

Caste, Family Pride and Honour: An Exploration of Public Perception in Tiruppur District

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ABSTRACT

Honor killing is a serious form of violence often linked to caste identity, family pride, and opposition to inter-caste relationships in India. Despite legal safeguards, such incidents persist due to deeply rooted social norms and community pressure. This study examines public perceptions of Honor killing in Tiruppur District, Tamil Nadu, focusing on the influence of caste identity and family Honor. Using a descriptive survey design, primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The findings reveal high awareness of Honor killing, with many respondents identifying inter-caste relationships, social pressure, and traditional beliefs as key contributing factors. The study highlights the continued influence of caste-based attitudes and emphasizes the need for greater awareness, stronger legal enforcement, and educational initiatives to prevent Honor-based violence and promote acceptance of individual choice in marriage.

Keywords: Honour killing, caste, family pride, inter-caste marriage, public perception.

INTRODUCTION

Honour killings represent one of the most extreme forms of violence rooted in deeply embedded socio-cultural norms. These acts occur when individuals are killed by family or community members for allegedly bringing dishonour through actions such as inter-caste or inter-religious relationships, choosing one's own partner, or rejecting traditional expectations. In such cases, the preservation of family honour often overrides individual rights and the value of human life. Honour is a collective social value closely linked to family reputation and community recognition. In many traditional societies, particularly in South Asia, the conduct of individuals especially women is seen as reflecting the honour of the entire family. As a result, violations of cultural norms may provoke extreme actions intended to restore social standing. Globally, honour killings are reported in regions such as South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, though many cases remain underreported due to social silence and misclassification. In the Indian context, honour killings are closely associated with caste hierarchy and patriarchal structures. The caste system enforces strict norms regarding marriage, particularly endogamy, and views inter-caste relationships as threats to social order. Patriarchy further reinforces control over women's autonomy, positioning them as

bearers of family honour. Additionally, community pressure, social stigma, and informal institutions such as caste councils often contribute to the continuation of honour-based violence by legitimizing such acts. Despite the existence of legal provisions against murder and judicial condemnation of honour killings as violations of fundamental rights, enforcement remains weak in many cases. Incidents such as the Sankar–Kausalya case (2016) and the Gokulraj case (2015) in Tamil Nadu highlight the role of caste-based tensions and family involvement in such crimes. These cases demonstrate that honour killings are not isolated acts but are deeply connected to broader socio-cultural structures. Rapid social change driven by urbanization, education, and increased exposure to modern values has strengthened individual autonomy, particularly among younger generations. However, these changes often clash with traditional norms, leading to generational conflict and, in extreme cases, violence. In districts like Tiruppur, where industrial growth and social transformation coexist with traditional caste values, such tensions are particularly evident.

Honour killings also reflect broader patterns of gender-based violence and social inequality. Although courts in India have affirmed the right of individuals to choose their partners, the persistence of such crimes indicates that legal measures alone are insufficient. Addressing honour-based violence requires not only legal enforcement but also transformation of social attitudes and collective perceptions.

This study focuses on understanding public perceptions of honour killings in Tiruppur district. By examining how caste identity, family honour, and community pressure influence attitudes toward such violence, the research aims to provide insights for policy, awareness, and the promotion of social justice and individual rights.

Review of Literature

Labelling Theory (Becker, 1963) explains that deviance is socially constructed through the labels assigned by society. In honour killings, individuals involved in inter-caste relationships and their families are often labelled as “dishonourable,” leading to stigma, social exclusion, and loss of status. This fear of negative labelling pressures families to take extreme actions to remove the perceived source of shame and restore their social identity.

Strain Theory (Merton, 1938) views deviance as a result of conflict between cultural goals and the means to achieve them. In caste-based societies, preserving honour and caste norms is highly valued, but modern ideas like individual choice and inter-caste relationships create tension. Honour killings may emerge as a misguided response to resolve this strain and reassert traditional norms.

By combining these perspectives, this research highlights how the fear of labelling interacts with the strain of cultural change, creating an environment where honour-based violence is not only tolerated but, in some contexts, expected.

A study by Ahmed (2019) analysed the honour killing of Qandeel Baloch as a case study to understand the broader phenomenon of honour-based violence in South Asia. The study highlights how family honour, social expectations, and patriarchal control contribute to such crimes. It emphasizes that honour killings are often justified within communities as a means of restoring social reputation. The research also points out the underreporting of such incidents due to fear, stigma, and societal acceptance.

Another relevant study by Mayeda and Vijaykumar (2016) examined honour-based violence as a gendered and collective form of violence rooted in patriarchal social structures. Their study highlights how notions of masculinity and femininity shape control over women’s behavior and autonomy. The authors argue that honour-based violence is not an individual act but a socially reinforced practice. They also note that despite

its seriousness, this issue remains underexplored within mainstream sociological research.

Dogan (2011) focused on the cultural dimensions of honour killings, arguing that such crimes are primarily driven by social interpretations of honour and shame rather than religious doctrines. The study explains that in communities where honour is considered a core value, maintaining it becomes more important than individual rights. These cultural beliefs create a social environment where violence is normalized. The research highlights how collective values influence individual actions in such contexts.

Sankari and Socrates (2024) examined honour killings in Tamil Nadu, linking them to caste hierarchy, patriarchy, and social pressure. The study identifies systemic issues such as delays in judicial processes, lack of victim protection, and weak enforcement mechanisms. It argues that honour killings are manifestations of caste superiority rather than acts of honour. The authors recommend specific legislation and institutional reforms to effectively address honour-based violence.

