

**Analysis of Honor Killing and Violence Against Women in Sufia Humayun's Its Not Ok
Not to Be Ok: A Feminist Perspective**

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ABSTRACT

The present research paper analyzes "It is not-ok-not-to-be-ok" a short story by Sufia Humayun through the lens of Postcolonial Feminism. The short story is taken from her collection of short stories entitled "Shattered Echoes" published in 2024. This short story shows us various factors including patriarchy and colonial policies that mix with each other to restrict women's freedom in different ways, most prominently violence and honor killing. The central focus of the current research is to find the major elements that add to violence and honor killing against women such as: traditional values, social constraints, patriarchal structure, religion and cultural beliefs. Along with that, how the mentioned factors have impacts on the autonomy of female. This paper is primarily based on the theories of postcolonial feminist theorists generally, Kandivoti (1988) and Mohanty (1984) and particularly on the theory of Spivak "Can the subaltern speak?" (1988). Qualitative research methodology has been used specifically close textual analysis technique to analyze the selected statements and passages of the short story from postcolonial feministic perspective. The short story highlights the marginalization of women due to powerful and prevailing patriarchal structure within the society. The killings of Qandeel Baloch and Noor Makhdoom are portrayed as a tragedy and are interpreted as a symbol for those who violate social and cultural norms. The paper highlights the significance of literary narration in exposing the societal and fundamental measures of violence based on gender. The study concludes the essential societal and lawful developments that line up women's rights and their voices, emphasizing the significance of challenging the dominant patriarchal structures and stimulating justice between the opposite genders.

Keywords: Honor Killing; Postcolonial feminism; Patriarchy; Systemic violence; Marginalization.

INTRODUCTION

Women's rights have become a major global concern in the new era. Vienna Declaration (1993), and the Declaration of Beijing (1995), the two international declarations that support equal rights for men and women, stand in stark contrast to the reality of life for millions of women around the globe. Women's cultural, social, and economic rights are still not properly recognized. Women in Pakistan and other South Asian countries are equally susceptible to various forms of violence, such as sexual assault by family members, strangers, and state agents; domestic abuse, including spousal murder; being burned, disfigured with acid, beaten, and threatened; ritual honor killings; and torture and abuse in imprisonment (Niaz, 2003).

Violence against women is still a major issue around the globe. Intimate relationship abuse, sexual harassment, rape, and honor killings are just a few of the issues that affect women. Honor killing ranks highest among the various types of violence committed against women. This type of violence against women is the worst way because it suggests that the victim has violated socially acceptable behavior, violated the code of honor, and embarrassed the family. As a result, the fault is punishable by anything from physical, social, and psychological abuse to the death of the offender. Both men and women have been shown to be victims of honor killings, although generally speaking, women are murdered in these situations because they are dependent on and controlled by their families and are unable to find safety or assistance to flee. On the other side, males frequently flee to a safe place, are pardoned, or are forced to provide money or the hand of a married relative (Hadi, 2020).

In South Asia, women's lives are frequently subject to social scrutiny, control, and patriarchal judgment. Honor-based violence (HBV), in which women are killed or wounded by family members or community members because they failed to uphold a particular honor associated with families or tribes, and it is one of the worst effects of this control. Honor-Based Violence is present almost throughout the world, it is particularly prevalent in specific areas of Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan where conservative customs, the negligent enforcement of the law, and the politicization of religious and tribal institutions all work together to maintain an environment of impunity (NOOR, 2025).

The most common definition of honor killing is, "*a response to the impression that a female or young girl has disrespected her family wishes, typically due to sexual rudeness*" (Raza, 2017, p.18). One of the characteristics of honor killings is that they are organized by family councils rather than individual family members, and families set up men to watch their family honor. Honor killing is widespread in South America, the Middle East, North Africa, and portions of Asia. In recent times, this behavior has also been observed in Pakistani communities, as evidenced by media reports. They are occasionally covered by media sources as the primary focus of their breaking stories, and the concerns are also followed up on (RAZA, 2017).

This study is of vital important because it analyzes that how the psychological and social restrictions on women's agency and autonomy in male dominated and postcolonial nations are depicted in Sufia Humayun's *It Is Not OK Not to Be OK*. Using a postcolonial feminist lens, the study shows how deeply rooted patriarchal beliefs shaped by both indigenous cultural traditions and colonial legacies are the primary causes of gender-based violence and honor killing. There is a significant role of literature to represent and reflect the systemic marginalization, suppression, and silencing the voices of women under the codes of honor and moral values. Based on this idea the current study promotes a feminist literary discussion.

The study also highlights the importance of healthy campaign and also a change in cultural norms on women rights, shelter and self-respect in the whole globe, particularly in South Asian countries. This study aims to highlight the connection between opposite genders, religion, culture and patriarchy by

analyzing Sufia Humayun's short story, which stressing the contemporary importance of feminist struggle and fight against the marginalization, based on honor and cultural values.

