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## Unfolding the Truth: A Chronological Analysis of the Qandeel Baloch Murder Case in the Context of Honour, Gender, and Criminal Liability in Pakistan

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#### ABSTRACT

This study gives a critical analysis of a criminal justice response to honor-based homicide in Pakistan with respect to a qualitative doctrinal case study of FIR No. 439/16, involving the murder of Qandeel Baloch. By employing an interpretive research design, the paper analytically examines forensic evidence, post-mortem results and utterances of the accused in pursuant to Section 342 CrPC as well as the rationale of judicial processes in the Sessions Court (Case No. 45/S of 2016/2019; Trial No. 24-T of 2016/2019) and Lahore High Court Multan Bench (Criminal Appeal No. 917 of 2019). The results indicate that honour killing is laid down in interlaced socio-cultural, gendered and legal system where patriarchal values and societal influence and systemic injustices legitimize acts of violence against the female gender. Forensic and procedural research confirms the virtues and vices of

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institutional systems and the statements by the accused prove the force of gender practices and concepts of honour in criminal activity and legal discourses. Judicial Critique In judicial critique, particularly of the appellate level, the loopholes in the clarity of the evidentiary needs, procedural protection, and the discord between familial compromise and justice by merit are identified. It is against this background that, by placing these findings within the frames of the criminological theories of structural violence, social-cultural norms, gender-role socialization, and legal-institutional failure, this study highlights the dynamic interplay between culture, law, and gender in honour-related homicides. The research identifies that the solution to the problem of honour killings must be developed in a multi-dimensional approach involving legal reforms, policies formulation, and community-based response to eliminate the normalization of honour killings. Such understandings will enhance to the academic discourse as well as to the practical approaches to improving criminal justice responsiveness to gender-based crime in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Honour killings; Criminal justice; Forensic evidence; Gender norms; Legal reform; Pakistan

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## INTRODUCTION

Qandeel Baloch, also known as Fouzia Azeem, was born in March 1990 in Dera Ghazi Khan in a marginalized Saraiki-speaking family, to eventually become the first big social-media celebrity and vocal advocate on women rights issues in Pakistan (Bakht & Alizai, 2023). By using her outspoken digital atmosphere, her self-portraits, videos, and commenting on gender inequality, she denied patriarchal expectations and provided the voices to women whose interests are usually silenced under the banner of honor. According to scholars, the path taken by Qandeel was a mirror of how women as a group were trying to negotiate the realities of classes, gender and social control (Langah & Umrani, 2022). She employed digital platforms to raise issues on empowerment and inequality despite general criticism, making her a symbol of resistance (Azhar, 2025).

In 2016, her brother allegedly killed her in the name of "honor," revealing the dangers women who challenge patriarchal norms confront and shaping Pakistani gender justice and law reform discourse (Shah, 2023).

### Research Questions

RQ. 1. How did the chronological investigation and collection of forensic evidence, including the post-mortem report, contribute to understanding the criminal liability in the Qandeel Baloch murder case?

RQ.2. In what ways do the statements of the accused under Section 342 Cr.P.C. reveal the interplay of honour, gender norms, and intent in the perpetration of the crime?

RQ.3. How did the Courts evaluate the evidence, including forensic findings and accused statements, to determine criminal liability in the context of honour-based killings in Pakistan?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The case of Qandeel Baloch murder constantly reflects the honour-based violence, gender norms, and the digital self-expression of Pakistan. Research indicates that social media presence of Qandeel was against the norms of patriarchy, and elicited moral repulsion, implying an impact on *actus reus* and *mens rea* of crime (Ahmed, 2019). According to researchers, her self-identification as an independent woman crossed the castrating culture, which increased pressure at home and introduced her killing as a crime and gender-related crime based on the views of honour (Umm-e-Habiba, 2018). According to the arguments of many academics, media discourse and, in particular, moral policing and public shaming influenced society judgments and contributed to the creation of intent, motive, responsibility (Rizwan, 2022). Comparative media studies indicate that the international media represented Qandeel as a source of resistance and feminine liberation, and the local media made a statement in favor of patriarchal discourse (Hussain and Umer, 2019).

In general, there are abetment and honor killing cases that have an obscure familial interaction, the social bias towards honour-based intentions, and disproportional response by the law. In the case of Qandeel, the aiding force could be family pressure, societal stigmatization, and moral outrage that is orchestrated by social media, which indirectly promotes violence (Maher, 2019). Her risk was enhanced by technological change: her visibility, previously a source of empowerment, turned out to be used as evidence to embarrass and alienate her, and there was a greater probability that she would be coerced and become retaliated against by her own family (Nash, 2016; Ahmed, 2019). The murder of Qandeel has become a popular example of a criminological twist on the theme of honour-based murders that remain despite legislative changes, demonstrating the ineptitude of the state in protection, investigative efforts, and gendered crime abetment prosecution (Bakht & Alizai, 2023).