Baianstovu, Lundqvist, and Håkansson (2025) conducted an international review of honour-based violence across different societies. The study highlights that such violence is deeply rooted in patriarchal control and family reputation, cutting across cultural boundaries. It emphasizes that honour killings are not confined to a single region or religion. The authors stress the need for stronger legal frameworks, awareness programs, and interdisciplinary approaches to effectively combat honour-based violence.

Research Gaps

By going through these reviews certain research gaps, I found, that gaps I will fulfil in my current study and the research gaps are as following;

1. **Lack of Public Perception Studies** Most studies focus on causes and cases of honour killings, but there is limited research on how the general public perceives such violence, especially at the district level.
2. **Limited Regional Focus (Tamil Nadu / Tiruppur)** Few studies provide empirical, localized analysis of honor killings in rapidly developing districts like Tiruppur, where modernity and tradition intersect.

Research Methodology

Statement of Problem: Honor killing remains a serious social issue in India, often linked to inter-caste or inter-religious relationships and violations of traditional norms. Despite legal protections and growing awareness, such incidents persist due to strong beliefs surrounding caste, family honor, and social expectations. Understanding public perceptions of honor killings is crucial for addressing this issue. Therefore, this study aims to examine how caste identity and family honor influence attitudes toward honor-based violence in Tiruppur district.

Significance of The Study

- To provide criminological insight into the social and cultural factors that contribute to honour-based violence in contemporary society.
- To highlight the role of community pressure, social stigma, and traditional values in sustaining honour-based practices despite legal prohibitions.
- To contribute to academic research on caste, honour, and social control by providing empirical insights from Tiruppur District.

Objectives of The Study

- To assess public awareness of honor killings in Tiruppur district.
- To examine perceptions of caste, family pride, and inter-caste marriage.
- To evaluate public views on the role of authorities in honor killing cases.
- To provide recommendations to prevent honor-based violence.

Research Design

This study uses a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to examine public perceptions of honor killings and the influence of caste identity and family pride. Data are collected at a single point in time using a structured questionnaire. The responses are analyzed using statistical tools such as frequency and percentage to identify patterns in awareness and attitudes.

Universe of the Study

The universe of this study comprises members of the public in Tiruppur district, Tamil Nadu, representing diverse age groups, educational backgrounds, occupations, and caste communities. This population is selected to understand societal perceptions of honor killings and the influence of caste identity and family pride. The study aims to examine how social norms, cultural beliefs, and community values shape attitudes toward honor-based violence within the local context.

Sample Size

The sample size for this study consists of 160 respondents from Tiruppur district. Participants from different social and demographic backgrounds were included to obtain diverse perspectives. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, and the responses are used to analyse public awareness, perceptions, and attitudes toward honour killings and related socio-cultural factors in the study area.

Sampling Technique

The sampling technique adopted for this study is convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which respondents are selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study.

Data Collection Methods

- Primary data were collected from respondents using a structured questionnaire to understand their perceptions and attitudes toward honor killings
- Secondary data were obtained from e-books, journals, research articles, reports, newspapers, and online sources to develop a broader understanding of honor killings, caste dynamics, family honor, and the legal framework in India.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study is limited to Tiruppur district, so the findings may not represent the views of people in other regions
2. The study initially aimed at collecting data from approximately 500 respondents. Only 160 responses were obtained due to time constraints, which may affect the generalizability of the findings.
3. The study is based on self-reported responses, and some participants may have provided socially

desirable answers instead of expressing their true views on the sensitive issue of honor killings.

4. The research mainly uses survey data along with selected case studies, which may not cover all dimensions of honour-based violence

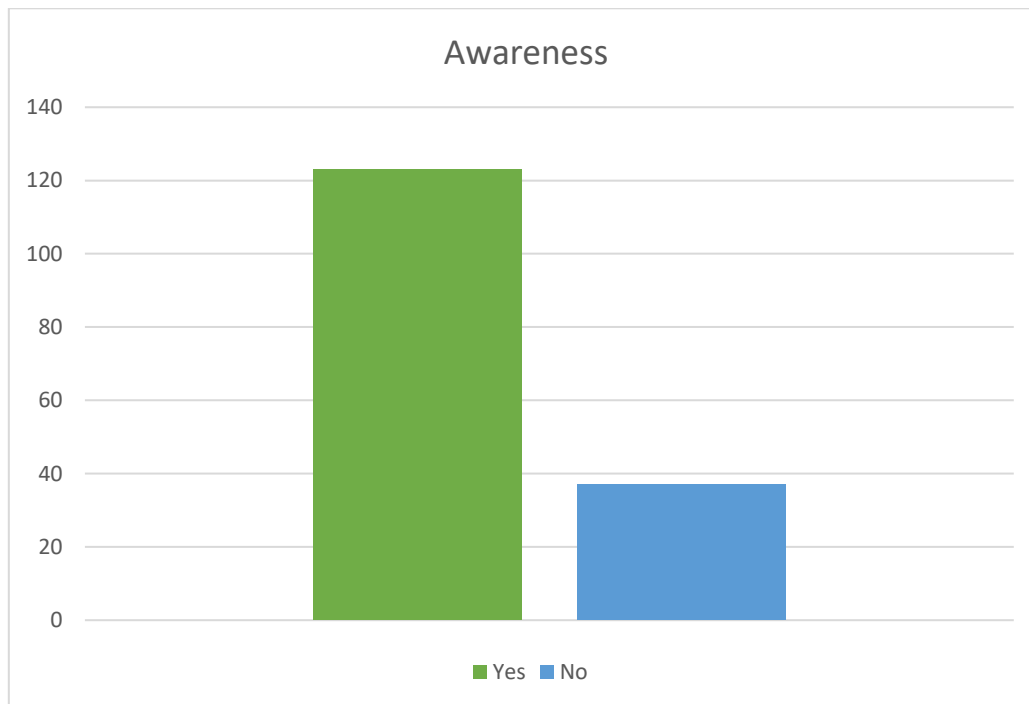
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