Sufia Humayun's short story *It Is Not Ok Not to Be Ok* shows the complicated fight of women dwelling in areas that are primarily male-centered and socially restricted. The mentioned short story also highlights the various effects of violence based on honor, among which emotional and mental effects are the most crucial. The short story illustrates the prevalent inequality based on gender that fills women lives by showing how women are constantly victimized, dishonored and silenced for the honor of a family. Academic analysis of such critical issues through the perspective of postcolonial feminism is not given any proper attention, although it highlights the significant themes of women suppression, cultural constraints, and incorporation of male-dominated values. This inequality stresses the importance of examining how Humayun's literary works challenge the religious and social variables that add violence against female in different parts of the world specifically in South Asian postcolonial countries.

This research study aims to cover this research gap by analyzing how Humayun's *It Is Not-Ok-Not-to-Be-Ok* evaluates the sociocultural phenomena that add to violence based on honor that restrict women freedom. The study main goal is to highlight the hidden meanings of this literary illustration by using postcolonial feminist theory. The study also focuses the factors such as; cultural beliefs, social codes, social values and male dominance that all works as a unit to suppress and silence women. The most important issue is that, women's viewpoints are constantly neglected in both the world in which we live and also that is imaginary, particularly in examples of violence based on honor where, social restraints and decisions have deeply adverse impacts.

Research Questions

This research study addresses the following research questions

1. In what ways does Sufia Humayun's *It's-Not-Ok-Not-To-Be-Ok* presents honor based killing and violence in postcolonial context?
2. What are the cultural, patriarchal and social norms that contribute to the marginalization of women in Pakistani society?

Research Objectives

The research study addresses the following research Objectives

1. To examine honor based killing and violence against women in Sufia Humayun's *It's-Not- Ok-Not-To-Be-Ok* in a postcolonial context.
2. To Identify cultural, patriarchal and social norms that contribute to the marginalization of women in Pakistani society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Postcolonial feminism is a critique of the western scientific pattern and claims to universal knowledge. The harmful consequences of western colonialism that persist to this day are analyzed and depicted by feminists. Additionally, local movements in other regions of the world like the Chipko Movement in India are given greater attention than those in the West. Western feminism also faces challenges from women who were forced to relocate to the United States due to colonization or severe economic hardships in their home countries, such as immigrant women employed in domestic service (Martin, 2020).

Gender discourse is frequently restricted or repressed in Pakistan due to religious, cultural, and traditional beliefs. Khan's (2006) research work, *Zina, Transgression, and the Reconfiguration of Honor in Pakistan*, illustrates how the social structure views gender nonconformity as incompatible with ethics, respect, and dignity (Iqbal et al., 2024).

Before the 1990s, Western academia largely ignored Black, Hispanic, and Asian theory, criticism, and creative writing. Feminist literary criticism has advanced recently; among of the most well-known writers are Gloria Anzaldua, Chandra Mohanty, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Gayatri Spivak, Rey Chow, Rosario Castellanos, and Cheryl Johnson-Odim. In her well-known and contentious article "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" Spivak specifically tackles the question of whether or not those in colonized, subordinate situations may find a voice. The "Subaltern Studies Group" in India is also implied by Spivak's use of the term "subaltern." These critics disagree with previous feminist perspectives that presumed that women's shared experiences of oppression constituted a collective identity. They challenge the notion that white middle-class women should be viewed as the norm, contending that these women's concerns are not necessarily shared by all women and that, even when it comes to the same general issues, women's varying social positions result in quite different issues and solutions (Shital, 2012).

The phrase "crime of honor" refers to a range of acts of violence against women, such as honor killings, assaults, imprisonment or confinement, and interference with marriage choices. According to Henry et al. (2018), honor killings typically entail three components: control over female behavior, males' feelings of guilt at losing control, and community involvement in controlling and sustaining this shame. According to Singh (2014, p, 381) "*Honor crimes are violent crimes, typically murder, that are committed, particularly by male family members, against a woman who is thought to have disgraced the family*". The public rationale for honor killings is predicated on a social structure purportedly dependent on maintaining family honor, which necessitates men controlling women, particularly with regard to their sexual behavior, whether real, suspected, or prospective (Ne'eman-Haviv, 2021).

According to Kogacioglu (2004) and Siddiqui (2005), it is the killing of a girl or woman by members of her family, including her mother, father, brothers, uncles, or grandparents, or occasionally by members of the community, due to her sexual behavior. Disapproved sexual activity varies by community and occasionally even by family; it usually involves flirting, opposing arranged marriage, having sex before marriage, and even being raped in addition to sex outside of marriage. When a woman violates sexual customs in her family, community, or religion, it is regarded as disrespecting or dishonoring these customs and causing shame to the family or group. Family members kill the woman in an attempt to rebuild their family or community reputation (Heydari, 2021).

Honor killing (HK) is a type of domestic violence that has been characterized as a custom in which accusations of sexual infidelity led to the murder of usually women and occasionally men. According to reports, the killers want to get revenge on the victims for allegedly embarrassing their families. Depending on the area of Pakistan where it is practiced, Honor Killing is referred to by different names. It is known as "Karo Kari" in the province of Sindh, where Kari denotes the blackened woman and Karo denotes the blackened or dishonored male (Nasrullah et al., 2009).

