

DYING TO BE HEARD



CASE 1

- 29 yo married post-partum Afghani F who speaks Farsi primarily - OD on 35 pills of Motrin (entire bottle).
- Pt. reports that her husband has been having an affair with a 19 yo that she discovered over 3 months ago.
- 3 months of anhedonia, crying spells, decrease in sleep & anxiety/irritability

- She was in arranged marriage at age 17 to a "mentally-disturbed" man She has two children 12 & 7 from that marriage. She reports a mostly harmonious marriage to current husband for 5 years, apart from recent difficulties.
- She also tried to OD on meds while a refugee in Turkey about two-and-a-half years ago. She was in twice weekly psychotherapy at the refugee camp but no meds.

CASE 2

- 19 yo single, Farsi speaker A F, lived in Turkey for 5 years before moving to America 2 yrs ago. Pt lives with her mother, 4 brothers, and 2 sisters. No prior psych hx.
- Pt was with her boyfriend at his job when his wife walked in on them. Pt denies any anhedonia in the weeks preceding. she admits to feeling stressed out and anxious because of the situation.

Afghan American

Per US Census Bureau, there were approximately 65,972 Afghan-Americans living in the country in 2006. By 2011, this number grew to 89,040.

According to the Embassy of Afghanistan in Washington, DC, the over-all Afghan population in US in **2011** is around 300,000 or more.

- various ethnicities , reflecting the ethnolinguistic mosaic of their homeland in the U.S. Namely, they draw from [Hazara](#), [Pashtun](#), [Tajik](#), [Uzbek](#), [Baloch](#), [Aimak](#), [Nuristani](#) .

Self-Immolation of Women in
Afghanistan
Findings of a Research Project

By medica mondiale 2006-2007

INTRODUCTION

- **Primary Aim** = *why* self-immolation is taking place and how best to address the practice.
- **Medica Mondiale** contracted 8 researchers (4 f & 4 m) to conduct research in the provinces of Kabul, Wardak and Herat.
- Selected based on research experience and were subsequently trained in different types of research methodology as well as how to conduct ethical research without harm.

- Because of Afghanistan's Islamic culture 8 researchers divided into 2 teams of 4 (2m & 2f).
- One team for Kabul and Wardak while the second team focused on Herat.
- Kabul = capital city of Afghanistan.
- Wardak = predominantly Pashtun population + the fact that it is densely populated.
- Herat = because the incidence of self-immolation is high.

- *Semi-structured interviews and focus Group Discussions* - to check information previously collected and also to observe how the group discussed the issue among themselves & *Direct Observations supplemented by the other research methods.*
- to eliminate bias, several visits were made at different periods during the research to check on the information that was provided and to further build trust.

- The researchers were provided with letters of introduction by
- the Ministry of Women's Affairs,
- the Ministry of the Interior,
- the Ministry of Public Health and medica mondiale.
- With introduction from the Governors of provinces to the Maliks and Arbabs of districts and villages who were able to advise them (once trust had been established) as to where to find cases of self-immolation and the addresses of survivors or the relatives of such individuals.

- **Across the 3 provinces** – 190 households and 900 respondents participated in the research. Of these, 80 in Kabul, 80 in Herat province and 30 in Wardak,
- The respondents included **survivors** and members of their immediate families, relatives and friends as well as the families and relatives of those who had died from self-immolation.
- Mullahs, provincial representatives, teachers, shopkeepers, health personnel from hospitals and clinics as well as the Governor

COMPARATIVE RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The research began in April 2006 and ended in July 2006.

In Kabul, due to the collusion of silence surrounding the issue it was difficult to obtain contact details of self-immolation patients and the majority of the testimonies collected were done so at **Esteqlal hospital**.

In Herat, details and contact addresses were provided by the hospital and testimonies were obtained first hand.

In Wardak, 30 households were targeted, but due to the collusion of silence and the fact that only 5 cases were reported, interviews mainly took place with teachers, mullahs and other respondents.

COMPARATIVE.....

❖ Despite the diversity of the information , and the differing prevalence rates of self-immolation in each area, results of the research uncovered an underlying pattern in the **age groups, levels of literacy** and the **reasons behind girls/women committing self-immolation**.

In addition, interviews with interlocutors illustrated an acute tendency to blame violence on the emancipation of women.

COMPARATIVE.....

- The reporting of cases of self-immolation has increased significantly in both Kabul & Herat from 2005 to 2006.
- Nevertheless, respondents in Kabul and Wardak tended to be reluctant to talk about the issue due to the stigma attributed to talking about suicide and violence against women – this in turn resulted in underreporting of the issue.