### Research Gap

Despite the fact that honour killing in Pakistan has become a common subject in socio cultural and legal literature, there are several questions, which the existing literature has failed to address. The role of patriarchal norms and family honour constructs on the occurrence of violence against women has been documented in a mass of literature (Abid and Matloob, 2024), and the role of socio cultural dynamics in reinforcing honour crimes has been investigated in other literature (Kayani and Khan, 2024). Nonetheless, these reviews tend to dwell on general societal explanation without wholly relating them to the procedures and evidentiary issues of criminal proceedings and prosecutions in concrete cases.

Besides, as much as Pakistan has legislatively amended laws to fight honour killings, the scholarship has shown that there are inconsistencies in legal frameworks, such as poor enforcement, judicial procrastination, and loopholes, such as family pardons to weaken accountability (Talha et al., 2024; Shahid et al., 2025). The

available literature highlights these systemic problems but does not go far enough to give a critical analysis on how the facts of the forensic evidence, investigation process, accused confessions and judge logic interplay in one high profile case to define criminal responsibility. This creates a knowledge gap on the criminal justice system processing of honour killing cases with evidence collection to judgement.

Moreover, the literature also embraces a tendency of applying socio cultural theories in their purity without putting them into perspective with the concepts of criminal law like *actus reus*, *mens rea*, and abetment, which are needed to have a comprehensive criminological perspective of honour based murders. Despite recording materials on the cultural norms and the patriarchal attitudes that condone violence against women, they do not oftentimes examine how these norms manifest themselves in judicial hearings and criminal responsibility (Jokhio et al., 2024).

Due to these limitations, studies on honor killings must examine socio-cultural and legal factors, correlating them with forensic evidence, investigative timelines, defendant testimonies, and judicial rulings. A historical, case-based study of the murder of Qandeel Baloch can illustrate the intersection of structural, cultural, and institutional factors, highlighting critical areas where legal processes either succeed or fail to deliver justice.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

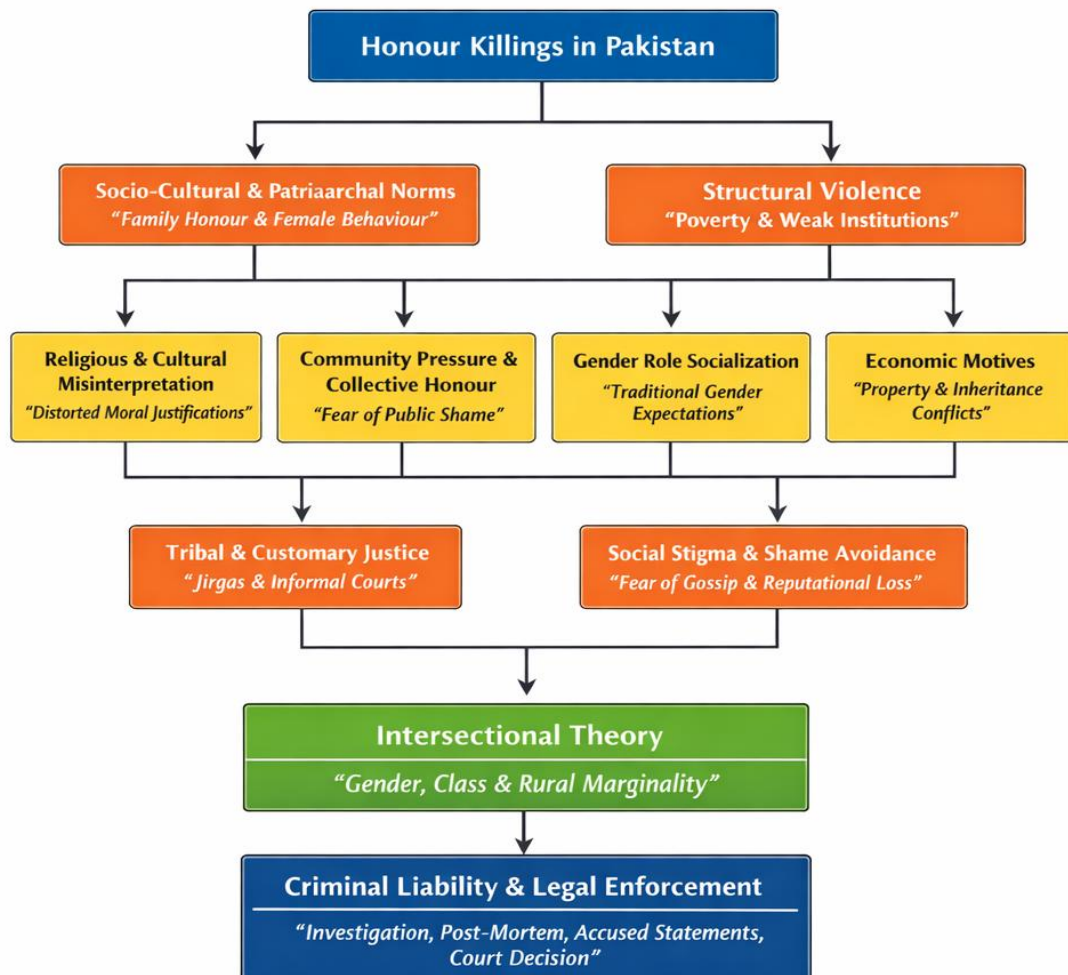
The case of honour killings in Pakistan such as in the case of Qandeel Baloch can be best described as a convergence of these theoretical frameworks that describe how these factors, culture, gender, economics, law and community pressures, converge and legitimize such violence. The theory of socio-cultural and patriarchal norms states that honour is connected to the conduct of women and female autonomy is considered the threat to the reputation of families (Abid and Matloob, 2024). These are supported by the structural-violence viewpoint, according to which honour killings are connected to poverty and poor literacy and weak institutions in which patriarchal violence could thrive freely (Naseem, 2021). The religious and cultural misinterpretation theory is another critical lens that emphasizes the way in which the perpetrators excuse violence by misunderstanding religious or moral codes that do not authorize honour-based killing at all (Bukhari and Bukhari, 2024). Community-pressure and collective-honour theory further describes how the family will operate under social pressure and under the fear of being dishonoured by the community and it is through violence that the family will be able to restore their perceived status (Adil et al., 2025). Moreover, the legal-institutional failure theory demonstrates that poor enforcement, family pardons, and the lack of conviction allow an atmosphere of impunity to abet such crimes to be committed (Kayani & Khan, 2024).