Although reforms have been made to the existing laws and awareness campaign has also started to aware the people about this cruel disease. But still honor based violence affected thousands of innocent lives in Pakistan with each passing year. The Pakistani nation was shocked by Noor Mukadam case that happened in 2021. In the said incident a male friend tortured and killed a 27-year-old daughter of a retired diplomat in a noble neighborhood of Islamabad. Inadequate media attention was drawn to Noor's privileged status and the vivid circumstances of the crime. However, the conversation around the incident, and how most people criticized Noor's character, way of life, and decisions as being her own were more shocking than the actual crime (NOOR, 2025).

On June 15, 2000, Amnesty International reported that every year hundreds of women and children in Pakistan are killed in what are known as "Honor killings". According to the HRCP's study conducted in January 2000, "Dimensions of Violence" (HRCP, 2000), at least 266 women had been the victims of "honor killing" in Lahore during an 11-month period. According to HRCP records from 1999, 266

women were murdered and Punjab had the greatest percentage of women who experienced this type of abuse. Only 128 of the approximately 672 women who were killed in Punjab in 2000 were reported by the police station, while the relatives of the remaining victims failed to take any legal action. Approximately 93 women were killed in Sindh between January and April of 2000, and "Karo Kari" was blamed for their deaths. Every year, hundreds of "honor killings," particularly in tribal areas of the North, are thought to go unreported due to social complicity, frequently involving district administration, which prevents such murders from being reported to the police (Hadi, 2020).

Hundreds of women of all ages are reportedly killed in the name of honor each year across the country. Nearly all of these incidents go unpunished and many more go unreported. Millions of Pakistani women's lives are restricted by customs that require them to live in complete seclusion and subject to men, many of whom use violence to establish their proprietorship over them. Honor killings are not only justified but often encouraged by jirga, or tribal courts. These jirgas are frequently used to justify honor killings in situations that are merely instances of misconduct. For example, a 17-year-old girl in the province of Sindh was under pressure from her uncle to convince her parents to give him acres of farm land. When she refused, the uncle and his allies made her father witness and then she is being shot to death after being mauled by a group of uncivilized men. The deceased girl was subsequently declared "kari," a lady engaged in an extramarital affair, at a jirga that was organized two months later (Naveed, 2019).

Violence against women is common in all societies and is acknowledged as a global issue. Data have shown that 10 out of 70 women experience physical abuse at the hands of their spouses. In Pakistani patriarchal society, women are generally thought to have few rights or privileges. The situation of women rights violation in rural areas is quite serious and concerning, even though women do better in rural as well as in urban areas of society. According to Wikan (2009), 75 percent of Pakistani women reside in rural and tribal areas. Pakistani women are still viewed as second-class citizens and have physical disadvantages. Women victims face social and cultural discrimination, especially in the southern area of Punjab (Ashraf, 2017).

There is not a single, comprehensive theory of honor that aims to explain both honor-based violence and its global applications. Philosophers have tackled the subject by attempting to differentiate honor from closely related concepts of respect and esteem (Sessions 2010; Appiah 2011) and by conducting a normative assessment of honor, connecting it to other normative systems like religious doctrine and morality (Doris & Plakias 2008; Appiah 2011; Demetriou 2014; Kumar and Campbell 2015). Following the seminal work of Nisbett and Cohen (1996), social scientists have made an effort to pinpoint and measure the psychological processes that underlie conduct connected to honor (Benard 2013; Shafa et al. 2014; Grosjean 2014; Benard 2015). The conceptual and psychological approaches to honor are equally insightful, but neither one offers a complete account for the origins of honor cultures. The most promising research in this area to far examines the customs and conduct of regional subcultures that uphold honorable standards in spite of the surrounding society very small role for them. According to Skarbek (2014), Chen (2010), Gambetta (2009), and Iannaccone and Berman (2006), these subcultures include terrorists, inmates, and professional criminals. Such case studies offer a kind of natural experiment: they make it possible to create models that could explain the root reasons of honor-based violence. This method is known as the comparative-functional approach to organized honor violence research (Thrasher, 2018).

The persistent practice of stove burning is one of the most severe types of domestic violence. Husbands and relatives seem to be responsible for a large number of these burnings due to their displeasure with the victim dowry. According to a newspaper accounts (UNICEF), In 1999, 201 Pakistani women were reportedly hurt while cooking. Approximately 206 women perished from stove burns in 2000. The Progressive Women Association claims that in every instance, over 30% of the body was burned, and in

many instances, that percentage rose to 60–90% (UNICEF Report). According to the HRCP study "Dimensions of Violence," 163 stove deaths occurred in Lahore alone during the course of 11 months in 1999 (Niaz, 2003).

In her seminal work *Under Western Eyes*, Mohanty (1984) criticizes Western feminist discourses for their universalizing inclinations, especially the representation of "Third World women" as uniformly disadvantaged. Mohanty highlights the need for feminist analysis to be based on the socio-historical circumstances of the Global South, where colonial legacies and patriarchal oppression are entwined (Sana et al., 2025).

In *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Spivak (1988) presents the idea of the "subaltern" to examine how colonial women are structurally silenced within prevailing political, intellectual, and cultural narratives. According to Spivak, subaltern women are frequently talked about rather than given the opportunity to speak, which perpetuates the very hegemonies that feminists aim to overthrow. Her observations are especially relevant to Sufia Humayun's *It Is Not-OK-Not-to-Be-OK*, where the systematic suppression of women's voices is reflected in the female characters' experiences with honor-based violence and social control.