Suicide

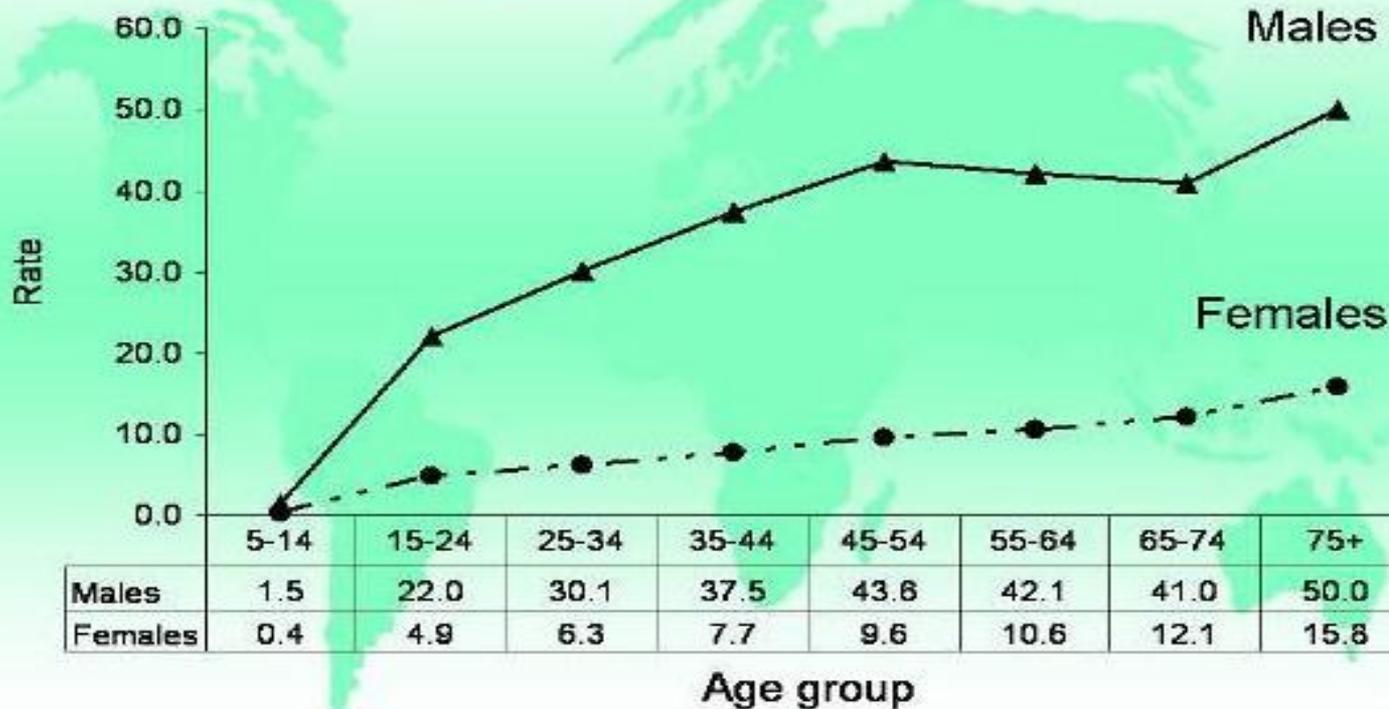
- “Suicide is not chosen - it happens when pain exceeds the resources for coping with pain”
- last 45 years 60% increase in suicide rates worldwide.
- Rates of young suicide have been steadily increasing.
- While mental disorders (depression and/or substance abuse) are associated with more than 90% of suicide cases, suicide is normally a result of complex **socio-cultural factors** and is more likely to occur during periods of **socio-economic, family and individual crisis**.

Nevertheless, reliable statistics for suicide do not exist and the socio-cultural factors are rarely, if ever, examined.

- ❖ Many countries choose to record suicide deaths as 'accidental' or loved ones often hide the true cause of death over fear of the stigma and shame attached to the act.
- ❖ For every successful suicide there are 15-20 attempts to commit suicide. Global statistics indicate that while men are more likely to die by suicide - currently the worldwide correlation is 3-1, females are more likely to attempt suicide.
- ❖ One explanation is that males tend to use more violent, immediately lethal methods than females. Another is that females are more likely to use self-harm as a cry for help or attention while males are more likely to genuinely want to end their lives.

Distribution of suicide rates by gender and age

Distribution of suicide rates (per 100,000)
by gender and age, 2000



Suicide...

The worldwide incidence women committing < suicide than men.

China is the only country where confirmed statistics women = Men.

Indicators suggest that suicide is prevalent amongst young Afghan women, with methods ranging from ingestion of rat poison, pesticides, fuel, sleeping pills and other tablets, to swallowing needles, overdosing on opium and other types of drugs, jumping from rooftops, hanging and jumping into wells and self immolation (AIHRC; medica mondiale).

Medica mondiale Afghanistan's research on self-immolation indicates that Afghanistan may be **the only country in the world** where female suicide rates strongly outweigh male suicide rates.

SELF-IMMOLATION

- ❖ Self-immolation is variously defined as - `destruction of the self - specifically by burning, or `the deliberate sacrifice of oneself, especially by fire`
- ❖ The practice, while not tolerated under anything but extraordinary circumstances by Buddhists and Hindus, was practiced by religious or philosophical monks (India) for various reasons, including political protest, devotion, etc.
- ❖ This method of suicide **not** prevalent in the industrialized world.
- ❖ The practice is commonplace in Iran, Sri Lanka, India, and Tajikistan.
- ❖ It is the leading method of suicide in **Iran**, (after hanging) where many of the victims of self immolation are women.

Self-immolation Afghanistan

- In Afghanistan, self-immolation is on the rise.
- **Herat** was considered to be the province where the practice was most common, however, 2007 indications are that Kandahar suicides by self-immolation are surpassing those of Herat.
- The issue has been highlighted in the country as a cause for concern and has been reported on by many journalists.

Self-immolation Afghanistan

Afghan reactions to this issue differ widely.

- ❖ Some condemn the act, pointing to the Islamic belief that those who commit suicide will go to hell.
- The collusion of silence, the general reluctance to address the issue (despite many of the efforts undertaken to date) and the lack of reliable statistics are all encumbrances to understanding the underlying structural roots of the problem.

Nevertheless, United Nations' reports have indicated that the endemic violence against women in Afghanistan is often a trigger.

(self forced marriages, early child marriages, multiple marriages, lack of societal awareness of women's rights, the psychological impact of 25 years of war, customary practices such as Tuyana (bride price) and family problems)

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The term `violence against women` means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or

(a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;

(b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, Including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

(c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

Cycles of Violence

BEFORE BIRTH Physical violence against the pregnant mother, lack of adequate health care

INFANCY Withdrawal of food and adequate health care, physical, sexual and psychological violence

CHILDHOOD Child marriage, physical labor, withdrawal of food and adequate health care, physical, sexual and psychological violence, incest, prostitution

ADOLESCENCE/ADULTHOOD Forced marriage, physical labor, withdrawal of food and health care, forced dating violence, prostitution, bride price, Bad, Badal, Sexual harassment(school, work & community), rape, trafficking

OLD AGE Forced suicide or homicide of widows for economical reasons, physical, sexual and psychological abuse.

Violence....

- ❖ Violence of this nature tends to be against women and perpetrated by men.
- ❖ Women statistically suffer violence at the hands of an **intimate male partner**. Perpetrators may also be officials of the state, police, armed opposition groups or other individuals –including family members.
- ❖ Violence within the family and intimate partner violence has tended to be looked upon in many societies as a **private matter** (As a result, development of legal mechanisms to curb domestic violence has been slow and at times non-existent)

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

- ❖ One of the most common harmful traditional practices to women in Afghanistan is forced marriage.
- ❖ Estimates conclude that up to **80%** of marriages are forced in Afghanistan. Child marriages are against the law yet it is estimated that **57% of** girls are married before the age of 16.

VIOLENCE...