Beyond these, the theory of gender-role socialization holds that ingrained gender ideals instill in men that they are expected to be dominant and on the other, women are expected to be obedient, and anything that goes against expected roles leads to violence (Naseem, 2021). The theory of economic-motive demonstrates that sometimes honour is applied as the cloak to conceal a property conflict, financial

pressure, or even inheritance motive (Jan, 2024). The tribal-customary justice theory through light how jirgas and informal justice systems standardize violence by highlighting cultural codes over state law (Cheema, Mumtaz, & Asghar, 2025). The social-stigma and shame-avoidance theory focuses on the economic motivational power of the fear of gossip, taunts, and the loss of reputation in influencing families to engage in extreme activities (Hakeem and Khan, 2023). Lastly, according to the intersectional theory, honour killings should be interpreted through the overlapping approaches; gender, class, rural residence, and restricted mobility are the factors that all trigger to make the marginalised women disproportionately susceptible (Jan, 2024). Combined, these theories validate that honour killings are not instigated by one variable but slightly are centered on a multi-level social structure that still legitimizes, facilitates, and reinforced gender-based violence.

Diagram No. 01: Theoretical Framework of Honour Killings in Pakistan

Theoretical Framework of Honour Killings in Pakistan:  
*Context of the Qandeel Baloch Murder Case*



Source: Researcher's Vision

## RESEARCH METHOD

In this qualitative doctrinal study, the criminal justice response to honour-based murder in Pakistan is examined. Case study methodology is the best choice in criminological research to establish the connection between complex violent crimes and their socio-cultural, legal, and institutional contexts to answer the question of how crime is caused, the law should be held accountable, and what the system responds to crime. A systematic method of examination of statutes, judicial logic and evidentiary norms can be conducted through doctrinal legal analysis, and the criminological case study framework permits contextualisation of the results of legal research into structural violence, gender norms, and honour-based criminality. The paper brings together doctrinal legal analysis and criminological qualitative investigations in its effort to describe what culturally legitimized violence represents and means in law, a methodological technique that is broadly accepted in the socio-legal literature and the critical literature on criminology researches. (Yin, 2018; McConville & Chui, 2017; Walklate, 2011).

**Table No.01: Case Study Framework**

Component	Legal Method	Criminological Alignment
Case Study	FIR-based judicial analysis	In-depth crime event analysis
Doctrinal Analysis	Statutes & judgments	Legal control of deviance
Evidence Review	Forensic & confession law	Crime reconstruction
Interpretation	Judicial reasoning	Structural & cultural criminology

This case was chosen purposely and theoretically informed as it constitutes a criminological legal focus of honour killing prosecution with a large volume of forensic investigation, judicial confession and statutory interpretation in accordance with Section 302 and 311 of the PPC and appellate criticism of both the evidentiary and procedural standards. The methodology of case study Doctrine is especially suitable when the study aims at discussing judicial reasoning, appellate review, and application of statutes to a real-life case (Hutchinson & Duncan, 2012).

This study uses a qualitative, doctrinal, and interpretive research design to analyse how criminal liability should be established, contested, and reassessed by the courts in a case involving honour killing on trial and the Court of Appeal. Instead of trying to achieve statistical generalization, the study uses analytical generalization to understand how legal reasoning, evaluative judgment of evidence and judicial discretion functions in operation inside culturally entrenched criminal activities. The study, through tracing the process of judicial interpretation, reveals the development of judicial interpretations of the Sessions Court through the appellate stage and into the greater debates about criminology and socio-legal issues concerning honour killings, the level of evidence, credibility of confessions, and the ability of the criminal justice system to assume accountability in Pakistan. Such a methodology fits the current standards of qualitative case study research, when the



goal is theoretical clarity and explanatory richness as opposed to numerical inference (Yin, 2018).