Honor killing is a problem that exists now in every part of the world; however, the severity of the issue varies from nation to nation or area to region (Warriach, 2005). Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Bangladesh, Algeria, Brazil, Ecuador, Morocco, Israel, Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, the Balkans, Sweden, Holland, Germany, Italy, Yemen, India, and numerous other nations are among those where honor killing is frequently observed (Ali, 2008).

The United Nations Population Fund estimates that approximately 5,000 women and girls are murdered annually on the pretext of "Honor Killing" (UNIFEM, 2007). However, Kiener (2011) noted that these 5000 figures are gross and that the real numbers are so concerning that they are roughly 20,000 every year worldwide. It is firmly ingrained in social and cultural standards not only in Pakistan rural and urban areas but globally as well. In many nations, the idea that fathers are in charge of their children's lives, particularly those of girls, is still prevalent. This belief leads fathers to feel that they have the right to punish their children to death if they wander, particularly when it comes to sexual matters. According to United Nations research published in 2000, up to 5,000 women and girls are killed annually as part of honor crimes committed by family members. Although it is certain that these incidents are simply a small portion of the big iceberg (Ali, 2020).

When it comes to intimate partner violence, a psychological approach offers explanations that range from situational to dispositional. While a situational perspective may highlight the role of transient reductions in self-regulatory resources in violence against women (e.g., Finkel, DeWall, Slotter, Oaten, & Foshee, 2009), one such dispositional perspective sees perpetrators of violence against women as having one or more personality disorders (Dutton, 2006). Similarly, an evolutionary viewpoint sees male aggression against women as the outcome of a species-typical struggle between males for dominance over women's reproductive resources (Daly & Wilson, 1988). Other psychological viewpoints are predicated on models of aggression that concentrate on specific elements that impact individual aggressors or victims, such as hostility and rage (Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005; Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward, & Tritt, 2004), excessively high self-esteem (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Cowan & Mills, 2004), and inadequate communication skills (Brown1, 2017).

In a broader sense, patriarchy refers to the spread of male domination over women in society at large as well as the expression and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children within the home. It suggests that women are deprived of access to such power and that men hold power in all the important institutions of society. However, it does not suggest that women are either completely deprived of rights, and resources or completely powerless. In order to ensure that males always play dominant, or

masculine, roles and women always play subservient, or feminine ones, patriarchal ideology exaggerates the biological distinctions between men and women. There is a strong worldview that men are generally capable to secure the consent of the women they suppress, because of which such incidents are common throughout the globe (Sultana, 2010).

It is of the vital importance to examine suppression based on gender because this helps the readers and academic scholars to know how symbolism, language and structure of narration shape our insights of inequality and gender roles (Azmy et al., 2024; Bashir & Mehmood, 2024; Rahman et al., 2024). By studying literary works through the perspective of suppression and gender highlights not only the representation of women but also how social and societal norms are targeted through story based telling, as the literature fundamentally reflects social and cultural realities (Ladzekpo et al., 2024). Furthermore, it allows us a better understanding of how cultural factors challenge the dominant views, particularly in settings where women's freedom of speeches is consistently oppressed or of no value (Agung, 2025).

There are enough research studies on honor-based murdering and violence based on gender in South Asian Literature. But, Sufia Humayun's *Its-not-ok-not-to-be-ok* has gained little scholarly based analysis through the lens of postcolonial feminism, most importantly when it comes to honor-based violence. Very few studies critically examine Humayun's literary work to analyze how patriarchal structure, cultural norms, and postcolonial social values mingled with each other to suppress women and maintain violence. This research gap needs to be fulfilled by enthusiastic research scholars that apply one of the postcolonial feminist theories to Humayun's short story. The current study revealing her story text social critique as well as the extensive consequences for understanding women subjugation in contemporary postcolonial nations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Qualitative research methodology has been used in this study, which is based on the careful reading and analysis of Humayun's short story text. The key source of the study for this research is Sufia Humayun short story *It-is-no-ok-not-to-be-ok*. The mentioned short story offers a power description of how post-colonial patriarchal dominancy affect the lives of women and continue violence based on gender. The narration offers a mirror through which one can see various factors such as; honor killing, cultural oppression, and patriarchal structure that restrict women's agency, autonomy, and their voices in society as well as in the home.

The study analyzes the mingling of patriarchal and colonial policies that still affect the lived experiences of women. It also focuses on the concept of shame and honor through deep textual analysis. The research is multidisciplinary, because it utilizes literature, studies based on gender, and post-colonial literary feminist theory to examine the text that challenges control and violent structures. The study attempts to search for the basic socio-cultural implications of violence based on honor in post-colonial South Asian settings by analyzing the narration as both a reflection and form of fight in contrast to gendered suppression. Furthermore, key scholars like Suleri (1992), Mohanty (1984) and specifically Spivak literary theory "Can the Subaltern speak? (1988) are quoted for the purpose to provide the scholarly theoretical framework that is necessary to grasp the narration from a postcolonial feminist perspective.

Data Collection

The primary source of data for this research study is the text of Sufia Humayun short story *It-is-not-ok-not-to-be-ok*. The secondary sources of data include books, academic publications and also critical essays that address violence against women, honor killing, patriarchal structure and postcolonial feminism.