- ❖ The family is often a source of constant insecurity for women as it denies them protection if they do not adjust to traditional rules and regulations.
- ❖ In Afghan society women's human rights and right to justice are sacrificed in favor of her husband's, her family's and her community's interests.
- ❖ The lack of understanding and support of girls and women within their own family and the constant abuse suffered at the hands of ones immediate family or in-laws can only be described as endemic in Afghanistan.

VIOLENCE...

One woman said of the violence against her - including violence by police – “my husband is my pimp. He prostitutes me. When I resist he beats me. I managed to escape and come to Kabul but when I informed the criminal Department here – a policeman took me to his house and raped me. The following night he and a number of other policemen friends raped me again until I lost consciousness”

Afghanistan =highest maternal mortality rates.

- Many women, due to culture and tradition and the non-recognition of women's rights as human rights, are unable to access proper health facilities.
- According to UN reports and surveys, 80 per cent of adult women are still illiterate, some 75 per cent of girls attending primary schooldrop out before grade five.

- ❖ no doubt poverty plays a major role , however traditional and cultural practices further compound women's poverty
- ❖ Culture and honor interact with one another. This interaction results in many women hiding violence due to fear of stigmatization, loss of honor and status.
- ❖ Lack of access to legal information, protection, psychological and medical aid, compounded by inadequate implementation of the laws that prohibit and criminalize violence against women serves to further hide violence.

GENERAL FINDINGS

- ❖ Due to the limitations of the research, mentioned at the outset of this report, it remains unclear how prevalent suicide and self immolation is in Afghanistan.
- ❖ Nevertheless, self immolation is present in the three provinces where research was undertaken. In many reports, violence against women has been cited as the principal factor

- ❖ Traditional practices”, (including but not limited to) forced marriage, Bad, Badal and honour crimes are painstakingly preserved in Afghanistan.
- ❖ This demonstrates a general reluctance across all levels to embrace the doctrine of equality which is enshrined in its Constitution, in the international instruments it has signed up to and of course in the Quran.
- ❖ The notion that Culture cannot evolve and should remain static in a closed set of beliefs and practices contributes to the subordination of women. As a result, violence against women is both a means by which women’s subordination is perpetuated and a consequence of their subordination.

❖ The fact that many respondents did not believe that self-immolation had taken place in their area or indeed did not admit to it taking place for fear of repercussions.

“We are obliged to broadcast them but when we broadcast such reports we are threatened, insulted and warned.”

“If they tell of any case of self-immolation or suicide their lives may be at risk.”

❖ Research pertinently illustrated that the issue of self immolation is very much a taboo subject in Afghanistan as it is in other Asian countries where it takes place.

- The existence of self-immolation was found to be present in all three provinces, with varying degrees of prevalence. The majority of cases were found in Herat and the least in Wardak where only five cases were reported.
- The lack of forthcoming and accurate information from the provinces, especially in Wardak and to some extent Kabul makes it very hard to make an adequate comparison between the provinces.

- ❖ Notwithstanding the high incidence of this practice in Herat, the research does not indicate that self-immolation does not take place to a higher degree than reported in the other two provinces but demonstrates a profound reluctance to address the issue at all levels.
- ❖ This ultimately results in its under-reporting self-immolation, and its contributory causes

- ❖ **POVERTY AND INSECURITY:** Despite improvements in the economy, Afghanistan is still one of the poorest countries in the world
- ❖ **security situation** Women are constantly forced under ground, and are left unable to access certain rights, including freedom of movement, access to health, access to education and to economic redress

- ❖ Research reveals that girls as young as 12 commit self immolation and that young girls/women between the ages of 16-19 are particularly prone to committing this act throughout the three provinces.
- ❖ Girls/women of this age are not only prone to carry out self-immolation but also tend to incur more than 70% burns indicating a genuine desire to end life.
- ❖ The correlation between age and the percentage of burns tended to differ slightly between the provinces.

PROFILE OF THOSE UNDERTAKING THIS ACT.

- ❖ **Girls and young women under twenty years old.**
These girls and women are normally victims of forced/child marriages or are denied access to education.
- ❖ There were some incidences of young girls and women whose honor were called into question, and the lack of understanding or support from family members resorted in them committing self-immolation.
- ❖ These girls/women tended to set themselves alight in an isolated area where it was very difficult to get to them in order to put the fire out

Women who have endured constant violence and get to a point of no return. It is unsure whether this is a legitimate cry for help or a genuine attempt to end their lives.

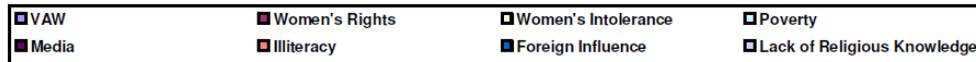
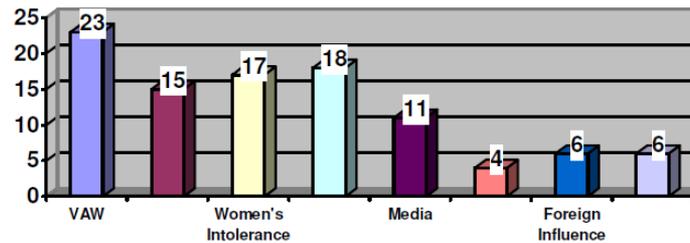
Women who may have been abused and are more than likely displaying

symptoms of post traumatic stress. Many do not remember the actual act of self-immolation, but state that they go “numb” just before they discover they are on fire

Women and families who claim that it is an accident

all levels.

63. The following graph illustrates the respondents view as to what are the causes of self-immolation. As one will note from the graph, the majority of respondents identified Violence against Women as a major cause for self-immolation, but quite a significant proportion of respondents highlighted that women self-immolated because of their intolerance or because of the introduction of women's rights to the culture.



Graph 5.0 Causes of Self-immolation according to Respondents

5.1. COLLUSION OF SILENCE

“This is because poor people are always faced with difficulties and they learn to tolerate them but people with better living standards have lower tolerance to problems and resort to solutions like self-immolation.” Governor in Wardak Province

“It is shameful for a family to reveal cases of self-immolation and suicide.”

