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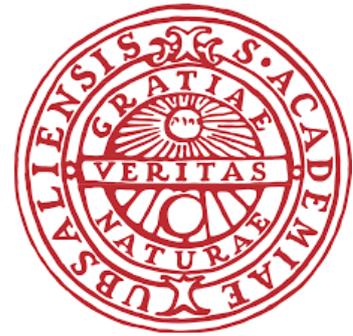
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**Rumours Matter:  
a Literature study on Honour killings Focusing  
on the link between gender, religion, and  
rumours**

# Abstract

This literature study investigates the link between gender, religion, and honour related violence with a focus on the intersection of rumours. Rumours as an intersection of honour will help to find out the answers to the research questions. The literature study concentrates on two honour killings cases, Fadime 's and Sorya M. The research questions, therefore, will focus on three themes, religion and honour, gender, and honour and rumours and the side effects on Muslim women.

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century lots of families moved to Sweden; from different regions from the Middle East such as Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt; due to conflict. Those families like many other migrants brought their traditions and beliefs. Some of them successfully integrated into Swedish society while others; refused to integrate, holding their beliefs hard and ignoring some Swedish law and policy. The concept of honour killings was brought from the Middle East, a term which will be explained further in the paper. Three Arabic migrant women interviewed in this study in order to discover the meaning of rumours and how it relates to honour killings.

The results show that gender differences existed in Fadime and Soraya 's case. Rumours as honour intersection could cause to honour killings and violence. However, the term rumours were not discussed in previous literature was not mentioned in other papers.

Honour killings exist in the Swedish society and the Middle Eastern society, but it is not related to Islamic religion, rather than a tradition, therefore, the old Middle Eastern societies were based on power rather than gender equality and justice.

**Keywords:** Honour killings, Religion, Gender, Rumours, Middle East, Islam.

## **Dedications**

To Fredrik, who supported me writing the thesis but passed away before I finished.

Thank you for your support, your love, and care.

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# Abbreviations

CDA - Critical Discourse Analysis

# 1 Introduction

*“What drives a man to murder his child-for honor’s sake?” (Wikan,2008:1)*

*She moved to Sweden running away from their Honour. The Honour that could take her life. Honour, according to the society where she was born is an important issue, it is related to female sexuality. She wanted to be free from the religious, the society, the Sharia Law’s control. After many complicated situations where she used to live, she was finally granted a divorce by the court.*

*She ran away from where she used to live from her small family, to the family she was born in. But there she did not find her freedom of choice, the freedom where and with who to live, the freedom to choose her own activity, or even what to study. She believes in gender equality, where she sees herself equal to all men at her family, but in Islam women are not equal to men. In Islam one man is equal to two women in inheritance law for example. Religion and Sharia Law supported her brother to see himself unequal to his sisters but the powerful, and the person who decides over them.*

*After going out from a tragic marriage she wanted to experience life differently, therefore, she was strong enough to decide and continue her life by her own choices.*

*Complicated. Her life became complicated. She wished that she could live easily as all people around her. She wanted to present her partner to her family, but because of the religious beliefs her family would not accept him or her new way of life. But he, he taught her many things in life, dancing, fishing cooking, relaxing, a new language, he taught her how to find herself in life, how to be calm standing against all her problems, he listened to her, and loved her to the last day he lived. The years run away, and death took him at an early age. She stayed alone, thinking, and wishing that he could have met her family that she loves. Life is unfair, at least to her. She, she loved him, she loved them and wished that shame and honour did not exist.*

*After all, she wanted to live as any other women, happy, free, and equal to men. Life is simple but complicated. Life is a choice, we chose to live freely, happy, or to hide our identities.*

(My own story)

Life is not easy for many Muslim women. Family traditions and religion may be more valued than human life to their families. Some young Muslim girls as well as adult women face many problems at the hands of their families. Some cannot choose their partners, others forced not to meet boys at school, and some are not allowed to travel with their friends. In Sweden, it is presumed that these types of activities would only be allowed, but perhaps even be welcomed by families. These activities are not accepted by some Muslim families in the Swedish society where shame and guilt play a big role, where young girls/women are following their families and societal rules. Some young women chose their own lives which were then ended by their fathers or brothers, all in the name of “honour”. Some girls might be pushed from the balconies and others were killed in different ways but for the same reason. (SvD, TT,2013). In line with this Gapf, in their statistics, presented that, “It is estimated that there are five honor killings in Sweden per year, but the number of unreported cases is large as many cases are classified as suicides or accidents due to lack of evidence” (Gapf, 2020). From that, many cases had no honour evidence and were classified as suicides; Gapf argued that such murders have never been reported to the court.

Moreover, Mehrdad Darvishpour and Pirjo Lahdenperä said, “The concepts of honour culture and honour violence were established in relation to a number of tragic murders that took place between 1996 and 2002 in Sweden” (Darvishpour & Lahdenperä, 2014:10).

Rumours were the reason that the family felt ashamed and wanted to clean up their honour. Removing the shame happens when the family kill their daughters to show other people that they did not accept their daughter’s actions. These actions were in many cases based on their sexuality and their freedom to choose their partners.

The killers in many cases took attention to what other people say about their daughters, forgetting their daughter’s rights in life, and forgetting gender equality and that there is no honour in murder.