AWARENESS OF HONOUR KILLING

Table 1
Awareness of Honour Killing

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	123	76.6%
No	37	23.4%
Total	160	100%

Source Primary Data

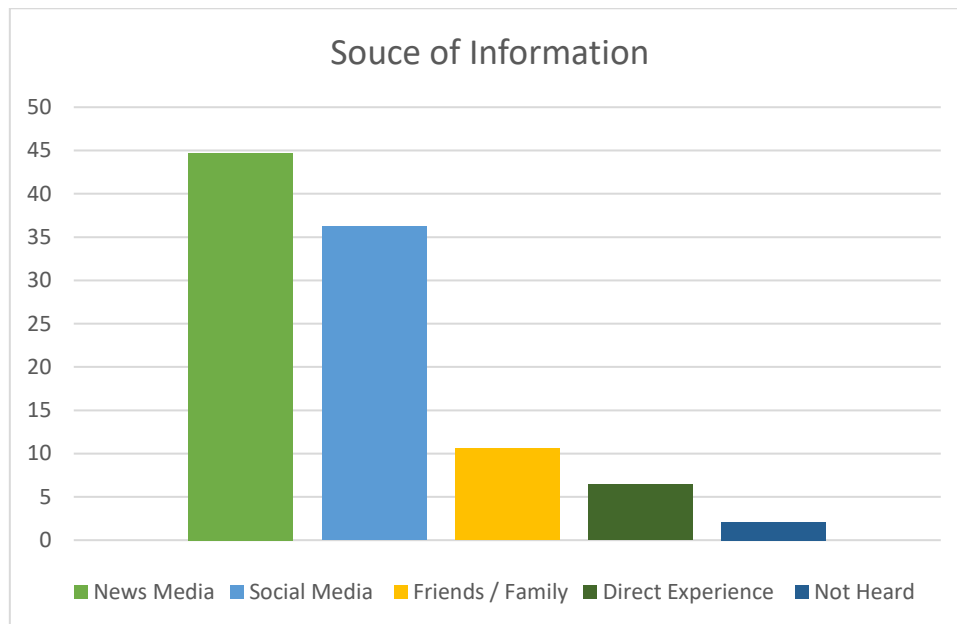


The above table and graph show the level of awareness about honour killing among the respondents. Out of the total 160 respondents, 123 respondents (76.6%) reported that they have heard about honour killing, while 37 respondents (23.4%) stated that they have not heard about it. This indicates that most of the respondents are aware of the concept of honour killing. The high level of awareness may be attributed to the influence of media, social discussions, and increasing public attention toward issues related to caste, family honour, and violence in society. However, the presence of respondents who are unaware of the issue suggests that further awareness and education on this topic are still necessary.

Table 2
Source of information about honor killing

Source of Information	Frequency	Percentage
News Media	72	44.7%
Social media	54	34.0%
Friends / Family	17	10.6%
Direct Experience	10	6.4%
Not Heard	7	4.3%
Total	160	100%

Source Primary Data

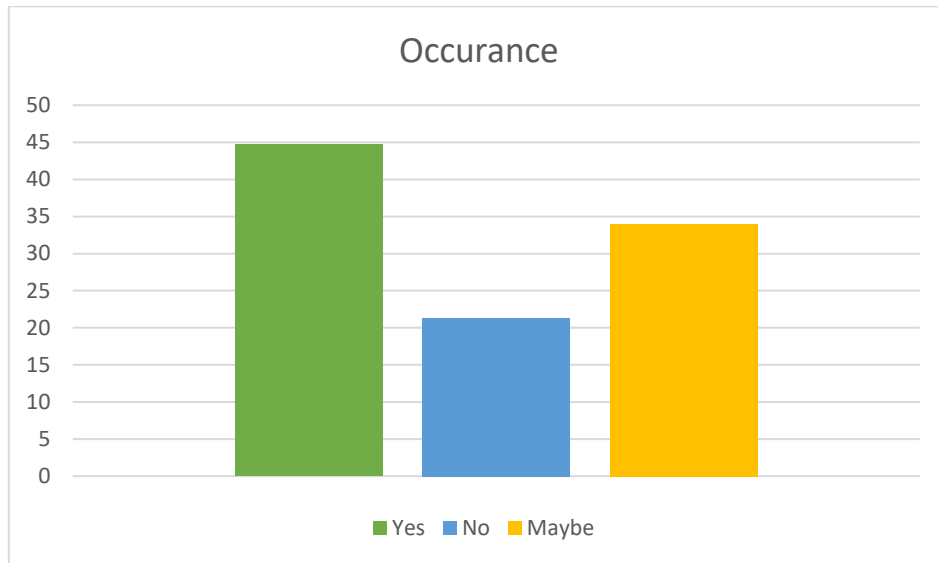


The table and graph the source of information about honour killing among respondents. Out of 160 respondents, the majority 72 (44.7%) learned about it through news media, followed by 54 respondents (34%) through social media. A smaller number 17 (10.6%) heard about it from friends or family, while 10 respondents (6.4%) learned through direct experience. Additionally, 7 respondents (4.3%) had not heard about honour killing. This indicates that news media and social media are the main sources of awareness about honour killings.