ANALYSIS

A qualitative research approach is used for data analysis to analyze Honor killing and violence against women in Humayun's short story *It-is-not-ok-not-to-be-ok* from postcolonial feminist lens. The study examines factors such as violence, patriarchal structure and honor killing and their effects on the lives of women in postcolonial South Asia. Qualitative study will specifically involve close and in-depth analysis of the selected sentences and passages from the story to analyze the data.

Sufia Humayun short story *It-is-not-ok-not-to-be-ok* is beyond a literary piece of writing. Basically, it is the reflection of our society and our traditional values and norms. The short story is the artistic and well-crafted representation of the sufferings of women who are dwelling in postcolonial and patriarchal structures. Primarily, the narration exposes the deep emotive pain and struggle of women who are fascinated in such structures that subordinate female reverence and cleanliness with honor of the family. The story subtle narration and emotive complexity permit readers to study the life of its leading female characters, who, like several others, is subjugated by inner fear, shame, and isolation in addition to cultural traditions, and societal norms. Analyzing this narration through the lens of postcolonial feminism reveals how cultural values, colonial customs, and male dominancy mix with each other to affect the identities of women, power of decision and experiences. Humayun's short story discloses the unending struggle for female autonomy, power of speech, and self-esteem in globe especially in South Asian societies and become a strong narrative on, how violence based on honor till now restrict the lives of women.

Here are some of the excerpts from Humayun's short story *It-is-not-ok-not-to-be-ok*, that exposes gender-based violence, honor killing and patriarchal structure in postcolonial South Asian nations.

Not one day but this time of night, you know you don't need to approach the cars, cars approach you, even ride over you regardless of the fact that the caked pastry face of yours has become goeey, mascara and kajal have left smudges around the eyes and your breasts have retreated back after holding them for the whole day long (Humayun, 2024, p.155).

In the above passage, Sufia Humayun very beautiful crafts the harsh realities of women marginalization within male-dominated and socioeconomic structures. The expression "*cars approach you, even ride over you*", invokes the imagery of both real and figurative violence. It demonstrates how the bodies of women are observed as commodities, and always in hazard from patriarchy and societal injustices. The former statement non-formal tone intensifies the dehumanization by pointing a societal structure where women pain is acknowledged and their dignity is eradicated. The portrayal of the women through phrases "caked pastry face", "smudged eyes," and "breast ...held for whole day long" highlights those women who are compelled to stay down if they want survival in a place that is totally male dominated. Through the lens of postcolonial feminist perspective, this interpretation challenges the customs through which cultural norms, values and male-dominated superiority mix to subjugate women, changing their identity into settings of both degradation and labor. Spivak concept of the subaltern is mirrored in Humayun's statement, which exemplifies how structural power silences the repressed voices. Similar to Spivak's subaltern, she lacks the ability to fully "speak" since dominating forces filter, ignore, and obscure her lived experience.

Sufia Humayun's *It's Not Ok not to be ok* highlights how male-dominated standards affect women's insights of themselves emotionally. The mentioned story evaluates the conditioning of women to views themselves through the perspective of men. From a feministic point of view, the writer says: "But who cares to look at you? The face that you paint daily is not for them but it's for you" (Humayun, 2024, p.155).

The aforementioned lines demonstrate the depth of thought behind the adopted patriarchal system, which is a central concept in postcolonial feminist and feminist discourse. On the outward, it seems to be an effort by a woman to retrieve agency through her self-representation; nonetheless, Sufia Humayun used satire to illustrate how this act of self-representation is altered by the standards of beauty and moral values of society. The phrase “Painting the face daily” is a symbol for the emotive work female to present herself strong, beautiful, and calm. This act can also be seen as an attempt to accept herself in a social setting that always degrades them. The sentence “It is for you” sounds authorizing, but in the framework of narration, it backs into a catastrophic announcement of fake freedom. The idea of the subaltern as proposed by Spivak is further demonstrated in the above mentioned line. Daily face-painting routine of the protagonist, even though “who cares to look at you?” stresses how invisible her work and presence are in a culture that disrespects her. Her experience is thus a perfect example of Spivak argument that the subaltern is unable to speak fully because, even while engaging in self-expression, social forces distort and complicate her voice, thereby denying recognition to her lived reality.

There is a strict code of conduct for both men and women in patriarchal societies. Sufia Humayun in *It’s not ok not to be ok* challenges the inflexible structure of masculinity in such patriarchal societies. The short story demonstrates how socially suitable behaviors such as: aggression, vulgarity and public dominance are viewed as pointers of “real” masculinity. Furthermore, the story discloses such harmful gender scripting, it notes, “And you avoided setting with boys because you don’t play sports, or do drugs, or pots, bang or hoot leering comments on chowks. Hence, you weren’t considered to be masculine enough” (Humayun,2024, p.156).