The study data were based solely on the primary legal and forensic materials related to FIR No. 439/16, supported by additional scholarly materials. The main data sources include:

**Table No. 02: Data Sources**

S.No.	Data Sources	Details
01	Police and Investigation Records	FIR No. 439/16 Investigation diaries Statements under Sections 161, 164, and 342 Cr.P.C. Recovery memos and site plans
02	Forensic and Medical Evidence	Crime Scene Unit reports Post-mortem examination report Forensic DNA and toxicology reports issued by the Punjab Forensic Science Agency (PFSA)
03	Judicial Records	Judgment of the Additional Sessions Judge, Multan (Sessions Case No. 45/S of 2016/2019; Sessions Trial No. 24-T of 2016/2019) Appellate judgment of the Lahore High Court, Multan Bench (Criminal Appeal No. 917 of 2019)
04	Statutory and Case Law Materials	Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr.P.C.) Relevant superior court precedents on confession, honour killing, and benefit of doubt

Depending on the formal court proceedings and forensic reports guarantees the correctness of the doctrines and increases the validity of the results.

It is a combination of thematic qualitative interpretation and doctrinal legal analysis. The reasonableness of judicial reasoning in the Sessions Court decision, as well as the Lahore High Court decision on appeal, was analyzed to establish how:

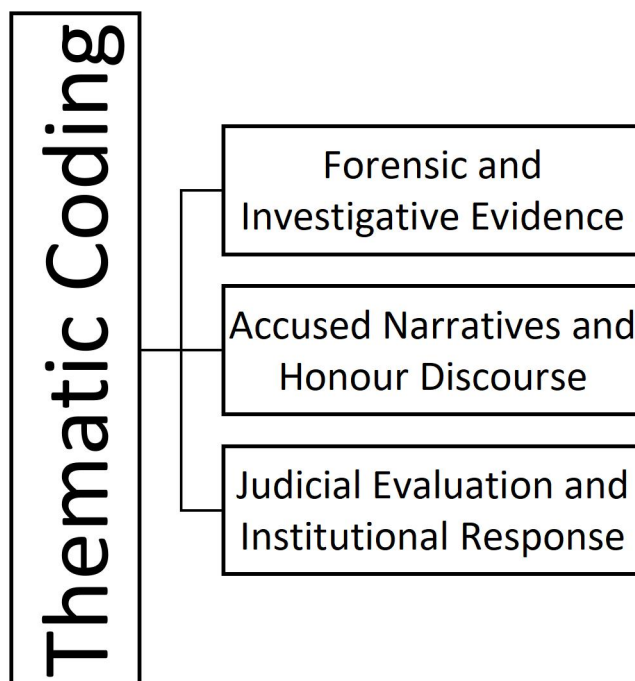
- Probably value of the forensic evidence was considered.
- Confessional statements were evaluated on what was voluntary and legal.
- Honour motive was legally interpreted.
- Principles of benefit of doubt were used.

The procedure puts the case within a vast scope of criminology as it connects the legal meaning of a case with the general socio- cultural requirements, gender expectations, and the responsibility of the institutional framework of the Pakistani judicial system (Lacey, 2007).



Thematic coding was performed in three analytical domains of core research question:

**Diagram No. 02: Thematic Coding**



*Source: Researcher's Vision*

The strategy fits within existing theories of socio-legal and criminological studies that combine both legal doctrine and context through integration (McConville & Chui, 2017).

The analysis is grounded purely on judicial and legal reports publicly accessible. There was no direct human engagement, and no personal information other than that which is in documents of court has been revealed. The study preserves academic objectivity and respects the dignity of the victim by converging on legitimate procedures rather than sensationalism.

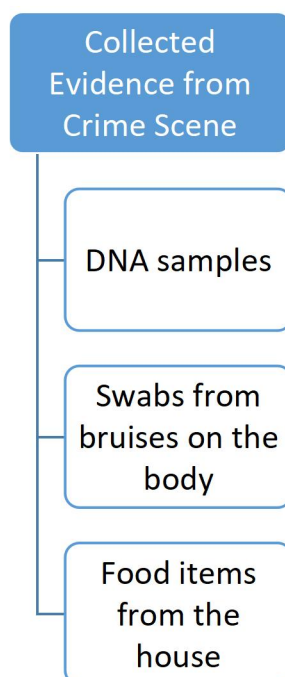
## **RESULTS**

### **1. Forensic and Investigative Evidence**

- **Forensic Investigation**

Evidence gathered on the crime scene was examined by a forensic team and includes:

**Diagram No. 03: Evidences from Crime Scene**



*Source: Researcher's Vision*

It was carried out under the coordination of the Forensic Crime Scene Unit of PFSA, Multan, with the assistance of the CRO and IT Team of the CPO Office. Further forensic testing by acquiring additional items was to be performed later.

**Table No. 03: Investigation Timeline**

Date	Name	Details
16–17 July 2016	Muhammad Azeem	He provided a written statement, identification other accused personnel. He submitted parcels of evidence to PFSA Multan and later to PFSA Lahore.
17 July 2016	Mugammad Waseem	He voluntarily surrendered and was formally arrested at Muzaffarabad Police Station, Multan.
18 July 2016	Muhammad Waseem	After recording his confession under Section 164 Cr.P.C., the magistrate sent Waseem to judicial lock-up.
19–22 July 2016	Muhammad Waseem	Investigations continued under Inspector Atiya Naheed Jafri, including recording Waseem's statement, obtaining physical remand, collecting Call Data Records (CDRs), conducting crime scene pointing-out, and sending him for polygraph and DNA tests at PFSA Lahore.