Table 3
Occurrence of Honor killing in the district

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	72	44.7%
No	34	21.3%
Maybe	54	34.0%
Total	160	100%

Source Primary Data

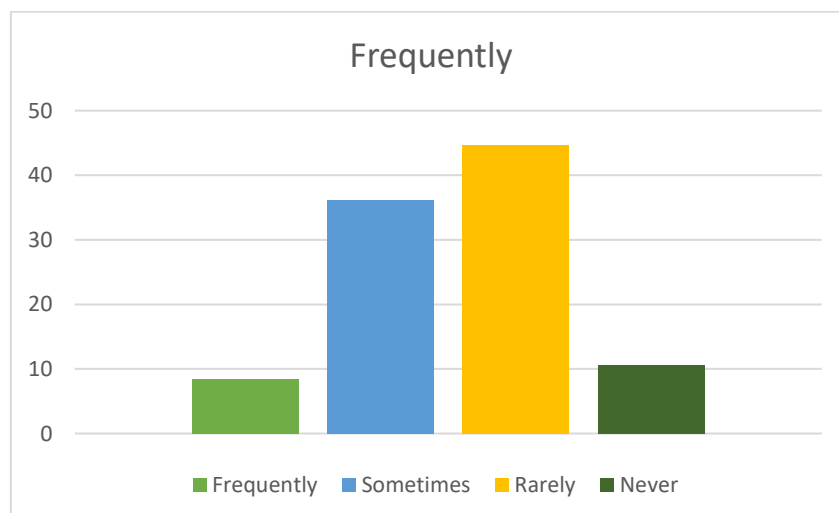


The above table and graph show respondents’ opinions about the occurrence of honour killings in the district. Out of 160 respondents, 72 (44.7%) believe that honour killings occur, while 54 respondents (34%) are uncertain. Meanwhile, 34 respondents (21.3%) believe that honour killings do not occur in the district. This suggests that a considerable number of respondents believe that honour killings may occur in the area, though some remain uncertain about their existence.

Table 4
Frequency of Honour Killing in the district

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Frequently	14	8.5%
Sometimes	58	36.2%
Rarely	72	44.7%
Never	16	10.6%
Total	160	100%

Source Primary Data



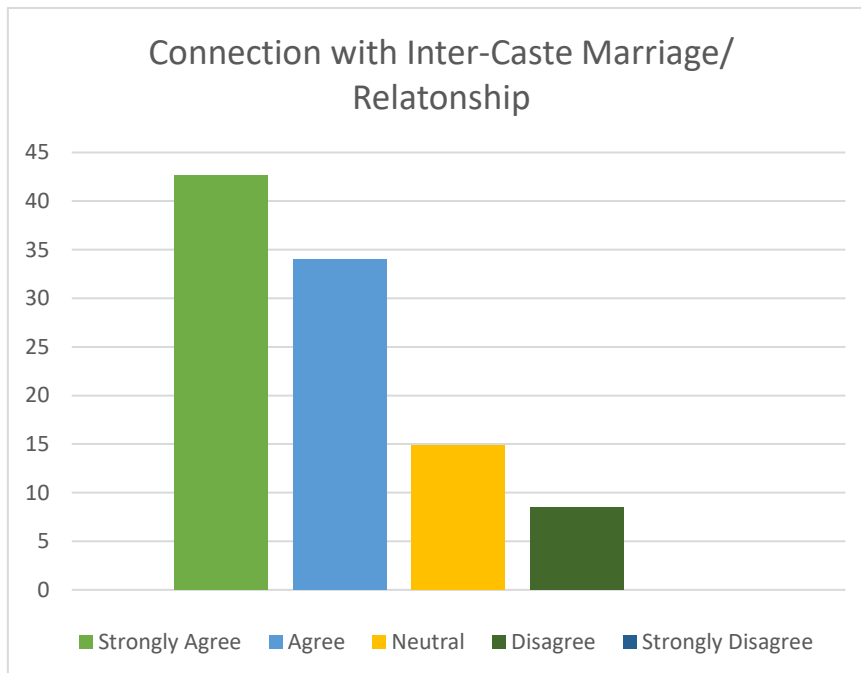
Above table and graph shows respondents’ views on the frequency of honour killings in the district. Out of

160 respondents, 72 (44.7%) believe that honour killings occur rarely, while 58 respondents (36.2%) believe they occur sometimes. A smaller number 14 (8.5%) think they occur frequently, and 16 respondents (10.6%) believe they never occur. This suggests that most respondents believe honour killings exist but occur infrequently within the districts.

Table 5
Honor killing due to Inter-Caste Marriage / Relationship

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	68	42.6%
Agree	54	34.0%
Neutral	24	14.9%
Disagree	14	8.5%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	160	100%