“Women loose tolerance in facing the problem and attempt to commit self-immolation”

THE DOCTRINE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

“If we always say that what is a woman's right when she sees that nothing is given to her of course she burns herself.” Mullah of Mosque in Kabul

“This word (Women's rights) has made men more offensive and has affected their minds - there is no other problem in our society except women's rights.” Focus group in Herat with Department of Haq and Awqaf

“Lobbying about women's rights has made a negative impact on the society” – Mullah in Mosque in Herat

“Women are diverted with knowing about their rights, when a husband asks his wife to prepare tea or his clothes she replies him back that now our rights are equal why don't you prepare it yourself, here the dispute starts and ends with wife's self-immolation”.

Mullah in Herat

associate self-immolation with women who came from a background that permitted them knowledge of women's rights. This knowledge coupled with their supposed "intolerance" to violence made them the ones most likely to commit self-immolation as an alleged demonstration of their rights.

"The second kind of women are educated and they know their rights and understand the rights of women and men in terms of Islam and they also realize their rights as stated in the charter of human rights. When such women are faced with violence and injustice they do not find any other way to escape from their situation and commit selfimmolation."

- On the other hand, it was generally respondents from Herat who cited illiteracy as a common denominator in the act of self-immolation.
- According to the research, illiteracy is one of the principal indicators. “this attempt is few among the working women but the illiterate ones because they are not educated and they also want freedom.” Chairman of the Council in Herat.

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

The role of the media was cited by many as a reason for many women in Afghanistan for committing self-immolation.

➤ “There are many factors for self-immolation, but one major one is that in Iranian Films, self-immolation is shown and people try to imitate that.”

*It should be noted, however, that not one person who had committed selfimmolation quoted the TV as being an influencing factor for them.

- Some respondents also pointed to the bad influence of the media, indicating that shows which advocated for women's right fuelled a catalyst for further violence.

“If the self-immolation cases are shown in TV the attempts have increased instead because men are sensitized with the word of equality so they show more resistance to their wives, and sometimes the wives family become offensive with their son –in law so this creates more problems and ends in self immolation.”

ILLEGAL MARRIAGES

Some of the respondents acknowledged that forced and child marriages were responsible for violence against women which subsequently culminated in selfimmolation.

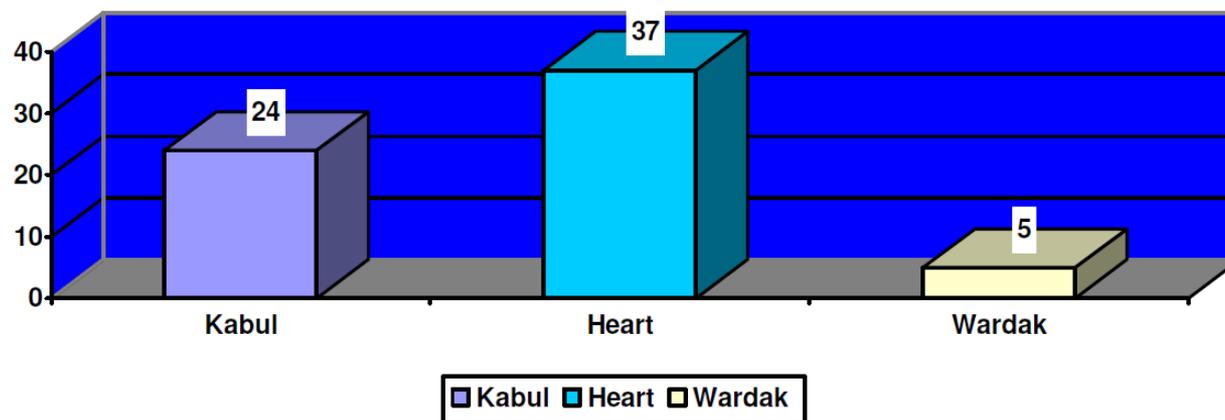
- ***Exchange of girls – baad and badal*** The research revealed many cases whereby girls had been exchanged between families or been given to their husband in order to appease an ensuing conflict between two families
- **POLYGAMY** is the marriage of a man to more than one wife.

- ❖ **PREGNANCY BEFORE MARRIAGE** Sexual relations before marriage are strictly forbidden in Islamic societies. If a girl/woman gets pregnant before marriage, they are taunted and ridiculed and are seen as dishonoring the family, herself and society.
- ❖ Even in cases of forced pregnancy or rape, women are generally perceived as “loose women” and their honor is tainted.
- ❖ There are very few cases whereby women can prove that they have been raped and the rapist is subsequently unpunished. Furthermore the crime of statutory rape does not exist in Afghanistan.

difficult to obtain.

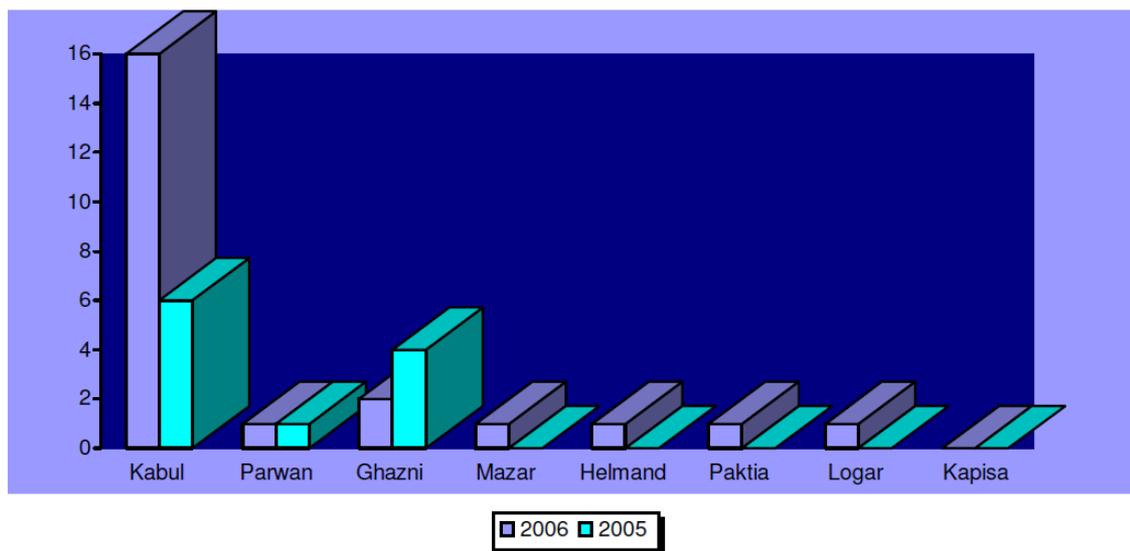
The graph below shows how many cases were recorded for each province.