Moreover, honour killings take away many girls lives every year around the world. Furthermore, according to the United Nation Population more than 5000 women may be killed every year in the name of honour. (Westmarland, 2015:73)

Sweden is one of the countries that is trying to focus on a solution to stop honour related violence. Writing about honour related violence, Islamic religion and the intersection on rumours would help to understand in depth why some Muslim men kill their daughters, or wives.

Therefore, the aim of this case study is to explore how rumours can affect women and their lives and why do rumours lead to honour related violence. In order to explore the role of rumours in honour killings, I also need to discuss the role of gender equality in Islam, and how Quran refers to women, as well as the meaning of honour related to sexuality.

The study will present two examples Fadime Sahindal's case and Sorya M's case. Furthermore, this paper will aim to identify the reasons as to why gender inequality is so relevant in the Islamic religion.

Intersectionality as analytical tool will help me to discover if there is a link between gender, religion, rumours, and honour.

## **1.1 Background**

I find it important to explain the reason I chose the topic. First, I moved to Sweden at the age of 28, running away from the Middle East where traditions and Islamic religion as the Sharia Law rules. I have questioned why fathers and sons rule the family, why women mostly stay at home, and are not allowed to move on, to work or study at different cities or countries; not even allowed to love a person who belong to another religion.

It started first when I got accepted to study medicine in England, but my parents did not even listen to what I wanted to do. I was 16 then, I came back home holding my folder of papers tight. I told my parents look! I have the chance now to study medicine in England. I remember when my mother looked at me and said: "England, ok, you are a girl and girls do not live alone in other countries. You have been to England six times with me, do you remember the dresses that we bought?" I said then, "yes, I of course remember, but I want to study in England this time!" I did not understand then why my mother said that, why her thoughts went to the time we were in England shopping, and why am I different from my classmates who are also girls but are going to study abroad. I asked, but I did not get many answers to my questions at school or at home. I changed my plan. As I said, I was 16 years old, my choice then was not correct, I quit the International General Certificate of Secondary Education, IGCSE, which was created by Cambridge University examinations to the local education system in Jordan. The school principal talked to my parents about my incorrect choice, but nothing happened. After this

decision, my life changed, and I reacted by not focusing on my studies but chose to build a family.

Today, after many years of studies, I continue finding my answers to the questions that I had with me all these years through my studies and research. First, I wanted to find out why some families do not see all gender the same. And what does Islamic religion say about men power over women. Secondly, I wanted to know why the gender differences exist in my family, in terms to choose of studies, travel, and relationship.

When I moved to Sweden after my divorce, I thought that people could change, or the society could change many actions and reactions. I chose to be free in choice; and to move on in life as many other women. But my choice was difficult for my family, where honour, shame and guilt play a big role. On the other hand, studying in depth the fundamental Human Rights helped me to choose my way of living which was not acceptable by my male members of my family. My mother after many years in Europe and adapting to the European society has asked me before her death to leave the family traditions and find my freedom where I can study and develop myself in life. More than that, and after many years of studies focusing on honour problems, I found it important to raise the reasons that cause to honour killings. One important reason that was not mentioned briefly was the intersection of rumours which it is the reason for many honour violence in the Middle Eastern region. The aspect of rumours was not sufficiently treated in the literature I have studied, therefore, I found it important to focus on it in this study.

I also found it important to know about how Middle Eastern culture reacts to rumours, to understand why honour related violence happens in Swedish society. The Middle Eastern culture differs from the Swedish culture by how norms understood and defined.

Furthermore, living alone was not easy at the beginning. I was paying attention to all my actions, to the places I visited, and I was careful of what I said and to whom I talked. I had my relationship sin secret because my partner then belonged to another religion which is not accepted in my family. After many years, my life became easier, and the solution I took was right to save my life. That was also one of the reasons I chose this programme, I always wanted to understand why honour crimes happens and what is the link between it and the Islam. During this programme at Uppsala University, I developed my knowledge on how to write about, and analyse religion. I have also learnt new concepts; and methods which will help me to develop my thesis.

My previous thesis was on intersectionality and understanding the meaning of honour related problems and why it happens. Therefore, I would like to continue researching the same subject focusing on rumours and how it could affect some Muslim immigrant women in Swedish society.

Religion is a power, and religious thoughts could change attitudes, affect traditions and culture. I, therefore, chose to study the Islamic religion and find out how could it affect Muslim families in Sweden and in what way. According to Jan Samuelsson, Muslims in Sweden are estimated to 300 000. This number has increased through the 21 years. From that, many Muslim families are in Sweden and that of course effects the Swedish culture in many ways. (Samuelsson, 1999:27)

## **2. Aim and Research Questions**

### **2.1 Aim**

The aim of this study is to explore if there is a link between both Fadime and Sorya's cases and rumours. It is also aiming to discuss the link between rumours, religion, gender, and honour killings.

Therefore, I am aiming to finding out why rumours cause honour killings, and how Islamic religion sees gender equality.

Further, to meet the aims of this research, the data are personal testimony, the interviews analysis, and literature.

### **2.2 Research Questions**

1. How do rumours matter in honour in both cases?
2. Is there a link between religion, and honour killings, and if there is a link, what factors play a role in establishing this link?
3. Is gender playing a role in honour killing, if so, how can this link be articulated?