Source Primary Data



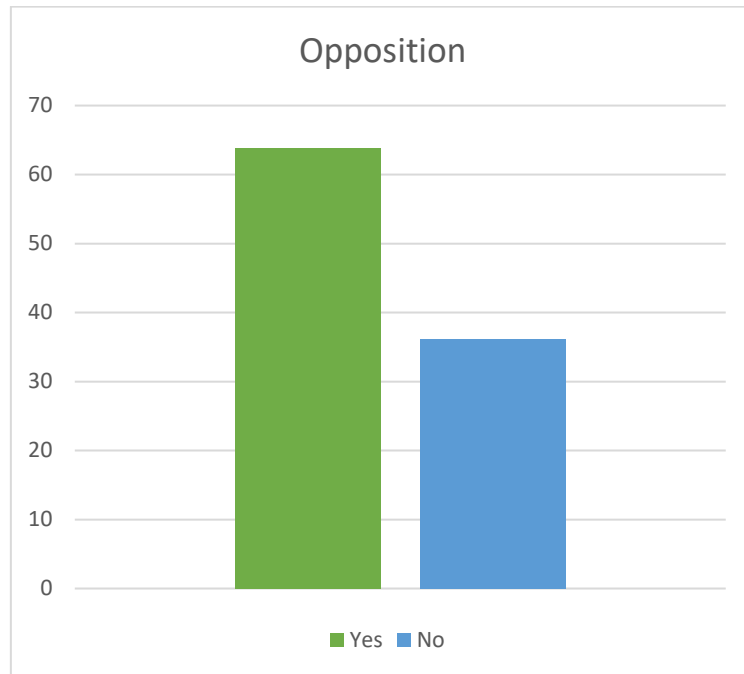
The table and graph show respondents' opinions on whether honour killings mainly occur due to inter-caste marriage conflicts. Out of 160 respondents, 68 (42.6%) strongly agree and 54 (34%) agree with the statement. Meanwhile, 24 respondents (14.9%) remain neutral, and 14 respondents (8.5%) disagree. This indicates that the majority of respondents believe inter-caste marriages are a major factor contributing to honour killing.

Table 6
Opposition to Inter-Caste Marriage / Relationship

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	102	63.8%

No	58	36.2%
Total	160	100%

Source Primary Data



Indicate above table and graph, views on opposition to inter-caste relationships or marriages. Out of 160 respondents, 102 respondents (63.8%) reported that they have experienced or witnessed opposition, while 58 respondents (36.2%) stated that they have not faced such opposition. The findings indicate that a significant proportion of respondents have encountered resistance toward inter-caste relationships or marriages. This suggests that traditional social norms and caste-based attitudes still influence people’s perceptions and acceptance of marriage choices. Despite increasing awareness and social change, opposition to inter-caste relationships continues to exist in many communities.

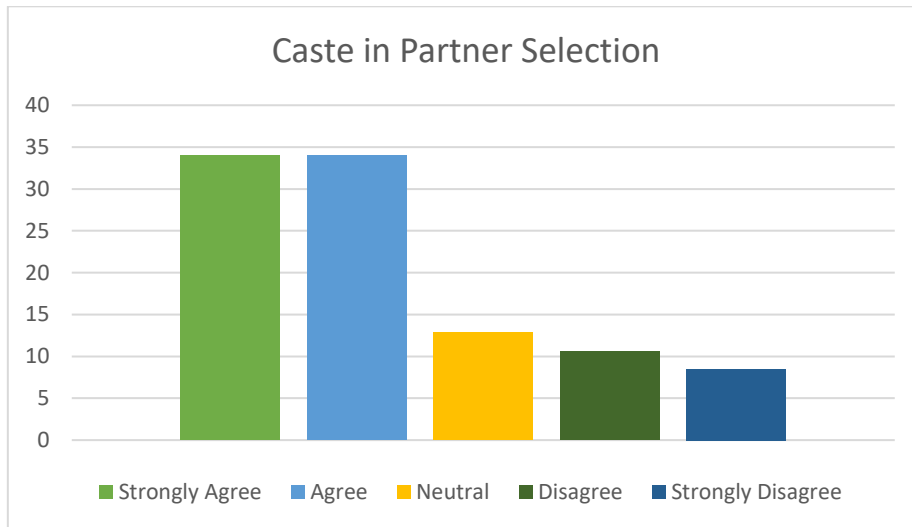
PERCEPTION TOWARDS CASTE AND FAMILY PRIDE

Table 7

Role of caste in partner selection

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	54	34%
Agree	54	34%
Neutral	20	12.8%
Disagree	17	10.6%
Strongly Disagree	15	8.5%
Total	160	100%

Source Primary Data

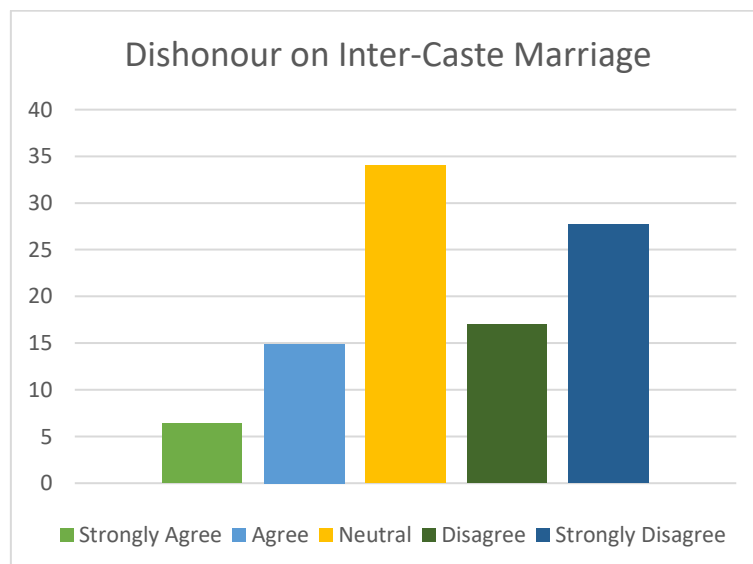


The table and graph shows respondents’ opinions on the role of caste in selecting marriage partners. Out of 160 respondents, 54 (34%) strongly agree and 54 (34%) agree that caste plays an important role. Meanwhile, 20 respondents (12.8%) remain neutral, while 17 (10.6%) disagree and 15 (8.5%) strongly disagree. This indicates that caste still influences marriage partner selection in many communities.