The mentioned statements very efficiently disclose the means through patriarchal societies enforce restricted concepts of femininity and masculinity that are harmful to women as well as to men. Here, Sufia Humayun shows how societal demands to exhibit dominance, violence, and restrictions that sustain a patriarchal system based on the oppression of women affect even men. The toxic masculinity ingrained in South Asian societies where a man's value is determined by his capacity to exert power, especially over women is shown in the mockery aimed at the male character for not participating in sports, drugs, or hooting comments on chowks. The postulation that maleness dwells on the marginalization of women is so in-depth that when people who are not willing to accept such attitude are considered feminized or simply as “not masculine enough”. The protagonist is socially marginalized and delegitimized as a result of avoiding male areas and acting in ways that are not typical of men, illustrating how prevailing norms limit both agency and voice. Her viewpoint and decisions are disregarded, underscoring the point that, as Spivak contends, the subaltern cannot completely express themselves inside systems that decide whose actions and experiences are acknowledged.

In her short story *It’s not ok not to be ok* Sufia Humayun exposes the corruption of institution that sustains moral policing based in gender. The mentioned short story strongly criticizes the way through which the educational institution punishes bodies that do not follow to heteronormative standards in the name of maintaining “health” and “morality”. The short story illustrates this hypocrisy and disciplinary control by pointing: “Thus the school council being the healthy community kept up the healthiness and rusticated you from school, just like the school council struck off the girls when they were caught in washroom being intimate” (Humayun,2024, p.156).

The mentioned statement narrates the profoundly rooted patriarchal duplicity within formal institutes that claim moral superiority but sustain social segregation and gender based prejudice. Such hypocrisy based on gender is exposed in the phrase “just like the school council struck off the girls when they were caught in washroom being intimate”. The other phrase “Healthy community” is used in an ironical way. Sufia Humayun discloses how these institutions support the so called moral health by disciplining and punishing all, particularly women, who don’t obey to gender based stereotypes. Social removal is

represented by the process of expulsion or rustication which is a temporary suspension from the society. Male and female both especially female students were punished for disobeying the rigid ethical standards set by patriarchal authorities rather than essentially for sin. The stress on “girls caught in the washroom” however, emphasizes the strictly regulated female sexuality, demonstrating the double standards that describe women bodies as space of honor and shame. Spivak labels the subaltern as systematically silent, and this text is a perfect example of that idea. The school council, which stands for dominant power, effectively erases the agency and voices of female pupils by punishing them for intimate behaviors.

Even the husbands of the staff do not spare college girls. This issue has been emphasized by Sufia Humayun in *It's not ok not to be ok*. She illustrates the prevalent danger of male harassment in school and public settings. The text of the short story illustrates how social conversation and predatory behavior continuously monitor women's safety and mobility. In keeping with this culture of fear, she presents that, “Then there were stories circling around of the spouse who loitered around the premises of the college, harassing girls” (Humayun, 2024, p.157).

The above statement of Humayun short story, illustrates how ordinary sexual bullying and male opinion affect the everyday life of women. Sufia Humayun portrays a societal structure in which there is consistent vulnerability of women to harassment, which is the symbolic representation of established gender-based violence. Through the perspective of postcolonial feminism, this happening highlights how the freedom and mobility of women are restricted by the possibility of damage as well as direct violence. The mentioned behavior of spouses exemplifies how cultural policies and patriarchal authority overlap, showing how women are socialized to self-regulate in order to prevent harassment or social condemnation. These control mechanisms are the same ones that support honor-based violence, in which women presence and behavior are continuously observed and penalized in order to maintain male and family authority and honor. The girls' voices are limited because they are unable to face the threat head-on or have authorities acknowledge it. This reflects Spivak's assertion that the subaltern is unable to completely express themselves because power institutions filter, ignore, or make invisible their lived reality.

Sufia Humayun in her short story “It is not ok to be ok” criticizes the systemic discrimination and inequality that women in male-dominated societies must resist with. The short story highlights how the wrongdoings of men go unpunished while women are penalized strictly for small violations. The writer notes the unchanging nature of men and also this gendered double standard in the lines: “Next time, you heard news that the girl-with-the dialed phone number-in-the-call-log had been struck off. No harm done to the dawdling goon because that's how men are. They will not change” (Humayun,2024, p.157).

The statements highlight the institutionalized gender bias in society. Humayun demonstrates how males frequently receive little to no accountability for their acts, but women are disproportionately punished for small infractions or affiliations. The phrase “*that's how men are*” preserves patriarchal liberty by stabilizing male misdeeds. This excerpt is a perfect example of Spivak's theory that the subaltern is repressed by dominant systems. In contrast to the male perpetrator's liberty, the girl's punishment shows how institutional and patriarchal authorities rob the subaltern of their agency and voice. Her lived experience is ignored, which supports Spivak's contention that the subaltern cannot fully express themselves since prevailing institutional and societal systems decide which behaviors and viewpoints are valued and which are disregarded.

The subtle kinds of violence that women face under patriarchal dominion are examined by Sufia Humayun in *It's not ok not to be ok*. Besides physical morality, the short story illustrates that wound can also include prolonged social and psychological suffering. This harsh reality is reflected in lines: “They wouldn't kill you for being a girl. They have better plans for you, far more sinister than the mere act of

killing. For, death relieves you of the pain and the atrocities. And they don't plan on letting go of the atrocities" (Humayun, 2024, p.157).