Graph 6.1.1: Number of Cases of women who committed self immolation registered in hospital per province since 2003³²



90. It must be highlighted that the data provided by the specialist burns unit of Esteqlal

Graph 6.1.2: Female cases recorded in Esteqlal Hospital – Kabul in 2006/2005³⁶

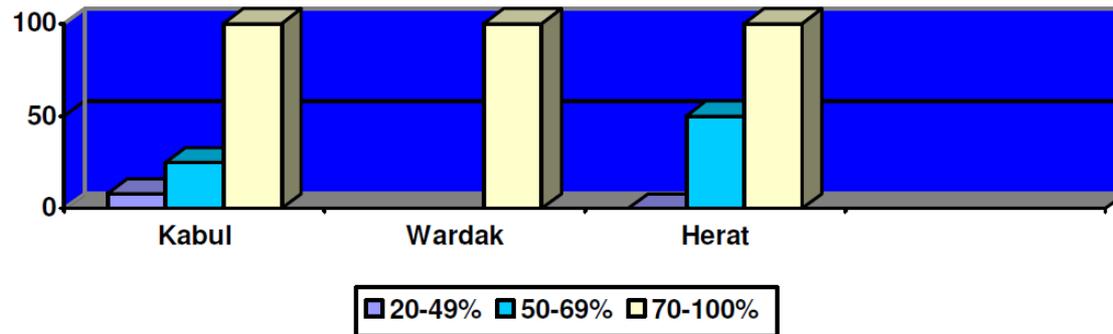


91. As one can note from the graph, there was a drop in cases from Gahzni in 2006 and an sharp increase in cases in general from 2005 to 2006.

CHAPTER 6 – PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Graph 6.3.1. Percentage of Death according to the level of burns

Percentage of Death according to level of burns



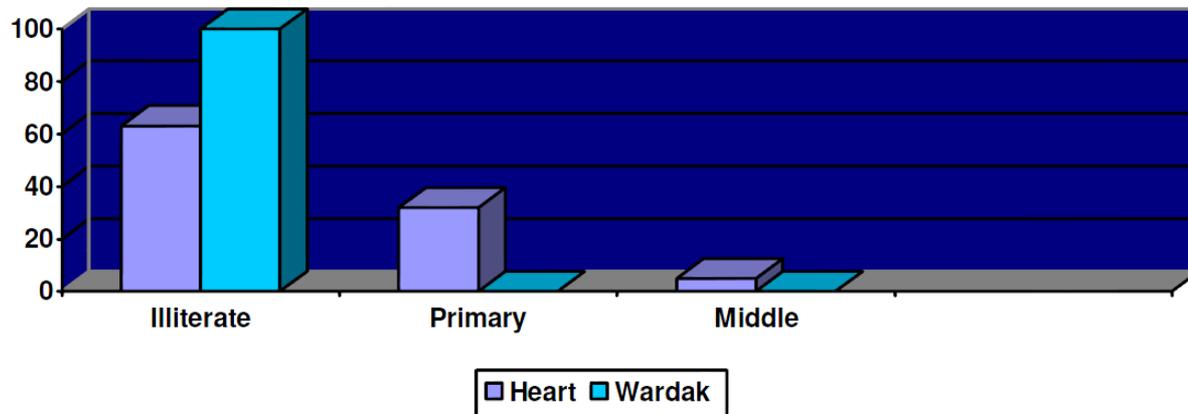
95. As the above graph illustrates, all those with above 70% of burns died. In Wardak,

literacy levels were not generally recorded in Kabul).

Table 7.1.1. Literacy Levels

Province	Illiterate	Primary	Middle
Herat	63%	32%	5%
Wardak	100%	0%	0%

Graph 7.1.2: Levels of Literacy amongst women who committed self-immolation



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Table 7.1.3: Level of Literacy and percentage of burns

Level of Literacy	Illiterate	Primary	Middle
HERAT			
20 -49%	22%	14%	100%
50-69%	17%	0%	0%
70-100%	61%	86%	0%
WARDAK			
20-49%	0%	0%	0%
50-69%	0%	0%	0%
70-100%	100%	0%	0%

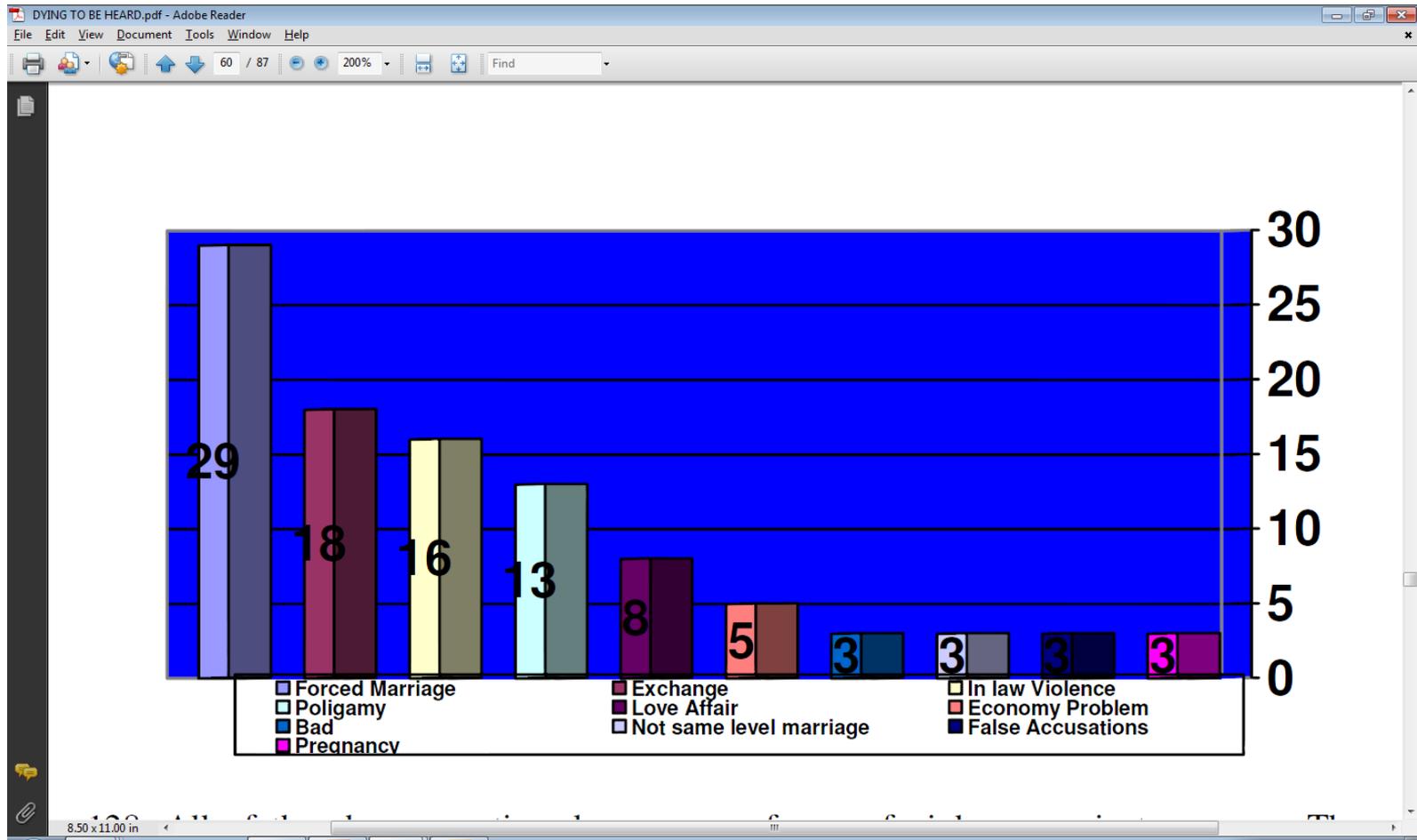
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Table 8.1.1: No of cases recorded per age and the percentage of burns they sustained