### **2.3 Two Examples of Honour Killings and the Role of Rumour**

My study takes its departure from the following two examples, and academic discussions of them and their context.

Fadime Sahindal's example was based in Sweden while Sorya M's example was based in Iran.

#### **2.3.1 Fadime Sahindal's Example, Sweden**

In 2002, the story of Fadime Sahindal shocked Swedish society. Fadime related to a Kurdish Muslim family, and was killed by her father who threatened her and tried to kill her

several times. (Wikan, 2008:15). Fadime chose, like many other girls, her boyfriend, moved in and started her life with him. Living with a person in a relationship outside of marriage is not accepted in the Kurdish tradition nor in the Islamic religion.

Fadime tried to move to different cities and hide herself from her family. She just wanted to live a simple life, sharing her future with her beloved Patrik. Fadime wanted to say goodbye to her mother and sisters before she left Sweden, but her father shot her outside the house. Fadime did not travel and did not live her dream but died by her father's bullet.

According to Wikan, Fadime was brave, educated and wanted to use her knowledge of social work to help young immigrant people. (Wikan, 2008:257). Fadime was brave, fought for her freedom, and explained to the government the meaning of honour aiming to save the other victims of honour lives. Fadime was buried in Uppsala. Crown princess Viktoria and other people from the government attended the ceremony while more than two thousand people were praying for her outside the ceremony. (Wikan, 2008:13).

The problem of honour killings was presented by Fadime to the Swedish parliament, but at that time, there were no policy against honour related violence, and her actions were not enough. According to Wikan "the concept of honor has different meanings and is practiced differently among diverse groups of people." (Wikan, 2008:14) From that, the meaning of honour is different in the Swedish context comparing to the Kurdish context.

Fadime was a strong woman who spoke for her rights. Wikan states that Fadime:

*stood up for her right to a life of her own and for her love of Patrik, even after his death. She reported the bullying and death threats, and her father and brother were charged and convicted.* (Wikan: 2008:16)

In her book, *In Honor of Fadime*, Unni Wikan explained how the liberal and illiberal moral clashes in reacting to Honour killings in Northern Europe. Wikan referred to the European moral as liberal. (Wikan,2008) The book therefore, showed us what is beyond the murder of Fadime, but rarely mentioned, is the importance of Rumours. The book on the other hand, presented what Fadime presented as honour to the Swedish society. It therefore used Fadime's case as an example on honour and explain how some families are marginalised and fail to integrate in the Swedish society. Wikan explained how that patriarchal power on controlling female's sexuality is the reason for honour and how it ends by taking their life, which "can wash away shame". (Wikan, 2008:33)

In chapter one Wikan mentioned that “Shame depends on dishonor’s becoming a fact to outsiders. This misery befell Fadime’s family, and it cost Fadime her life.” (Wikan,2008:16) What I found important to add on this statement is how important rumours are, and how it is important to Fadime’s family not to accept rumours. But in that case Fadime’s family did not accept what others say about their daughter believing that it is shame. “Fadime was a whore,” her father told the police. “The problem is over now.” (Wikan, 2008:13). According to David & Mayr, the discourse analysis, on the other hand, focuses on the “linguistic elements” which in their terms show the hidden power and ideologies in individuals minds. (1997:258, 1989:5; Machin & Mayr, 2012:5). Likewise, Titus Hjelm (2014) expresses that “discourse analysis in the sociology of religion means looking at the ways in which religion, spirituality, belief, etc. are constructed in discourse.” (Hjelm, 2014: 857) Through using this analysis, after killing his daughter, it can be argued that Fadime’s father felt free from shame which went over with her death by saying that the problem is over. This utterance showed how Fadime’s father thinks about shame and honour through the discourse.

### **2.3.2 Sorya M’s Example, Iran**

Sorya M was an Iranian woman who was married and had two young boys. Sorya helped a man in her city which made her husband angry, and he spoke about her behaviour to others. Woman in the Iranian society are not allowed to practice their lives as men, most women are housewives. As many other victim women, Sorya was the victim of rumours and was punished by stoning to death. Her husband and two sons were first throwing the stones at her, then all men at her city started to be stoning her to death. By killing Sorya her Husband regained his honour and removed his shame.

Sorya’s story summarised the Islamism in the Iranian Muslim culture, as told in a story written in 1990, by the French Iranian journalist Freidoune Sahebjam. The book *La Femme Lapidée* was the basis for the film *Sorya M*. Later on, in 2014, Khatija Bibi Khan in her journal *Versions and Subversions of Islamic Cultures in the Film The Stoning of Soraya M* explained how women are marginalised in the Islamic culture and that in the Qur’anic verse (2009:336) “no stoning of women is mentioned” on the other hand the “Zina” as unlawful sexual act is defined differently by the Islamic scholars. (Khan, 2014:151) In Sorya’s M case the rumours about an unlawful sexual act between her and her neighbour caused to her death. Sorya’s

husband according to the article has condemned her relation to Hashem, while Sorya was helping him cook and to care of his son Khan added that Sorya's sons "defend their father against their mother. Ali indoctrinates his sons, poisoning them with negative male stereotypes in the world that reinforce women's social position in it. Ali tells his sons that this is a man's world.