24–25 July 2016	Muhammad Waseem	Recovery of Waseem’s golden Samsung mobile phone and two intoxicant tablets, along with completion of recovery memos and witness statements. PFSA reports were received and added to the record.
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This table provides a description of the inquiry's specifics, with a particular emphasis on the forensic investigation that was conducted in this particular instance.

**Table NO. 04: Further Investigation and Arrests (27 July – 11 August 2016)**

Date	Investigation	Details
27 July 2016	Waseem disclosed that his brother Arif instigated the murder and promised to arrange his travel to KSA post-crime	He admitted committing the murder in the name of honour.
30 July 2016	Haqnawaz (Accused No. 2) was arrested and confessed to participating in the murder	Qandeel’s passport was recovered from his residence
1 August 2016	Haqnawaz described the murder method: he and Waseem administered intoxicants to Qandeel	When she became unconscious, Waseem held her hands while Haqnawaz pressed her throat, with Waseem assisting in strangulation. Qandeel’s iPhone was recovered from a hidden location
3 August 2016	Polygraph tests for Haqnawaz	Submission of mobile phones to PFSA Lahore
6–8 August 2016	Further disclosures confirmed planning by Arif and Zafar; Basit and Zafar were arrested, and recovery of additional evidence including mobiles and a car was conducted	Mufti Abdul Qavi voluntarily submitted two mobile phones, which were seized with proper memos
9–11 August 2016	Statements of Basit and Zafar were recorded, and judicial remand of all accused was obtained	Polygraph tests conducted for Basit and Zafar

The above table shows the further investigation, arrests, and finding and seizure of items with appropriate documentation.

**Table No. 05: Statements and Evidence Recording**

Date	Details
17 August 2016	Statements of ASI Karama Hussain and Moharrir Sohail Akbar were recorded

	regarding evidence handling.
22 August 2016	It was investigated and found that Basit, Haqnawaz and Waseem were part of the murder led by Arif and Zafar who felt dishonoured by her post-viral selfies with Mufti Abdul Qavi. (Sessions Case No. 45/S of 2016/2019; Sessions Trial No. 24-T of 2016/2019).

According to the table, what was presented in the records and evidence shows that the murder was instigated and motivated by dishonor after Qnadeel posted viral selfies with Mufti Abdul Qavi.

**Table No.06: Post-Mortem Report**

S.No.	Post-Mortem	Details
01	Condition of Face and Body	Puffy face, blue nails and lips, tongue pressed between teeth, petechial hemorrhages in eyes, foam from nose – indicating asphyxia or poisoning.
02	Clothing	Recorded items included printed net gown, green shirt, black tights, black underwear, bra, and earrings.
03	Neck Examination	Hyoid bone intact; injuries consistent with forced suffocation and struggle
04	Chest & Internal Organs	Lungs congested (asphyxia), heart empty, stomach contained 200 ml partially digested food. Other organs mostly normal.
05	Time Between Injury and Death	Estimated 18–36 hours.
06	Cause of Death	Asphyxia, possibly due to poisoning; all wounds ante-mortem. Final opinion awaited after DNA and chemical test reports.

The table on the post-mortem report on the above shows that the cause of death was mainly due to asphyxia, which could have been caused by a poison, and all of the wounds were ante-mortem.

**Table No. 07: Forensic Findings**

S. No	Samples	Findings
01	DNA samples	Nail clippings, vaginal swabs
02	Chemical analysis	Detected Lorazepam
03	Forensic DNA and serology	Confirmed seminal material; some samples required no further profiling

The following table shows the important forensic results achieved of the examination of various samples. In the process of determining biological evidence DNA samples gathered in form of nail clipping and vaginal swabs were analyzed. Chemical examinations also showed the presence of Lorazepam which might have been used to administer some form of a sedative drug before or even during the incident. In addition, the presence of the seminal material was proven by the use of the forensic DNA and serological analysis, which reinforced the evidence of sexual contact. In certain samples, the results were clear and conclusive enough, thus not having to be further profiled in DNA. Taken together, the combined findings are good forensic corroborating evidence to the investigation and corroborating events surrounding the case.

**Table No. 08: Legal Procedure**

<b>Legal Procedure</b>	<b>Details</b>
Challan submitted	Under Section 173 Cr.P.C.; copies under Section 265-C Cr.P.C. provided to all accused.
Charges Framed	Charges framed on 12 December 2018 against all accused, who pleaded not guilty.
Prosecution Produced	35 witnesses and submitted multiple documents, photographs, crime scene reports, and remand orders.

The details of the legal action in the case run become more than clear and outlined in the table above.

The chronological examination, gathering of the forensic evidence, post-mortem examination, confessional notes and the corroborative evidence were all used to determine the criminal responsibility of the defendant in the Qandeel Baloch murder case.

## **2. Accused Narratives and Honour Discourse**

### **A. Statements of the Accused under Section 342 Cr.PC.**

All the accused involved were examined using section 342 Cr.PC to withhold all the criminal material against them.