AGE	20-49%	50-69%	70-100%	Total Number of Cases
KABUL – 2006				
12-15	2	0	2	4
16-19	3	2	6	11
20-25	0	3	4	7
Above 25	1	1	0	2
Kabul 2005				
12-15	0	0	0	0
16-19	1	0	1	2
20-25	2	0	4	6
Above 25	1	1	1	3
Herat 2006				
12-15	2	1	1	4
16-19	2	2	6	10
20-25	3	0	7	10
Above 25	0	0	3	3
Herat 2005				
12-15	0	0	1	1
16-19	0	2	3	5
20-25	1	0	1	2
Above 25	0	0	2	2
Wardak 2000-2006				
12-15	0	0	0	0
16-19	0	0	3	3
20-25	0	0	2	2
Above 25	0	0	0	0
Total	18	12	47	77

CAUSES OF SELF-IMMOLATION



- My father married me with a man who had neuron sickness and he didn't ask my consent [participant from Wardak].
- **My marriage was not with my consent. In fact, my father didn't ask for my consent. So when I went to my husband's house my mother in law was always filling up my husband against me and he was beating me. They only allowed me to visit my family in five or six months. One day he beat me even my father in law, and then I poured fuel on me and burnt myself. I want to complain against my husband to the authorities and government if they can do anything [Herat]**
- My 18 years old sister did not want to marry this man and requested my father several times not to give her to the farmer but he ignored her pleas. One day I heard that my sister had taken petrol and committed self-immolation {sister of victim – Wardak province}

One of the cases involved an 18 year old girl who was forced to marry a “mad man.” She was unable to obtain a divorce from the court.

“ I am her sister, and I saw her before she died and asked her why she had taken this step. She cried and said “Now I have got rid of this torture. Why did you give me to a mad man? What can I say? I had no alternative but to do this!”

152. The main conclusions from the research were:

- ❖ Self Immolation is more prevalent among women than men. In Kabul a correlation was found 3:1 and in Herat 37:1 and in Wardak there were no male cases of self immolation recorded.
- ❖ Women commit self-immolation in response to violence against their person in all its forms.
- ❖ Self-immolation is present in all three provinces, and on the increase in Kabul and Herat.
- ❖ During the research Herat has the highest incidence of recorded cases, followed by Kabul and then Wardak.
- ❖ Herat is more open to talking about the phenomenon; in Kabul and Wardak a collusion of silence surrounds the issue.
- ❖ Young girls between the ages of 12-15 in Kabul are more prone to alleged accidents in the kitchen than any other age group.
- ❖ Young girls between the ages of 16-19 in Kabul, Wardak and Herat are more prone to commit self-immolation than any other age group.
- ❖ Young girls between the ages of 16-19 in Kabul are more likely to sustain more than 70% burns than any other group, and in Herat women between 26-50 are more prone.
- ❖ 95% of cases of self-immolation were committed by women who were illiterate or had little education. The remaining 5% of cases, however, were probably due to accidents rather than attempts of self-immolation.
- ❖ Nearly 80% of those who committed self-immolation were married.
- ❖ The mean age of single women committing self-immolation was 14.
- ❖ The total mean age of women committing self-immolation was 19.
- ❖ The most frequent reason for committing self-immolation emanates from forced or child marriage.

The main conclusions from the research were

- Women commit self-immolation in response to violence against their person in all its forms.
- Young girls between the ages of 16-19 are more prone to commit self-immolation.
- Young girls between 16-19 are more likely to sustain more than 70% burns.

95% of cases of self-immolation were committed by women who were illiterate or had little education.

- Nearly 80% of those who committed self-immolation were married. The most frequent reason for committing self-immolation emanates from forced or child marriage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Afghan Government and Parliament

- ❖ Afghanistan signed the Bonn Agreement on 5th December 2001 and committed to a “broad based, gender sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative Government”.
- ❖ The Afghanistan Constitution was approved on 4th January 2004. Article 22, 44 and 54 highlight that “the citizens of Afghanistan – whether woman or man – have equal rights and duties before the law.” ;
- ❖ Elections in 2005 resulted in 27% of the National Assembly being represented by women;
- ❖ Nevertheless, only one cabinet member is female, 4% of the sitting judges in Afghanistan are female, 6.4% of prosecutors are female, 6.1% are attorneys and no women members are in the Supreme Court Council.

❖ Therefore Afghanistan and its government are falling short of their commitment to gender equality and should promote the integration of women at all governmental

levels.