Table 8
Inter-caste marriage brings dishonor to family

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	10	6.4%
Agree	24	14.9%
Neutral	54	34.0%
Disagree	27	17.0%
Strongly Disagree	45	27.7%
Total	160	100%

Source Primary Data

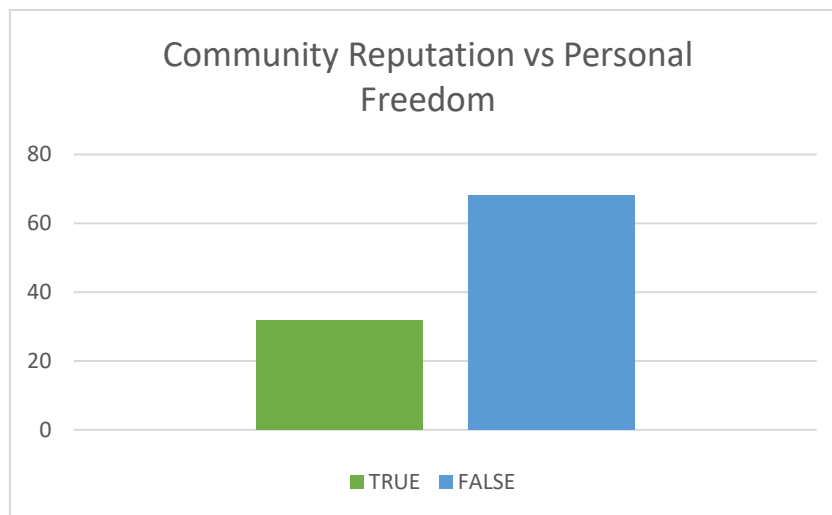


Both Table and graph table indicate that respondents’ opinions on whether inter-caste marriage brings dishonour to the family. Out of 160 respondents, 10 (6.4%) strongly agree and 24 (14.9%) agree with the statement. Meanwhile, 54 respondents (34%) remain neutral. On the other hand, 27 respondents (17%) disagree, and 45 respondents (27.7%) strongly disagree that inter-caste marriage brings dishonour to the family. This indicates that a considerable number of respondents do not believe that inter-caste marriages bring dishonour, reflecting changing attitudes toward caste and marriage in society.

Table 9
Importance of Community reputation than personal freedom

Response	Frequency	Percentage
True	51	31.9%
False	109	68.1%
Total	160	100%

Source Primary Data

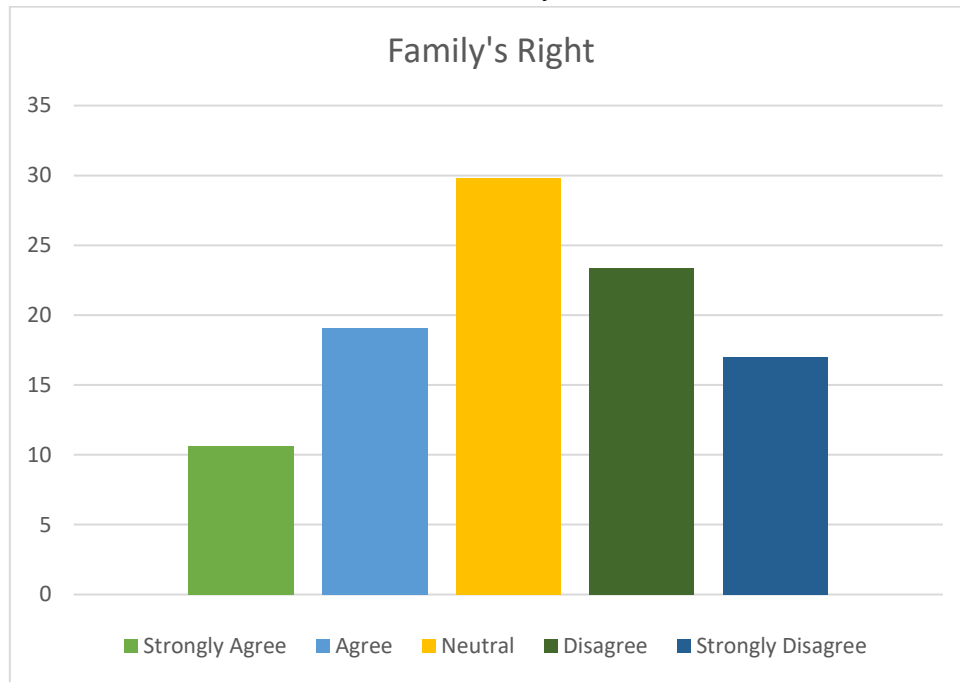


The table shows respondents’ views on whether community reputation is more important than personal freedom. Out of 160 respondents, 51 respondents (31.9%) agreed with the statement, while 109 respondents (68.1%) disagreed. This indicates that the majority of respondents believe that personal freedom is more important than community reputation, reflecting changing attitudes toward individual rights and personal choices in society.

Table 10
Family’s right to oppose inter-caste marriage

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	17	10.6%
Agree	31	19.1%
Neutral	48	29.8%
Disagree	37	23.4%
Strongly Disagree	27	17.0%
Total	160	100%

Source Primary Data



The table shows respondents’ opinions on whether families have the right to oppose inter-caste marriages. Out of 160 respondents, 17 (10.6%) strongly agree and 31 (19.1%) agree that families have such a right. Meanwhile, 48 respondents (29.8%) remain neutral. On the other hand, 37 respondents (23.4%) disagree, and 27 respondents (17%) strongly disagree with the statement. This indicates that opinions among respondents are divided, with a considerable number believing that families should not have the authority to oppose inter-caste marriages, reflecting changing attitudes toward individual choice in marriage.