**Table No. 09: Alleged False Implication and Police Pressure**

<b>Alleged Name</b>	<b>False Implication</b>	<b>Police Pressure</b>
Muhammad Waseem	Claimed he was falsely implicated	Alleged that police pressured his parents to provide names of family members; judicial confession obtained under duress
Haq Nawaz	Claim of false implication	Stated no direct evidence was presented against him. Highlighted police pressure on

		victim's parents to name him and other family members
Abdul Basit	Denied any conspiracy	Emphasized that police acted under media pressure. Claimed he had no knowledge of taking Haq Nawaz to Multan

According to the above table, the three individuals all claimed that the police put unjustified pressure on them during this case especially in making them confess and identify other family members.

**Table No. 10: Denial of Direct Involvement**

Name	Denial of Direct Involvement	Details
Aslam Shaheen	Claimed no direct allegation	Stated he was in Karachi performing military duties during the incident
Muhammad Abdul Qavi	Denied any knowledge of Qandeel Baloch	Sending objectionable content, or involvement in planning the murder. Polygraph test confirmed no connection with the crime
Muhammad Zafar	Asserted innocence	No oral or written evidence linked him to violence

The table summarises the positions adopted by those named where they refer to their alleged involvement in the case. Aslam Shaheen did not make any direct allegation and thus presented an alibi saying he was in Karachi carrying out his military duties during the incident. Muhammad Abdul Qavi categorically denied any knowledge regarding Qandeel Baloch or involvement in sending such objectionable content and in organizing the murder, his denial of involvement was further confirmed by the outcomes of a polygraph examination that showed that Mohammed Abdul Qavi had no connection with the crime. Similarly, Muhammad Zafar also maintained his innocence and the investigation did not find any oral or written evidence of Muhammad Zafar's involvement in any act of violence. Overall the information as summarized in the table expresses regular rejections of direct participation, accompanied by lack of substantial evidence of connecting these individuals to commission the crime.

Accused statements hold patterns in relation to honour, gender norms and purpose as summarized below:

**B. Themes Related to Honour, Gender Norms, and Intent**

- **Honour:** It was pointed out by the accused that the accusations were interpreted through the prism of family dishonour; Waseem and Haqnawaz stressed that the

murder investigation was influenced by the notion of family shame.

- **Gender Norms:** The gender expectations are oblique, as the inquiry and the account of the honour killings are closely interwoven with the suppression of female agency and the punishment of the perceived deviations.
- **Intent:** Although there were allegations of confessions under duress, the accused had consistently denied any premediated involvement, having projected himself as an object of external force, other than as a perpetrators.

### C. External Influences

A number of the accused mentioned media and institutional pressure on police and families, which may have influenced the narrative of honour as well as attribution of criminal intent.

The assertions in Section 342 Cr.PC cumulatively indicate that there was no involvement on the part of accused, that confessions had been invalidated, and that the case scenario was influenced by honour-based forces, gender expectations of society, and pressures in the case process.

## 3. Judicial Evaluation and Institutional Response

### A. Sessions Court Evaluation

- **Evidence Considered:** The Sessions Court (Case No. 45/S of 2016/2019; Trial No. 24-T of 2016/2019) depend on resilient evidence, including:
  - Judicial confession of Muhammad Waseem
  - DNA reports
  - His presence at the crime scene
- **Legal Determination:**
  - Waseem admitted killing his sister Qandeel Baloch, which fell under Section 311 PPC.
  - The parents pleaded over compromise but the court pointed out that the offence needed to be punished.
  - **Outcome:** Muhammad Waseem was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment subject to recognizance of Section 382-B Cr.PC.
  - Announcement Date: 27 September 2019

### B. Review by Lahore High Court, Multan Bench

- **Case:** Criminal Appeal No. 917 of 2019 (Muhammad Waseem vs. The State & another)
- **Acquittal:** In February 2022, the Lahore High Court acquitted Waseem following forgiveness from the victim's parents.

### C. Issues with Judicial Confession

Waseem's confession was scrutinized against Supreme Court standards and several legal issues were identified:

1. Confession recorded only 30 minutes after presenting him to the magistrate.
2. Entire court staff was present; legally, only essential personnel should attend.
3. Handcuffs were not removed during recording.



4. Language inconsistencies: confession written in Urdu, record in English, no confirmation that Waseem understood English or Urdu explanations.
5. After the confession, Waseem was returned to the same investigating officer, questioning voluntariness.

Hence, the confession was of no legal value.

#### **D. Case Assessment without Confession**

- There were no substantial pieces of evidence except for Waseem's confession that proved that the murder was perpetrated in the name of honour.
- Witnesses contradicted themselves; evidence could not reliably establish criminal intent.
- The court emphasized the principles of criminal law:
  - Guilt must be proven beyond reasonable doubt.
  - Credible, reliable evidence is required; mere fame of the victim is insufficient for conviction.
  - **Fiat Justitia Principle:** Justice must be completed regardless of external circumstances.