- ❖ The majority of the cases researched concluded that forced and child marriages led to self-immolation.
- Forced and child marriage is contrary to the law and to Islamic beliefs. Furthermore, Afghanistan signed the Protocol on the Elimination of Forced and Child Marriage on the 24th November 2005, aiming at the **elimination of child and forced marriage by 2008.**

The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education

- ❖ Afghanistan became the 191st signatory to the Millennium Development Goals in 2004 – pledging amongst other things to “achieve universal primary education; to promote gender equality and to empower women; to reduce child mortality and to improve maternal health.
- ❖ Estimated literacy rates for women stands at 15.8% and at primary level there is one girl student for every two boys and at secondary level there is **one girl for every five to six boys**. Only about one quarter of teachers in Afghanistan is female.

Honor Killings in the Middle East and North Africa:

A Systematic Review
of the Literature

- ❖ A systematic review of the research literature on honor killings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) indicates a paucity of studies relative to the presumed magnitude of the problem.
- ❖ Forty articles were reviewed and critically appraised, of which only 9 contained primary data and 11 presented original secondary analyses.
- ❖ Most studies focus on legal aspects, determinants, and characteristics of victims and perpetrators.

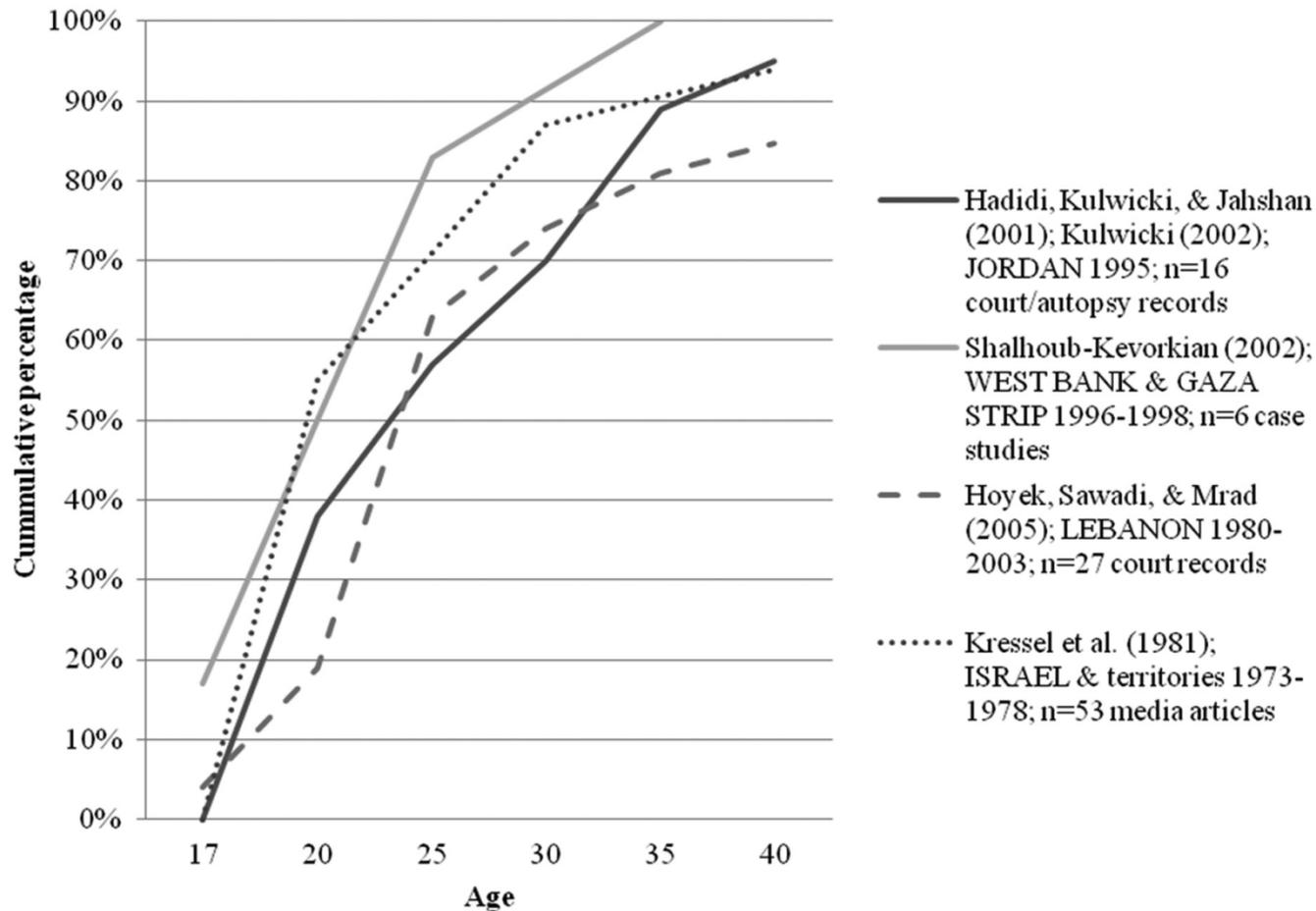
The literature search was conducted in mid-/late 2008.

First, published literature was sought from six electronic bibliographic databases (PubMed, Google Scholar, CWI [Contemporary Women's Issues], ASSIA [Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts], PAIS International, and Popline)

Second, the bibliography of each article was inspected as a potential source of additional publications of interest, which were then examined further.

Third, we reviewed pertinent publications and website materials from relevant international development agencies (UN, UNFPA, and the World Health Organization [WHO]), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and advocacy groups involved in women's rights, reproductive rights and human rights (including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Center for Reproductive Rights, the International Women's Health Coalition, and the International Center for Research on Women).