When a woman is accused of adultery, as happened with Soraya, the punishment is death by stoning. (Khan, 2014:185). In line with that, Leila Ahmed 1992, in her book *Women and Gender in Islam* focused on women roles in the Islamic societies, and how gender was before the rise of Islam and after, and how the Islamic discourse changed through the years. Ahmed also discussed how the old Islamic discourse clashed with new ones and how that affected Arabic women. I agree with Ahmed, that the Arabic Muslim societies have changed through the years, with some societies moving towards globalisation, liberalisation, such as Lebanon and Jordan, and other societies becoming more religious focusing on different faith and practising the Islamic religion in all life situations, example as in Iraq and Iran.

## 3 Theoretical Background

The theoretical perspective I am planning to use is a Critical Discourse Analysis, (CDA), intersectionality and James A. Beckford social theory.

Using intersectionality as an analytical tool will help me focus on Islamic religion, and rumours as one of the intersections of honour related problems. While social theory will focus on the social practices of the Middle Eastern families and on how gender differences manifest in certain actions.

### 3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA could help to criticise the old traditional or cultural behaviour and explain how it affects the new generation of Middle Eastern Swedes. However, CDA is “*concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender*” (Fay,1987; Creswell 2014:65). Used together with the qualitative research which focuses on “cultural theme”, CDA could give more results. (Creswell, 2014:67).

CDA was defined by Teun A. Van Dijk as a, “discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (Dijk, 2015:466).

Using Critical discourse analyses in this paper criticise inequality in the Islamic religion according to me power over women, as CDA “deals with social inequality and domination” and focuses on “gender differences” (Dijk, 2015:476). Dijk states that, “A central notion in most critical work on discourse is that of power, and more specifically the social power of groups or institutions” which Dijk noted “that power is not always exercised in obviously abusive acts of dominant group members, but may be enacted in the myriad taken for-granted actions of everyday life (Dijk, 2015:469).

Critical discourse analysis according to Jørgensen and Phillips, “provides theories and method for the empirical study of the relations between discourse and social and cultural developments in different social domains” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:55).

Jørgensen & Phillips added that Critical discourse analysis has five features which is “possible to categorise the approaches” that belong to the same subject. The first feature is that “the character of social and cultural processes and structures is partly Linguistic Discursive” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:55). That means that social and cultural practices could maybe be explored through language. The second feature is that the “discourse is both constitutive and constituted” by that the discourse might have relation to “other social dimensions”. More than that “language use should be empirically analysed within its social context” therefore “discourse functions Ideologically”. That means, that the study will see the differences between the “ideological affects” such as “unequal power relations between social groups” example on that “women and men”. That also highlights the value of critical research which on the other hand, can help in a political change on the social difference. (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:55,58).

On the other hand, Titus Hjelm described discourse analysis in the sociology of religion as “*looking at the ways in which religion, spirituality, belief, etc. are constructed in discourse.*” (Hjelm, 2014: 857) Thus, it explains how people react when talking about things. More than that, Hjelm gave attention to the “*discourse analytical approaches in the sociology of religion*” which “*focus instead on ‘conducting actual discourse analyses’ using empirical materials*”, while the critical approach examines “*the role of religion in creating and sustaining inequalities*” (Hjelm, 2014:857).

Based on that, Hjelm states that CDA is “constitutive and functional” (Moberg, 2013; Hjelm, 2014:857,858). In line with that, Foucault states that discourse analysis is a powerful analytical tool in text analysis. Following Foucault, Fairclough stated three points which are important in the discourse, “the social identities, social relations and the systems of knowledge and belief”. (ibid, 2014:858). Consequently, ideology and hegemony are the main terms for CDA. (Hjelm, 2014:859).

According to Hjelm (2014) “questions such as ‘why?’, ‘when?’, and ‘who?’ often presuppose a state of things which is not explicit in the question itself.” (Hjelm, 2014:862). Therefore, I chose to ask why, when, who questions to understand all the different answers, and to reach a final answer. Thus, I asked myself three main questions before studying both cases, why does the honours killings happen, who is the killer and when did the murder happen?

The analytical tools which could be useful to practice CDA are nomination, and word connotations. (Machin & Mayr, 2012) Nomination will be a helpful analytical tool to find out what individuals do. According to Machin and Mayr, “Participants can be nominated in terms

of who they are or functionalised by being depicted in terms of what they do” (Machin & Mayr, 2012:81). In Fatime’s case, nomination as an analytical tool will explain why Fadime’s father kill her.

Similarly, word connotations will be useful in terms of discovering the “basic choice of words” and how they were used in the text. (Machin, David & Mayr, Andrea (Machin & Mayr, 2012:32) Word connotations, thus, will be useful in terms of understanding the word honour in both languages’ Arabic (the Middle East) and English (Europe).

### **3.2 Intersectionality as an Analytical Tool**

Intersectionality was introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 as a:

Intersectionality is a concept that enables us to recognize the fact that perceived group membership can make people vulnerable to various forms of bias, yet because we are simultaneously members of many groups, our complex identities can shape the specific way we each experience that bias.

Intersectionality is thus a critical lens for bringing awareness and capacity to the social justice industry in order to expand and deepen its interventions. Intersectionality was initially conceived as a way to present a simple reality that seemed to be hidden by conventional thinking about discrimination and exclusion. (Crenshaw,2010:3)

Lykky introduced the term intersectionality as:

a theoretical and methodological tool to analyze how historically specific kinds of power differentials and/or constraining normoactivities, based on discursively, institutionally and/or structurally constructed sociocultural categorizations such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age/generation, dis/ability, nationality, mother tongue and so on.(Lykky, 2010:50).