LEGAL AND CRIMINOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Table 11

Influence of community elders

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	44	27.7%
Agree	61	38.3%
Neutral	48	29.8%
Disagree	7	4.2%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	160	100%

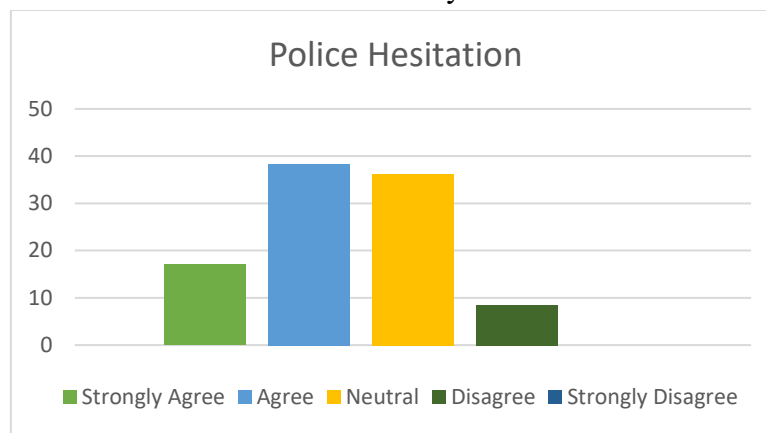
Source Primary Data

The table shows respondents’ opinions on the influence of community elders in honour killing cases. Out of 160 respondents, 44 (27.7%) strongly agree and 61 (38.3%) agree that community elders influence such cases. Meanwhile, 48 respondents (29.8%) remain neutral, while 7 respondents (4.2%) disagree. This indicates that most respondents believe that community elders play a significant role in influencing decisions or actions.

Table 12
Police Hesitation to Intervene in Caste-Related Cases

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	27	17%
Agree	61	38.3%
Neutral	58	36.2%
Disagree	14	8.5%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	160	100%

Source Primary Data



The table and graph shows respondents’ opinions on whether police hesitate to intervene in cases involving caste groups or local leaders. Out of 160 respondents, 27 (17%) strongly agree and 61 (38.3%) agree that police may hesitate to intervene. Meanwhile, 58 respondents (36.2%) remain neutral, and 14 respondents (8.5%) disagree with the statement. This suggests that a considerable number of respondents believe that law enforcement may be hesitant to intervene in caste-related conflicts, possibly due to social pressure or community influence.

Table 13
Community Support for the Accused in Honor Killing Cases

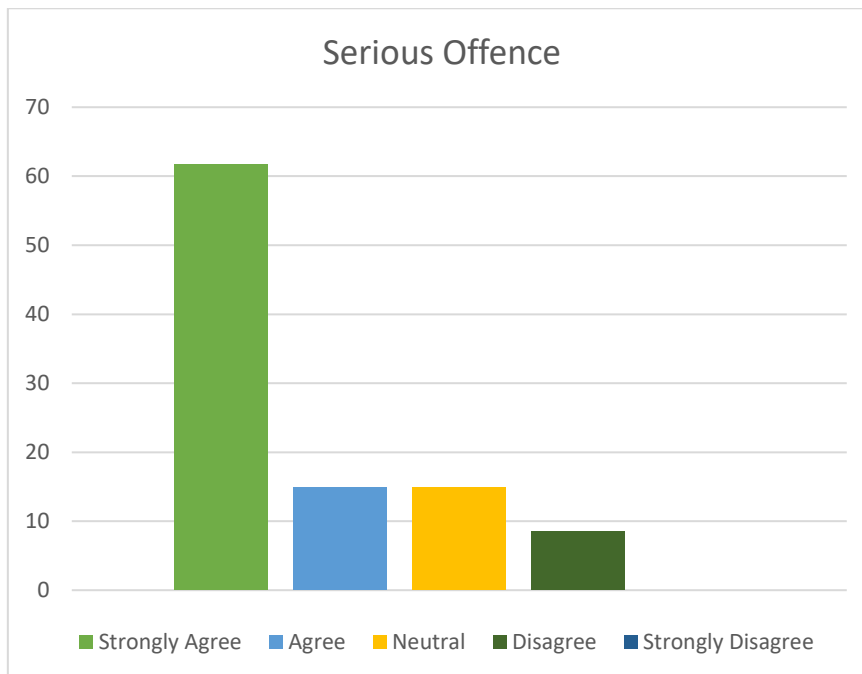
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	92	57.4%
No	48	29.8%
Maybe	20	12.8%
Total	160	100%

The table shows respondents’ opinions on whether community members support the accused in honour killing cases. Out of 160 respondents, 92 respondents (57.4%) believe that community members support the accused, while 48 respondents (29.8%) believe they do not. Meanwhile, 20 respondents (12.8%) are uncertain. This indicates that a majority of respondents feel that community support for the accused may exist in honour killing cases, possibly due to social norms, caste values, or pressure to maintain family honour.

