as it transgresses the boundaries of a woman's immediate family to her extended family, community, and wider family network locally, nationally, and internationally. It is a concept that allows for punishment of individuals who do not conform to the rules and *socio-cultural* and *ancestral* traditions of the family and wider network. Attention to a breach of the code of honour might be brought by a family member inside the woman's immediate family but can also be raised by a person outside her immediate family, who having a perceived legitimate interest in the reputation of the family network might believe there to be behaviour straying from rules which appear damaging the reputation and credibility of the network as a whole.

Principally women are at the receiving end of abuse and mistreatment for what might be perceived to be a betrayal of family honour. Family structures that are patriarchal in nature reinforce inequality between men and women. Women are required to behave in a manner that cannot be shown to be disrespectful to the male members or the associated wider family and community. Women are subordinate to the rules and norms of the family life of the community and network. The concept of honour (*izzat*) is an extension of power and control, and it is evident from this research men are the principal protagonists. However, in the family hierarchy, a mother-in-law might use her own position against the female family members categorising her also as a primary protagonist. Patriarchal family structures can limit the individuality, freedom, and autonomy of women from minority ethnic backgrounds. Ballard (2008) suggests this occurs in South Asian families and minority ethnic communities as a consequence of male family members reinforcing rules which require collective support and mutual reciprocal obligations, rather than individualistic behaviour, to create stability, to strengthen and maintain the wealth of the family and wider network (in Grillo, 2008: 45). There is little support for women who seek to challenge the rules or demands placed upon them within this environment leaving them isolated and marginalised. At a basic level the primary victim of the abuse is the woman who is actually abused and the family secondary victims. However, from the perspective of the community they will be viewed as primary victims because of the impact upon the reputation of the family and honour.

Abusive behaviour in the name of *family honour* is not subject to legislation within Scots law rather it is incorporated at a strategic level within the Scottish Government Equally Safe strategy. As currently framed, domestic abuse legislation excludes women experiencing HBA from the criminal justice system, thus preventing equal access to and redress from Scots law for women from minority ethnic backgrounds. HBA does not fit with domestic abuse legislation as the protagonists *are more than one person and not solely a husband, partner, or ex-partner*. However, HBA and mistreatment is largely perpetrated against women who endure social isolation, coercive control, and all forms of gender-based abuse. Within the national violence against women framework, there should be consideration of a separate HBA strategy including separate legislation, taking into account the intersectionality of factors affecting women from minority ethnic backgrounds.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR END USER / POLICY / PRACTICE COMMUNITIES

Suggested improvements and actions across areas of policy, practice, legislation, training, and promotion of information:

- Conduct further consultation with women who experience HBA about the creation of a specific HBA strategy and legislation.
- Creation of specific HBA policy at a strategic level, under the banner of Equally Safe, recognising that women from minority ethnic backgrounds living in Scotland are victimised and abused collectively by extended family members as well as intimate partners.
- Consult with statutory and voluntary sector organisations working with victims of HBA about the creation of a specific HBA strategy or legislation with the aim that women are equally protected within Scots law.
- Increase public awareness, nationally and internationally (taking a preventative approach) empowering women with knowledge on rights and services before they enter the United Kingdom.
- Increase community awareness of the harms of HBA through community engagement involving women, young people, parents, and older generations.
- Address access to barriers within mainstream services.
- Increase the provision of support for victims and create 'safe spaces' for victims of HBA to be heard including an increase in resources of specialist existing services working with women experiencing HBA.
- Ensure stronger messages to victims and survivors that '*upholding family honour*' does not legitimise coercive control and abuse.
- Develop specialist HBA training for professionals, in particular statutory sector professionals (teachers, social workers, police officers).
- Training for practitioners should include the recognition that HBA is situated within the national Violence Against Women and Girls strategy to enable it to be dealt with it in the same '*zero tolerance*' way, without losing the connected nuances linked to honour which can increase risk and make it more difficult for victims to seek help.
- Development of a toolkit for practitioners explaining the differences between HBA and DA to help them to recognise the signs and unique difficulties women encounter as a consequence of HBA to allow them to provide appropriate support.
- Improve partnership working between agencies. Police and other agencies require help, support, and guidance to navigate the complexity of HBA, ensuring decision making is in the best interests of victims.

- Stronger positive representation of women from minority ethnic backgrounds in public spaces to mitigate perceptions held by victims that women have to '*accept abuse*' to uphold honour and prevent shame.

PLANNED FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

- The research team will facilitate an online event later in the year to deliver the findings.
- The research team intend to produce journal articles.
- The research team will proceed with the creation of an animation following the findings of this research.

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