Lykke added, “intersectionality as a theoretical and methodological entrance point to understand power differentials and normativities” (Lykky, 2010:51).

Intersectionality in my research will define the intersection of rumors and find out if gender is playing a role in honor killing, and the reason for gender differences in honour actions.

Intersectionality the feminist analytical tool, is suitable to find out the answers for my research questions. Kathy Davis in her chapter *Intersectionality as a Critical Methodology* asked the question “But how to use it?”, she discussed and presented for the reader how she thinks intersectionality is used in academic texts. Davis states that “gender always is a part of the intersectional analysis” (Davis; Lykke, 2014:19). Intersectionality was developed by “feminist scholar Leslie McCall” who “addressed the issue of developing a methodology of doing intersectional research” Intersectionality thus helps feminist researchers to achieve “ a better research” , open the way to ask more questions, to explore more details and make the research “more creative”. (Davis; Lykke, 2014:19,20) Furthermore, the concept of Intersectionality as analytical lens will highlight the importance of social justice and understand how women are marginalised and dominated by men in some families in Sweden. It can on the other hand, “analyse how power differentials, normoactivities and identity formations in terms of categorisations such as gender, ethnicity” and sexuality. (Lykke, 2012:208). Hence, Intersectionality will in this thesis categorise the reasons of honour and explore if rumours is an intersection of honour.

After thirty years of finding the concept of intersectionality Kimberlé Crenshaw said:

*It's basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What's often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts. (Steinmetz,2020)*

I used Intersectionality in all the steps in this thesis. I started by using the intersectional thinking by categorising the rumours as a reason for Honour killings. Therefore, to understand how rumours matters in committing Honour Crimes.

### 3.3 Social Theory

James A. Beckford in his book *Social Theory and Religion* (2003) “reviews the current state of social scientific knowledge about religion.” (Beckford, 2003:1) Further, Beckford claims that “the ‘free space’ in which religious entrepreneurs can cultivate and promote novel forms of religious belief, experience, action, solidarity and organisation has expanded significantly since the midtwentieth century. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Developing countries, where religious movements such as Pentecostalism, Hindu nationalism, and Islamic ‘purity’ movements have been expanding for several decades.” (Beckford, 2003:166)

Moreover, Beckford mentioned the issue of identity and true self which that according to feminist Witchcraft, is “an ideal of an essential true self is firmly located within a primordial holistic world-view of the Goddess embodied in Nature” (Beckford, 2003:182) On the other hand, Beckford mentioned that the central form for Muslim Sufi belief is that “The nexus between body, convictions and emotions” are important for the Islamic spirituality. (Beckford, 2003:183) Both movements focus on the self-connection to religion, in line with Beckford’s question, “what if the self does not connect to religion?” and “lies between religion and non-religion or between acceptable and unacceptable expressions of religion (Beckford 2001; 2003:184). It is important to discuss what is the acceptable and according to who, to society, family, or the self. If I take Fadime as an example, her choice and her self-connection were not accepted by her family. Foucault’s theory about power via Beckford explains how power exist and that is relevant to understand Fadime’s story. Foucault’s psychological disciplines on the principle that power exists “to control human subjectivity and action.” (Beckford, 2003:184) Fadime’s family wanted to control her actions by ignoring her choice of relationship focusing on their tradition’s belief.

## 4 Methodology

This paper will gain in depth understanding of how rumours affect women's lives and how are they relate to honour. The literature study discussed narratives about two Middle Eastern women as victims. On the other hand, storytelling is helpful in creative writing and presenting the examples. These examples give the reader in depth understanding of how social practices could cause these women their lives.

### 4.1 Research Design

This paper is based on my personal testimony, interviews, and literature. Using a personal testimony in academic writings is a way of writing that supports the understanding of concepts that the paper is using. While through the interviews the paper explores the meaning of the concept of rumours and how does it exist in the Middle Eastern and the Swedish societies. The literature on the other hand, gives the understanding of the concepts and support this paper. More than that, the importance of writing is to share knowledge, thoughts, and examples based on real experiences. Understanding Religion and aiming for peace is an implicit goal for this paper. Therefore, with a belief in gender equality and supporting women's rights, I find it important to see how Islam and gender equality works together. Thus, intersectionality as an analytical tool will analyse the unequal social power in Islamic religion. Honour related violence is a crime that take mostly women's life. The cases that I chose are based on Muslim women and their relationships. Rumours as a main concept in this paper has a link with gender equality in Islam and men power over women at the same family.

Inspired by bell hooks and Nina Lykke and their way of using personal testimony in academia, I choose to write differently aiming to inspire the reader and get a deeper understanding to the concepts I use. European readers need examples from the real life concerning the concept of rumours and how it affects women at the Swedish society with a Middle Eastern background and Islamic religion.

hooks said:

*I have been working to change the way I speak and write, to incorporate in the manner of telling a sense of place, of not just who I am in the present but where I am coming*

*from, the multiple voices within me . . . I refer to that personal struggle to name that location from which I come to voice—that space of theorising.* (hooks, 1990:146)

hooks choose to write differently to inspire the reader. Positioning the self in writing will clarify the reasons of the stories, background, and the inner voice. hooks used intersectionality to examine the relation between race, class, and gender. Inspired by her, I chose to explore the relation between the intersections of gender, religion, and rumours.