The passage extracted from Humayun short story "it-is-not-ok-not-to-be-ok" presents the hidden and prevalent nature of violence against females, which is more severe and harsh than physical pain. Sufia Humayun stresses the act of subjugation of women, which is consistently preserved in countries where there is a dominant patriarchal structure. They use several factors as a means to control women, such as; social, emotional and psychological manipulation. When viewed through postcolonial lens, the aforementioned passage reveals the mixing of cultural and patriarchal structures that systematize violence against women. Apart from the deliberate acts of social and societal control, the "far more sinister" phrase symbolizes the adopted suppression that women still tolerate and living in constant distress, limitations and isolation. This is frequent in postcolonial feminist theorist Spivak's concept of the marginalized. Subsequently, the voices of women and suppression are silenced while on the other hand social and societal systems justify and defend their sufferings. Their experiences of ongoing suffering highlight the subaltern's limited agency and highlight how, despite severe oppression, they are unable to adequately express themselves or have their realities acknowledged by the institutional and societal power structures that control them.

Sufia Humayun explores how women coopt male-dominated control and carry roles that are forced upon them in her short story It's not ok not to be ok. The short story exemplifies how, once awareness rises, this exercise can provoke subtle types of resistance. The narrator reflects this conflict between disobedience and obedience by saying: "The role which you have been playing to please your puppet master, has become second hand nature to you, now wherever the strings take you, you rebel until the strings are broken" (Humayun,2024, p.158).

The sentence excellently explains the inner struggle of the particular women living in patriarchal nations. She is fighting for acceptance to please his master in such a male-dominated societies. The word "*strings*" is a symbol for cultural duties and social expectations that restrict women, while the phrase "*puppet master*" portrays the patriarchal social order that hold their attitude, identities, feelings and emotions. From the perspective of postcolonial feminism, this clash symbolizes the identical oppression of women in communities characterized by both indigenous patriarchy and colonial legacy. Similar to the "puppet-puppet master" dynamic, the colonial "master-subject", this connection demonstrates how hierarchies of control and dependency still function at the gendered and cultural levels. The honor-based institutions that control women behavior and limit their agency under the pretense of moral integrity or family reputation are likewise symbolically connected to the "strings."

Personal accounts of suppression are placed within the larger social framework of gendered violence in Pakistan by Sufia Humayun in It's not ok not to be ok. The text of the short story stresses that the recorded incidences are but a small percentage of the pervasive exploitation that women experience in patriarchal societies. Drawing attention to this concerning fact, the narrator says: "According to Aurat Foundation of Pakistan, 2,297 cases of violence against women are registered in four provinces of Pakistan in 2021. But BEWARE! They are the only one which have been reported and are of a very grave nature" (Humayun, 2024, p.160).

The mentioned statements highlights that the suppression and sufferings demonstrated in Humayun's short story is not only imaginary and fictional but actually symbolizes the ongoing organized violence against women. The short story illustrates how established inadequacies, patriarchal values and societal shame keep hidden the real scope of violence based on gender. The word "*BEWARE*" reveals the severity of the mentioned crimes by connecting literary description to real oppression and sufferings, such as; social segregation, harassment and honor-based violence. Thus, the whole excerpt supports the Spivak idea about Subalterns.

It's not ok not to be ok by Sufia Humayun addresses the awful reality of honor killings and social structures that support and encourage them. As societies inspect the bodies of women to justify violence, the text discloses how victim-blaming recurrently follows women's death. The short story describes how this monstrous habit is demonstrated. She explains this in these lines: "When Noor Mukhdoom was beheaded and her head fell on the floor, and they were busy finding scars and wounds and when they couldn't find the scars and wounds, they chanted that she was wanton" (Humayun,2024, p. 160).

The above statement from Humayun short story *It-is-no-ok-not-to-be-ok*, portrays a severe and terrifying way of honor killing, highlighting the complete control of male-dominated rules over the bodies and reputation of women. Additionally, Humayun illustrates the societal and emotional violence that continues after death apart from the physical violence performed for the sake of honor. Inspecting and examining the dead body for scars and wounds symbolizes societal fixation with changeable women conduct and maintaining moral values. The claim that follows, "*they chanted that she was wanton*," illustrates how patriarchal ideology places the blame on women and uses moral judgment to justify harsh brutality. To maintain male authority and family honor, women are stigmatized and punished even in cases when there is no proof of misconduct. The killing of Noor Mukhdoom and the moral policing of her body that followed show how hegemonic systems silence the voice of the subaltern and impose their own story. As Spivak argues that the subaltern cannot speak inside systems of power because their experiences and agency are controlled, twisted, and made invisible, the perpetrators rewrite her tale by calling her "wanton" in spite of evidence to the contrary.

Sufia Humayun highlights the connection between honor culture and gendered violence in Pakistan in her short story "It's not ok not to be ok". The narrative illustrates how the cultural disapproval and the fear of moral disobedience determine life and death for women like Qandeel Baloch, who are subjected to ritualized punishment. Keeping this harsh truth, the short story notes: "When Qandeel Baloch was strangled and they, with all those scary stories, chanted about her wanton ways on rosary beads. Their followers murder and execute tales of honor killing, mindful of not leaving a scar because the scar is punishable and her wanton ways are carrying a death sentence" (Humayun, 2024, p.160).