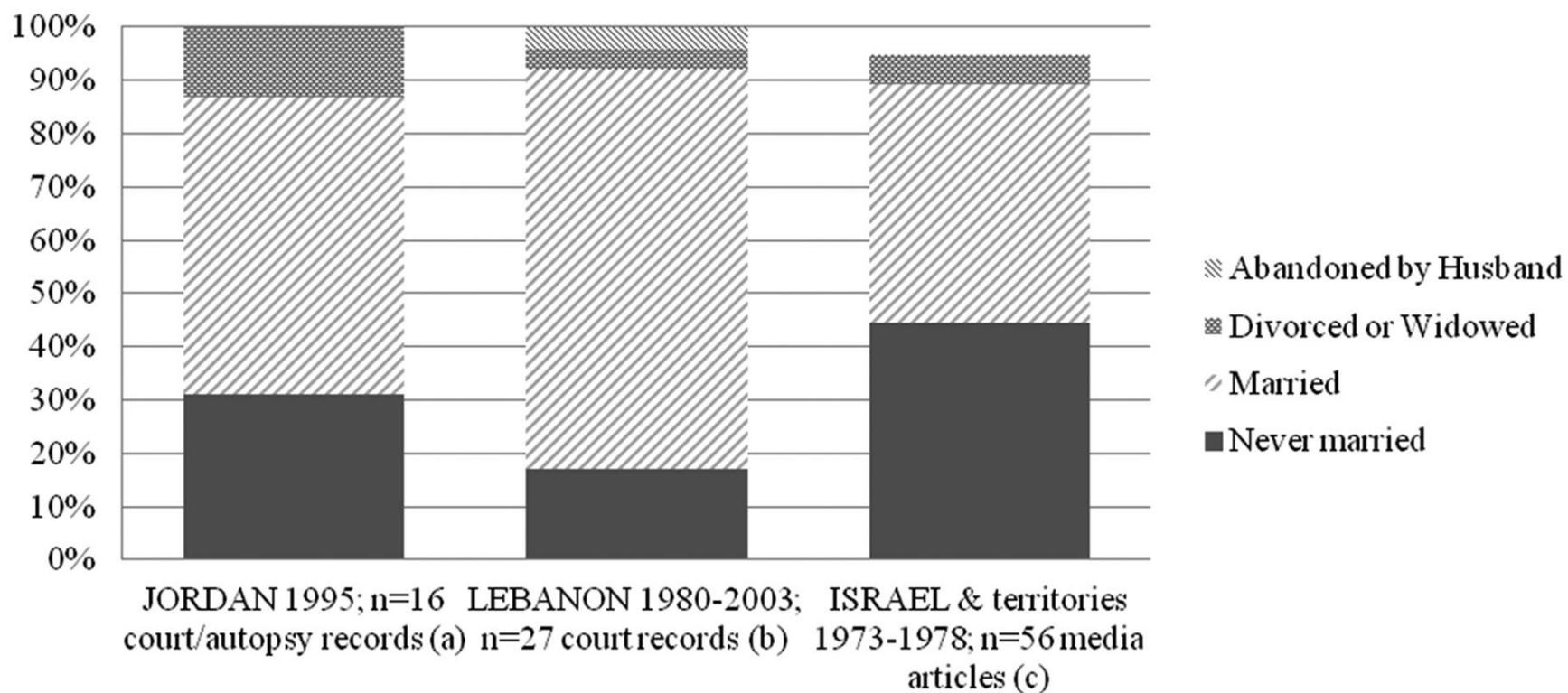
Cumulative percentage of honor killing victims by age at time of death



Characteristics of Victims

The paradigmatic victim is typically depicted as a young, unmarried, low socioeconomic status female who lives in a rural/isolated region.

Age is the best documented of these purported characteristics. The scant data available, along with most anecdotal reports, corroborate that most victims are young



Victims' socioeconomic status is even less documented, but may potentially influence vulnerability to honor killing. Also, several authors suggest that honor killings are more likely to occur in lower class families, in rural and socially disadvantaged areas, and to be associated with early marriages and low levels of formal education (Kardam, 2007; Kogacioglu, 2004; Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001).

Men with little material wealth may be more likely to kill because all they have is their honor (Khan, 2006; Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001), although higher status families may have more to lose through dishonor (Kressel et al., 1981).

- ❖ A Lebanese study that examined court records for 25 honor killings found that of the 13 files reporting a date of marriage, one in three showed that the victims had married before the age of 16;
- ❖ also, one in three of an unspecified number of files that listed educational level indicated that the victims were illiterate (Hoyek et al., 2005).

The paradigmatic perpetrator is the youngest brother of the victim or a male cousin, typically from the victim's side of the family, selected to commit the crime by a family council.

Table 2. Perpetrator's Relation to Honor Killing Victim

Reference	Country and year	Sample size and source of data	Brother	Father	Husband	Ex-husband	Other male relative	Mother	Other female relative	Other nonrelative	Unknown
Khafagy (2005)	Egypt 2002-2003	<i>n</i> = 125 media articles	18%	34%	41%		7%				
Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2002)	West Bank and Gaza Strip 1996-1998	<i>n</i> = 6 case studies	50%	17%			17%		17%		
Touma-Sliman (2005)	Israel 1984-2000	<i>n</i> = 33 (from 25 cases) court records	39%	15%	9%		27%	3%	6%		
Kressel et al. (1981)	Israel and occupied Palestinian territories 1973-1978	<i>n</i> = 97 media articles	32%	12%	4%		36%	4%	5%	3%	4%
Hadidi, Kulwicki, and Jahshan (2001); Kulwicki (2002)	Jordan 1995	<i>n</i> = 15 court/autopsy records	60%	20%		13%	7%				
Hoyek, Sidawi, and Mrad (2005)	Lebanon 1980-2003	<i>n</i> = 25 court records	36%	12%	32%		12%	4%	4%		

- ❖ In Jordan, (After 10 years, a survey of 200 people from the general population found that) 95% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that “honor killings are morally just,” and through a similar statement disagreed that perpetrators should be treated with leniency (Sheeley, 2007).
- ❖ However, most respondents (72%) agreed that Jordanian culture requires that when promiscuity occurs, family honor should be cleansed through honor killing, and 22% agreed or strongly agreed that Islam requires it

In Turkey, a qualitative study based on 195 interviews conducted with professionals in 4 cities found that respondents assume **1 of 4 positions** concerning honor killings:

(a) full support, because doing otherwise would encourage dishonorable behavior;

(b) conditional support, holding that although the killing of a person for a dishonorable act is not something to be willed, it may be unavoidable if the perpetrator committed the killing in a moment of extreme emotional fury;

(c) passive opposition mixed with grudging acceptance, based on the perception that such killing is inevitable in the case of people unable to live with such dishonor due to social humiliation and exclusion; and

(d) conscious opposition, holding that people should not be killed for reasons of honor and that a peaceful resolution through marriage or compensation is desirable instead (Kardam, 2007).