As such Lykke in her book *Writing Academic Texts Differently*, mentioned that “Writing can be more creative by using examples from the reality to explain how important the subject is and how I am “embedded in” the story as a writer” (Lykke et. Al, 2014).

Moreover, my passion for writing about honour related violence and to find out the intersections of honour and example on that rumours, helped me to understand in depth why Muslim male relatives act to protect their sisters, wives or daughters and opened my eyes through writings to many aspects to protect my life and avoid honour related violence. Writing on a subject that has a link to the self and religion could protect Muslims from danger and help others to understand the concept from another point of view. Roland Barthes argued that writing help us to,

*protect ourselves (as) we keep an eye on ourselves, we censure and delete our blunders, our self-sufficiency (or our insufficiencies), our irresolution, our errors, our complacencies, sometimes even our breakdowns...* (Barthes, 1985:4)

Furthermore, situating the self in academic writing has a connection with the Intersectional way of thinking. As a researcher on honour related violence and the intersection of rumours, I position myself to understand how social identities affect Muslim women. Davis states that “developing a narrative about how your specific location shapes or influence you” (Davis; Lykke et. al. 2014:22). From that, situating myself as a Middle Eastern female, born Muslim will help to understand how gender and ethnicity matter in the intersection of rumours. Researching on honour related violence made me realised the importance to share facts and examples from life, and how I am drawn into towards solutions to avoid honour related violence in Swedish society.

Magdalena Górska presented the intersectionality as:

*a crucial analytical and political concept in feminism for decades, and today it is both contested and embraced in feminist studies. For me, feminism is an approach that*

*focuses on an analysis of unequal social power relations and on the development of social justice tools and strategies. (Górska, 2016:24)*

For me, I use intersectionality as a feminist analytical tool to investigate the unequal social power in Muslim families. Reading about honour related violence shows that it happens because of gender inequality at some families. These families see honour crimes as a solution to stop rumours that brings shame to their family. From that intersectionality helps to explore how rumours matter in honour related violence and crimes. Grahan states that “It is essential to examine how structures of power and oppression cooperate and to investigate whose interests are being marginalized and whose are given privilege in societal processes. It is a key to understand the effects of power” (Grahan,2011:225). Men have power in some Muslim families; thus, it is worth understanding the reason of moralising women at the same family. Religion, gender equality, and power are united to draw attention to the reasons of honour related violence.

The interviews similarly are important in terms of supporting the evidence. Choosing three interviewees was deemed necessary for this study. Because I did not find the cases of Fadime and Sorya enough to draw conclusions, I decided together with the supervisor to add interviews to this paper aiming to find evidence. The researcher’s role according to Creswell is to collect the data. The data thus, will be the “biases of the study” (Cerswell,2018:205).

Qualitative generalisation is a “term to limited way of qualitative research, since the intent of this form of inquiry is not to generalise findings to individuals” (Creswell,2018: 202).

Additionally, using “quotes: from short to long embedded passages” are useful to support the analysis. (Creswell, 2018:203) The interview had only one question. The question was sent to two interviewees via message and then was recorded and sent by WhatsApp. The last interview was a face-to-face interview at the workplace. The interviewees answered the question in 15 minutes each. As two interviews were handled by distance, it was hard to feel if they were stressed, nervous or relaxed. One of the interviewees recorded a video which showed that she was nervous at the beginning of the recording, while the second interviewee recorded her voice. She was relaxed and confident in answering the question. The face-to-face interview was also recorded but the interviewee started with a nervous voice but relaxed while talking. I needed to repeat the question when she stopped talking. I also asked the interviewee to share some examples that based in Sweden. Because she started by an example which was based in the 1980s in Iraq.

There were advantages and disadvantages of using one question in the interviews. The advantages can be summarised as:

1. Collecting information on how the Muslim society deal with rumours and how does it affect women.
2. The information is the data which I used for the thesis.
3. Short interview is useful as it is focused on one question. The interviewees then, did not have space to go out of the subject.
4. The question was easy to answer.

The disadvantages are:

1. It would be better if the interviews were face to face, to explore the interviewees actions and reactions.
2. Longer interview and perhaps another two questions would be useful to collect more data and the discussion would be wider.
3. More than that, I used an example in the paper which was based on conversation through years with a relative. The person was asked before I wrote the example and accepted that I share the story but anonymized.

Additionally, “to write is a physical as well as mental process” it also has to do with “who I am, with all my experiences, memories, thoughts, feelings” (Lie; Lykke et al.2014:124).

I agree with Lie that writing is both a physical mental process which shares feelings, thoughts, and experiences through words. On the other hand, Parse described the personal testimony as an evidence which supports the outcomes of the quantitative research. The evidence here “raises the discourse from lowest common denominator, that aggregate data from quantitative research result, to that of honoring personal wisdom” and “Evidence, as truth for the moment, gives voice to individuals’ personal wisdom that arises from their privileged lives, their seamless symphony of becoming” ( Parse, 2008:47).