#### **E. Final Decision**

- **Lahore High Court:** Criminal Appeal No. 917 of 2019 was accepted.
- **Outcome:** Trial court's conviction overturned; Muhammad Waseem acquitted based on parental compromise.
- **Additional Notes:**
  - Release immediate if no other cases are pending
  - Property is important to follow trial court order

Therefore, preference to appeals to the SC by state and NCSW on the basis of miscarriage of justice and the implications of legislation on honour killing.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **RQ1. Forensic Evidence and Criminal Liability**

The chronology of the Qandeel Baloch murder case accepted evidence of forensic science and the systematic application of investigative practices to establish criminal liability, especially the physical acts and intent. The painstaking collection of DNA samples, bruise swabs, mobile devices, pointing out memos, CDR recovery, and polygraph tests gave a correct foundation of the accused to the crime scene, methods of killing. Importantly, such structured forensic procedures help in differentiating the simple social narratives from the legally relevant evidences (announcing of the objective indicators of violence and facilitate in proving of causation) (Ghazi & Salamat, 2024).

Linking these findings to structural violence element in the theoretical framework, the investigation was not only reconstructed the actus rea and mens rea (Manzoor, Munir, Fatima, Zia, 2025) of the offense but also brought to light the deep-rooted nature of the patriarchal norms which make violence against women a

normality. Structural violence theory put forward the notion that systemic iniquities and culturally suppression of female autonomy enables the oppression that can help violence get socially sanctioned, which was among it that the forensic findings proved the socially driven intent behind the killing (Kayani and Khan, 2024).

By putting forensic evidence in context with this socio-legal environment the results imply that complex processes of investigation are important not only in terms of legal responsibility, but can also challenge cultural narratives that work to justify honour based violence. This brings to the fore the need for better forensic capacity and training for investigating honour crimes in jurisdictions where they are prevalent as the dispensation is on credible, scientifically based evidence on bringing justice in these cases.

### **RQ2. Accused Statements, Honor, and Gender Norms**

The statements quoted by the accused under Section 342 Cr.PC exhibited complicated areas of honour, gender rules and alleged coercion. Each of the accused were denying involvement, often citing false implication, police pressure, lack of direct evidence - responses which echo wider socio-cultural pressures on masculinity and honour narratives. This directly links itself to the theory of socio-cultural and patriarchal norms, which suggests honour killings are based on narrowly and enforced gender roles within which male relatives are entitled to exercise and assert their control over female behaviour perceived as transgressiveness (Bakht & Alizai, 2023).

The repetitive focus on false implication and denial shows the importance of gender norms for perpetrator and defence narratives. These reactions reflect attempts to navigate cultural scrutiny in the law that still yields to cultural concepts of male responsibility to defend family honour, which is an important insight of gender-role socialization theory. According to this theoretical lens, men are socialized to assert dominance and women to abide by submissive roles and therefore it is culturally sanctioned that women who deviate from these roles are expected to spark violence (Ghazi & Salamat, 2024).

Furthermore, denials of intent, and attention refocusing on perceived cases of investigative pressure, are used to demonstrate how people accused of crimes may co-exert a cultural explanation to deflect legal culpability. This dynamic resonates with existing literature demonstrating that voices of accused people in honour killing cases are closely rooted in local gendered expectations and community pressure patterns explaining the shortcomings involved in strictly legal approaches when deeper cultural values have not been analysed.

### **RQ3. Judicial Evaluation and Honour Killings in the Legal System**

The Sessions Court and the High Court judgements on the evidence emphasize the ambiguity between legal principles and cultural honour narratives. Initially, the Sessions Court had convicted Muhammad Waseem secured by strong forensic links and his confession, thus keeping with the legal principles of requiring clear proofs for both *actus reus* and *mens rea*. However, on appeal, chagrin of the Lahore High Court's acquittal on the ground of procedural flaws in the recording of

the confession illustrates the judiciary's fidelity to principles of criminal justice including volunteerism, reliability of evidence and strict adherence to due process.

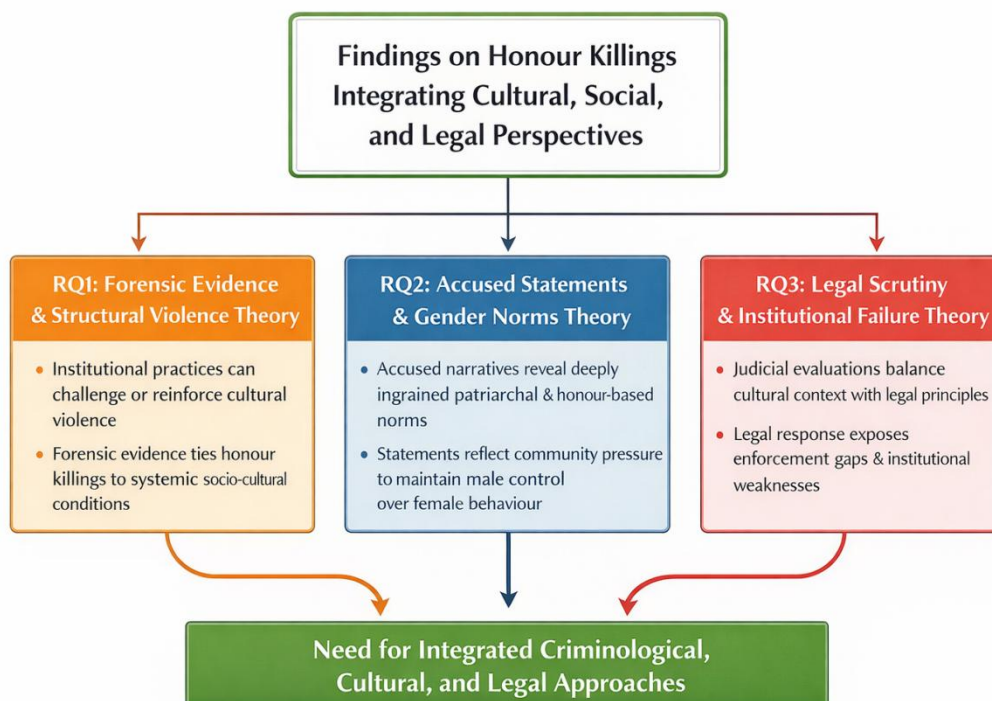
This judicial scrutiny is a good fit to the theory of legal institutional failure which had argued that weak enforcement and the procedures usually disrespect substantive justice in the cases of honour killing. Although Pakistan has introduced laws such as the Anti-Honour Killing Laws to fill the loopholes of the offenders getting away with the crime in the past but the enforcement is irregular. Judges as well as legal institutions still face problems sorting out the difference between culturally motivated narratives and legally admissible evidence (Shahid et al., 2024).