The statements above illustrate how honor killings are ritualized and socially acceptable. Humayun illustrates how chants and stories serve to legitimate and maintain control over violence against women, which is not random but rather systematically reinforced through cultural and religious symbolism. The phrase that the supporters must be "mindful of not leaving a scar" captures attention to the complications of lawful societal investigation, in which women are punished for ethical violation rather than concrete evidence. This demonstrates two forms of violence: first one is the real act of killing, and the second one is the ethical and cultural defamation of women, where the only accusation of "wanton ways" is enough to authorize the crime. The killing of Qandeel Baloch and the constant denial of her "wanton ways" show how patriarchal and prevailing societal systems silence the voice of the subaltern and impose their own story. Even the guidelines for execution, which are "mindful of not leaving a scar," emphasize how tyranny is structurally governed, regulating the body as well as its narrative. Her viewpoint is entirely missing, demonstrating how, as Spivak contends, the subaltern's lived experiences are filtered, twisted, and made invisible under systems of dominant power, and that they are unable to properly express themselves.

DISCUSSION

Sufia Humayun short story *It-Is-Not-Ok-Not-To-Be-Ok* is an in-depth analysis of the different forms of suppression and exploitation that women are facing and enduring in patriarchal societies. In addition to physical harm, the short story also demonstrates different factor such as; social, cultural and psychological that sustain the dominance of male, which restrict the autonomy of women. Sufia Humayun exposes the physical structure of suppression based on gender by revealing organizational prejudice,

patriarchal values and postcolonial norms. Through her appealing narrative she highlights that such factors mingled with each other to limit the freedom and voice of women.

The storytelling stresses the regularization of physical and emotional risks to the health of women by presenting them as continually weak. In addition to physical abuse, Sufia Humayun also highlights the cognitive aspects of suppression, by illustrating the ways through which women adopt the cultural values and restrict their own behavior to adjust their selves to patriarchal norms. Sufia Humayun criticizes the social and institutional frameworks that maintain gendered pyramids and moral controlling. In patriarchal societies the injustice is systemic which support violence based on honor. Humayun exposed the fact that women are normally punished for violations that have no reality, on the other hand men are consistently relieved from accountability of their miss deeds. The short story stresses organizational tools, cultural values, and family expectations mix together to control the behavior of women, legalize the punishment and maintain the domination of male.

The short story also highlights the various forms of sufferings that women are facing, such as; physical abuse, emotional torturing, societal shame and harassment. In fact, the voices of women are silenced, their actions are restricted and physical inequality is maintained by this interlinking system of control. The narration draws attention to the global dual morals in places where there is male-dominance. In such patriarchal systems, women are excessively punished for small misconducts while male wrongdoings are forgotten or either not punishable at all. Such injustices and differences highlight how the whole society is smooth in sustaining the male-dominated structure by imposing the societal and cultural conditions that strongly support violence based on honor.

Humayun short story can also be placed in the context of current scenario, which demonstrates the prevalent and systemic gender-based violence in postcolonial counties including Pakistan. The narration illustrates that apart from the oppression in private places, it is also in-built in both public and organizational structures, thus linking the space between lived experience and literature. From the perspective of postcolonial feminism, the short story stresses the different local patriarchal norms and colonial policies that link with each other to subjugate women, restrict their freedom, and rationalize both minor and major types of violence.

Finally, Sufia Humayun short story throws light on the constant sufferings that women are enduring, highlighting that violence against women is multi-layered. Different kinds of violence against them are; societal, emotional, physical, cultural, structural and are strongly deep-rooted in formal institutions and also in cultural values. Humayun's short story adds meaningfully to literary social and feminist discourse and suggests a critical lens by which one can view the organized nature of violence based on honor.

CONCLUSION

Sufia Humayun short story *It-is-not-ok-not-to-be-ok* is an influential analysis of the orderly suppression and abuses, that women are experiencing in male-dominated societies. The short story highlights how explicit as well as concealed power dynamics restrict the autonomy of women through the inspection of different forms of control, for example, societal, emotional and cultural. The narration exposes the cultural and institutional factors that sustain inequality based on gender, and smother the voices of women by stressing the normality of violence based on honor, moral controlling and harassment normalization.

By using a postcolonial feminist perspective, it illustrates how the lived experiences of women are molded by the connection of local male-dominated values and colonial policies. Humayun literary piece demonstrates the complex nature of suppression, which comprises societal subjugation, emotional torture, physical harm, and organizational inequality. The short story also illustrates the shared collaboration that

allows the ongoing honor-based violence. Hence suggests how women are consistently penalized for disobeying the rigid norms based on gender rather than for their actions.

The significance of the short story is beyond the boundaries of literature because it highlights the ongoing trends of violence based on gender in Pakistan as well as other postcolonial nations.

In her short story Sufia Humayun blends literary analysis with social realities which offers a valuable perception into the large dynamic forces of discrimination between opposite genders and the structural reasons of honor killing.

By highlighting the use of literature as a lens to grasp and challenge the patriarchal values, this literary work advances feminist ideas and stresses the urgent need for reforms in institutions, social awareness and lawful development in gender-sensitive cases.

Finally, Humayun short story *It-is-not-ok-not-to-be-ok* is an urgent call to recognize, oppose and eradicate the structural, societal and cultural factors that maintain and support violence against opposite gender in different forms and shapes. The narration demonstrates the value of giving voice to the lived experiences of women, and the current pertinency of post-colonial feministic theory in grasping and solving gender-based injustices.

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