## 4.2 Storytelling - Situating the Self

*“People’s stories are not just the action of an individual but are part of interaction of experiences which make meaning within context.” (Webster, 2016:27)*

Stories are the best way to explain situations, concepts, and emotions. As honour violence is not common in Swedish society, examples and stories can help the reader to understand the situation. I am going to use personal stories to explain different situations that have happened in life. The personal stories will be presented as examples to make the reader understand the concept of honour differently. According to Ninna Lykke, “example of how exploring an unfinished collection of thoughts, inspirations and references in the shape of writing a story about/around them can provide a way to open up creative thought and face the challenges of finding and sticking to a research topic and methodology.” (Lykke 2014)

Grace Davie says that situating the self in the text could be in “positioning the self as a research in terms of Gender, class, ethnic, sexual and other social identities.” (Daive; Lykke 2014: 22). Following that, I situate myself in the text in examples from my past life, linking that to gender, and how my old society, sees gender differently, to ethnicity, and to religion. Storytelling thus shares a cultural story and creates motivation to continue reading the text. Likewise, “ situating human actions at the center of case study, emphasis is place on interpreting exploring and understanding why phenomenon occurs”, from that the personal examples, situating the self in both cases will give the reader the understanding of the phenomenon of honour (Webster,2016:7).

## 4.3 Qualitative Interviews

*What do you think about rumours and does it relate to honour killings? (Interview question)*

As I mentioned above, this study chose the story telling method but while researching. However, I must be supplemented by further data for this thesis. Because of the sensitive nature of the subject, and legal reasons, I cannot share stories that I know through my job or life situations. For the same reason I have chosen the story telling as a method, I chose the qualitative method to explore more about rumours. The intention was to reflect on the analysis of the interviews. The importance of focusing on rumours in my interviews is to show how it

link to honour killings. It also was not mentioned in the literature I have studied. The reason why I am very interested to write about rumours is because in the Middle Eastern where I was born, rumours ended up the lives of many women. Rumours was and still is in many cultures the reason for honour killings.

### **4.3.1 Analysis of Interviews**

Here I present the analysis of the interviews and my reflections.

I have chosen three women to interview. All of them moved to Sweden from the Middle East, are Muslims, and follow the Middle Eastern traditions. One of them is my colleague who works with integration at the adult school. The second woman I met via my friend, and the third woman I met via dancing course. They accepted to be interviewed and wanted to share their stories but not their names. Two interviewees were asked the question on Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> of September via a message. Then they send the recordings on Monday the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2020. The last interview was face to face at the workplace and I recorded the interview on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2020. Each took 15 minutes to answer.

Because of the social distance required by coronavirus pandemic, I have asked them to record the answer for the following question and send it by message to me.

At each interview, I started by introducing myself as a student and talked little about my thesis and that the interviews will be used for the thesis. The interviewees agreed. After that, the interviews were recorded.

#### ***Interview one: S***

The first interviewee is S, 28 years old, originally from Palestine and has lived in Sweden for ten years. After asking the question above, S answered the question and sent the recording via telephone. The interview was 12 minutes long.

She started to answer the question above directly by defining what rumours are and the problems or the side effects that rumours could cause especially on women in the Middle Eastern culture. S said, "Some people use rumours as a joke, but rumours could cause to honour

killings”. She described how some people try to judge girls and build up stories and connect them to their sexuality. She described rumours as “a dirty action” and that everyone women as well as men have their choice in life, but that as she said: “controlled in the Middle Eastern way of thinking”. S said, “as it is said in Quran, when you speak about someone is as if you are eating your brother’s skin”. As a believer S presented how Quran forbid rumours. She added “many men killed their daughters in my society because of rumours” and how fathers believe rumours but not their daughters. S said, “it does not mean when I talk to a man that I am a dirty girl, it is my ow life that no one should talk about”. S personally suffered from rumours. In her recording, S sounded sad while saying that people talked about her, and she did not want to say the reason why they talked about her:

*I suffered from rumours. A small story became too big and caused a problem to me. I do not want to say details, and I forgive those who gossiped. Honour killings happen in Europe, in the villages or in our counties. It sadly just happens. Men, fathers, or brothers killed their daughters because of rumours.How do they think? They lost their family member because some, someone has talked (S, 28 years old).*

S ended the interview with, “Rumours could force some parents to kill their daughters I do not know what to add, but I am against rumours and I do not accept it” (S, 28 years old).

From that, S believes that rumours are a reason for honour violence and killings and linked that to the traditions but not religion. She as many other Middle Eastern Muslim women has suffered from rumours which affected her psychologically. Rumours to her are not accepted in Islam. According to S, rumours are the first step in honour violence and that many girls were killed by their fathers or brothers because of rumours which caused the family shame.

### ***Interview two: R***

The second interviewee is R, 55 years old, from Palestine and lives in Sweden. The interview was 15 minutes long. R is a true Muslim. A true Muslim is the person who follow the Sharia Law and the five principles of Islam. R talked about honour killings which was an important issue in the Middle East. R said, “Honour related violence is connected to the old traditions, and it does not have any relation to religion” She added “Honour is different according to regions, cities and old villages.”. She also presented the difference in cultures between European and Middle Eastern, R states that “relationships are refused in my culture,

religion, and traditions, two people cannot be together without getting married, that is known to everyone” she added

*many girls were killed because of rumours, and the law at my country support father's and son's. ...Honour is important to families, even though we moved to Sweden, which is a European liberal country, we still hold our traditions. ...That's why people talk about woman who have relationships, it is not accepted, it is a shame. ...We should respect the Swedish law and our kids also should share the good part of our traditions respecting the Swedish law.... many girls were killed because of rumours, and the law at my country support father's and son's. ...Honour is important to families, even though we moved to Sweden, which is a European liberal country, we still hold our traditions. ...That's why people talk about woman who have relationships, it is not accepted, it is a shame. ...We should respect the Swedish law and our kids also should share the good part of our traditions respecting the Swedish law.*

R in the end of the interview talked about her beliefs and that she let her kids to choose their future partner refuses that they live together without getting married. By that she showed that she follows the Sharia Law even while living in Sweden.