The emphasis of the Lahore High Court during the procedure on the integrity of the procedure is an aspect of a greater shift in things in respect of the integrity of evidence rather than culture. It also illustrates the position of the judiciary in adhering to such principles of universal criminal justice as proof beyond reasonable doubt, although it is subject to pressures from society. This judicial position is significant because such honour killings generally have rationalizations of a cultural nature that can in some cases lead to a decrease in legal understanding which is crucial for fair results in particular cases.

#### Integration with Theoretical Framework

The following is the integrated analytical framework of the study, which shows the interaction between forensic investigation, the accused narratives and judicial evaluation as these interact with the socio-cultural and legal theories to explain the structural dynamics vying with honour-based killings.

**Diagram No. 04: Results Integration with Theoretical Framework**



Source: Researcher's Vision

Across all three research questions the findings underscore the fact that honour killings are not just criminal acts that are isolated, but products of multilayered cultural, social and legal systems. The forensic evidence and the legal scrutiny explored in RQ1 is related to the structural violence theory because the processes of institutional practices can problematise or reinforce cultural violence. Accused statements in RQ2 are consistent with socio-cultural norms as well as gender-role socialization theories for the interdependence of legal narratives and the deeply held gender norms. Finally, RQ3 is the legal-institutional failure and reform theories, shows how Judicial evaluation tries to resolve the balance between the cultural and the universal and legal.

Together, these analyses show that academic and policy attempts in tackling honour killings should take a criminological, cultural and legal approach to fully understand, and try and counteract, the complex dynamics that are at the heart of honour killings.

## **CONCLUSION**

The analysis of the Qandeel Baloch murder case clearly shows that honour killings in Pakistan are deeply rooted in the intersectional cultural, social and legal systems where gender norms, family pressure and institutional weakness combine to make them possible. Forensic evidences, judicial reasoning's and accused statements reveal the difficulties surrounding the attribution of criminal liability in legal issues created by socio-cultural expectations and honour. The judgments of the Sessions Court and the Lahore High Court illustrate some of the possibilities and limits to the legal resolution of honour-based violence, and make it necessary to have a more robust and procedural approach to resolving the issue, gender sensitive interpretation of the laws, and greater enforcement mechanisms.

Ultimately, honour killings cannot be solved just through legal means but rather societal transformation is just as vital. Education, awareness programmes and empowerment of women are needed to go hand in hand with judicial reform in trying to counter the deeply held patriarchal norms. Criminological research, like this case study, can provide evidence based insights and advice to help policymakers, law enforcement and communities to develop a holistic and sustainable approach towards honour-based violence. By bringing together law, culture and social justice, Pakistan may work its way towards a framework where gendered crimes will be prevented, effectively prosecuted and socially reviled.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the exploration made through this study, there are several recommendations which come forward in order to address the issue of honour based killings in Pakistan. General recommendations comprise: promoting community awareness programs against patriarchal norms; gender sensitivity education; social campaigns against honour related violence and empowering women to exercise their

autonomy in safety. Policy recommendations include the necessity for legal reform on closing all the loopholes that give family pardons power to override the course of justice, establishing some standard investigative and forensic procedures and ensuring rigors are added when it comes to following and strictly adhering to evidentiary procedures to prevent the forced confession. Legalization recommendations are to amend the Pakistan Penal Code and associated laws to class honour killing as non-compoundable offences, take the provisions which allow forgiveness by family members hence reduce impunity and introduce mandatory minimum crime sentences for perpetrators reinforcing the deterrence. Additionally, law enforcement agencies should also be trained particularly on the area of honour based cases, crime insights should be integrated in the investigation protocols. Finally, inter-agency coordination between the judiciary, police and social welfare organizations is vital in order to implement preventative measures, in order to protect potential victims and create a sustainable framework to reduce impunity and promote accountability for such crimes.

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