Table 14
Honor killing should be treated as a serious offence

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	99	61.7%
Agree	24	14.9%
Neutral	24	14.9%
Disagree	13	8.5%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	160	100%

Source Primary Data

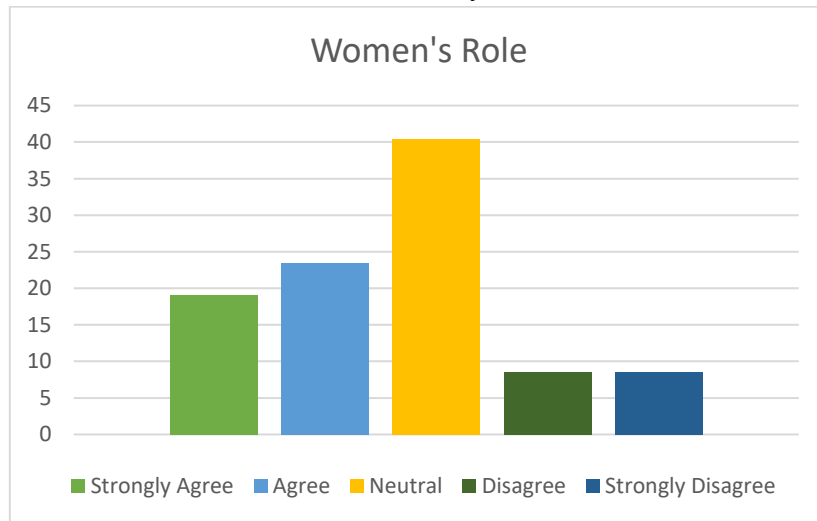


The table shows respondents’ opinions on whether honour killing should be treated as a serious criminal offence. Out of 160 respondents, 99 (61.7%) strongly agree and 24 (14.9%) agree with the statement. Meanwhile, 24 respondents (14.9%) remain neutral, while 13 respondents (8.5%) disagree. This indicates that most respondents strongly support treating honour killing as a serious criminal offence, reflecting a strong condemnation of such practices in society.

Table 15
Women’s role in maintaining family Honor

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	31	19.1%
Agree	37	23.4%
Neutral	65	40.4%
Disagree	13	8.5%
Strongly Disagree	14	8.6%
Total	160	100%

Source Primary Data

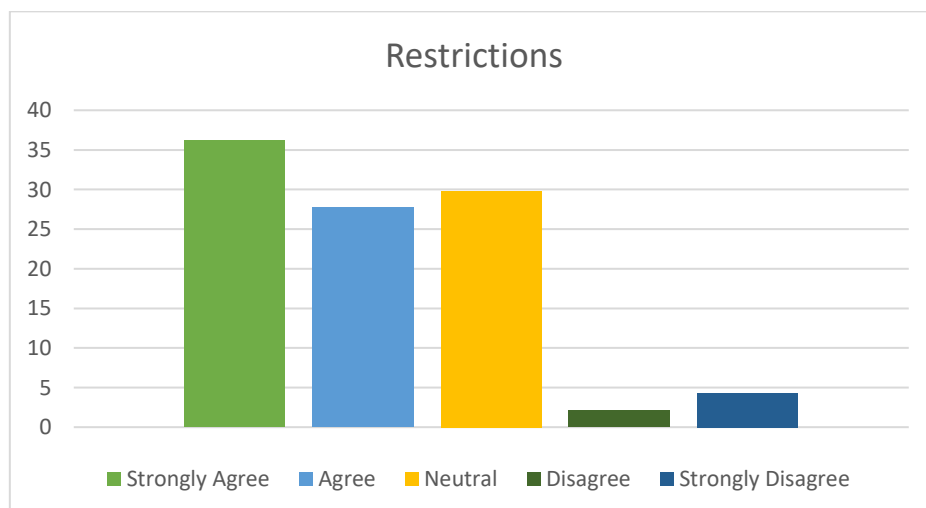


The table shows respondents' opinions on whether women bear greater responsibility for maintaining family honour. Out of 160 respondents, 31 (19.1%) strongly agree and 37 (23.4%) agree with the statement. Meanwhile, 65 respondents (40.4%) remain neutral, while 13 (8.5%) disagree and 14 (8.6%) strongly disagree. This indicates that opinions among respondents are mixed, with many remaining neutral about the belief that women are primarily responsible for maintaining family honour.

Table 16
Restrictions on women's marriage choices

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	58	36.2%
Agree	44	27.7%
Neutral	48	29.8%
Disagree	3	2.1%
Strongly Disagree	7	4.2%
Total	160	100%

Source Primary Data



The table and graph show respondents' opinions on whether women's choice in marriage is more restricted than men. Out of 160 respondents, 58 (36.2%) strongly agree and 44 (27.7%) agree with the statement. Meanwhile, 48 respondents (29.8%) remain neutral, while 3 respondents (2.1%) disagree and 7 respondents (4.2%) strongly disagree. This indicates that most respondents believe that women face greater restrictions than men in making decisions about marriage.

Major Findings & Conclusion

1. **High Awareness through Media:** Most respondents are aware of honour killings, primarily through news and social media, highlighting the significant role of media in spreading awareness.
2. **Inter-Caste Marriage as a Key Cause:** Inter-caste and love marriages are widely perceived as the main triggers of honour killings due to caste conflicts and family opposition.
3. **Strong Influence of Caste in Marriage Decisions:** Caste continues to play a major role in selecting marriage partners, showing that traditional norms remain deeply rooted despite modernization.
4. **Family and Community Pressure:** Family expectations, fear of social criticism, and pressure to maintain honour and reputation are major factors contributing to honour-based violence.
5. **Gender Inequality in Decision-Making:** Women face greater restrictions than men in choosing marriage partners, reflecting persistent patriarchal values in society.

Conclusion

The study examines the link between caste, family pride, and Honor killings, highlighting that most respondents associate such violence with inter-caste marriages, family pressure, and the need to maintain social status. Caste continues to influence marriage decisions, and opposition to inter-caste relationships remains common. However, some respondents show progressive attitudes by supporting individual choice and rejecting the idea of dishonor. The findings also emphasize the role of social pressure and community expectations, while recognizing Honor killing as a serious crime. Overall, although attitudes are gradually changing, caste-based traditions still persist, indicating the need for greater awareness, education, and stronger legal measures to prevent Honor based violence.

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