

Beat: News

Third of Jordanian teens believe honor killings; justified,

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USPA News - Approximately one third of teenagers in the Middle Eastern nation of Jordan believe that so-called `honor killings,` in which a woman is murdered for dishonoring or bringing shame to her family, is justified, according to a study released on Thursday. Researchers from Cambridge University surveyed over 850 students in the Jordanian capital of Amman, revealing that almost half of boys and one in five girls believe that killing a daughter, sister or wife who has dishonored or shamed her family is justified.

A third of all teenagers who participated in the study advocated the brutal practice. According to the researchers, the attitudes are far more likely in adolescent boys with low education backgrounds and it did not appear to be linked to religious beliefs. Instead, the main factors include patriarchal and traditional worldviews, emphasis placed on female `virtue,` and a more general belief that violence against others is morally justified. The study, which is published in the journal *Aggressive Behavior*, suggests a large proportion of teenagers in Jordan believe that killing a woman deemed to have dishonored her family is "morally right," and the findings reveal "risk factors" for attitudes in support of the vigilante murder of women as justifiable punishment in instances of perceived dishonor. "While we found the main demographic in support of honor killing attitudes to be boys in traditional families with low levels of education, we noted substantial minorities of girls, well-educated and even irreligious teenagers who consider honor killing morally right, suggesting a persisting society-wide support for the tradition," said Professor Manuel Eisner of Cambridge University's Institute of Criminology. The researchers sampled a total of 856 ninth graders, who were 15 on average, from a range of secondary schools across Amman, including private and state schools as well as mixed-sex and single-gender. Participants completed a questionnaire, asking teenagers to indicate their opinion in relation to different situations where it may be justified to kill a person. In total, 33.4 percent of all respondents either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with situations depicting honor killings. Boys were more than twice as likely to support honor killings: 46.1 percent of boys and 22.1 percent of girls agreed with at least two honor killing situations in the questionnaire. The results showed the level of support for honor killings was the highest at the lowest level of educational background, from which 61 percent of teenagers showed supportive attitudes towards the practice. In contrast, only 21.1 percent of teenagers were in support of honor killings where at least one family member has a university degree. Up until 2001, Jordan's Penal Code allowed men to injure or kill their wives if she was caught having sex with another man, but the government has increasingly criminalized the practice in recent years. A special court to prosecute honor crimes was established in 2009, but cultural support for violence against women remains widespread. "Any meaningful attempt to reduce attitudes in support of such practices requires a broader societal commitment, including coherent messages against honor-related violence from political and religious elites, and decisive action by the criminal justice system," Eisner said, adding that the researchers hope their research will allow governments to take firm action against attitudes that condone honor killings.

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