R said:

*I am against all kind of violence because our religion is the religion of peace. Islam taught me how to protect my kids in another way. I talk to them and let them choose in life. I do not accept outside marriage relationships but if they would like to get married, they have to choose their partners (R, 55 years old).*

From that, R agrees that Islam is the religion of peace, and rumours are linked to honour as a tradition and that Arabic men do not accept the associated shame, and that is why they decide to kill their daughters to stop the rumours which cause not only them, but the family's shame. She is against rumours and honour killings and would like the new generation to avoid such problems in Sweden by adapting to Swedish law so that they learn in Sweden but hold onto the “better side” of their cultural traditions.

### ***Interview three: Rd***

The third interviewee is Rd, 48 years old, originally from Iraq and lives in Sweden for fourteen years. Rd started by saying that she would like to share examples to explain her answer.

“In the 80s in Iraq, someone talked about my neighbour that they saw her talking to her ex-man. Talking to the ex-man is not accepted in the Iraqi society” she added, “the family believed that their daughter who has two kids talked to her ex-man, that caused a big problem”. She added: “They started to follow her, and she was feeling bad that her family following her. As a divorced woman, she was living at her family with her kids.” She added:

*Another example on rumours, this story based in Sweden, that an Iraqi family heard from other people who came from Iraq that their daughter who was divorced is dating a man. The family who moved to Sweden long time ago, listened to their daughter and the explanation she said, by that, I was surprised that nothing happened to the daughter. (Rd, 48 years old).*

Rd added an example on honour which was bases in Sweden:

*Before ten years, I do not know all the details, but a man has shared his and his ex-girlfriend's picture on social media that he was kissing her. His ex-girlfriend is married today with another man. People who share the same culture started to talk about the girl. Her husband and brothers killed her x-boyfriend because of their family shame and honour. That shame is based on the rumours and the family's name at their community (Rd, 48 years old).*

The first example explained how rumours have side effects on Iraqi woman, but it does not have to end by violence. The second example explained that Iraqi people react differently to rumours and some of them do not believe in honour related violence. While others, believe in honour and reject rumours and kill their daughters. The last example proved that honour related violence is related to rumours and the victims could be men or women.

## **4.4 Literature Study**

A literature study is a way of researching books, articles, and other thesis on the same subject, to find out what is not highlighted, to search and prove the importance of the concept. I read many articles, books and policies which were based on honour violence and killings. What I found out is that honour killings and violent actions happens for different reasons. The reasons are the intersections of honour killings, these intersections are all connected to sexuality and family control. Rumours as one of the honour violence intersections is not focused upon in the literature. Therefore, my findings will be supported by the voices in the interviews.

## 5.Honour Related Violence in law

Here, I will explain the meaning of honour and what it means in both Middle Eastern and European societies, focusing on Sharia Law and Swedish Law.

According to Wikan the concept of honour is “developed fairly late in European history. In most countries, honor was not widely seen as synonymous with moral integrity until the eighteenth century”, before that “Honor lay in what was in the public eye. Repute is lost only in the eyes of others.” (Wikan, 2008: 53) On the other hand, honour in the Middle East is connected to sexuality and that women should behave in a way that suits society, whilst family see women “as sexual beings”. (Wikan, 2008:49). In line with that, and according to Richard Antoun, Abu-Lughod states that there is “an ideology of honor in ordinary conversation and everyday behavior” she added that “The ideology of honor is itself divorced into two separate but related discourses. The discourse of honor (pursued by men) is keyed to autonomy, independence, generosity”, “tough assertiveness, fearlessness, and pride” (p. 87), and self-mastery, including physical stoicism and the capacity to resist ignore women. (Antoun Richard; Abu-Lughod,1986: 990)

Iranian and Kurdish women’s right organisation IKWRO identified honour as a patriarchal ideology, they wrote:

*So- called family honour is a patriarchal ideology of oppression, women who make autonomous decisions, particularly relating to their private lives, are believed to have brought shame to their family. Honour crime is performed with the intent of limiting the psychological freedom of women. (Westmarland, 2015:73)*

Further, Awaad (2001), states that honour killing is “a form of gender based violence perpetrated by a male family member, usually a brother or a father, against a female family member believed to have dishonored the family by engaging in immoral and unacceptable forms of sexual behavior” (Awaad, 20001:39).

Honour happens when two cultures clash, but how? I will explain here how I understand honour as a woman who has her roots in the Middle East. When the Middle Eastern families move to Sweden,”The culturally determined explanatory model focuses on cultural differences and clashes between Swedish and non-Swedish groups in order to explain acts of conflict and

violence in Sweden within families from a different ethnic background (Wikan, 2004; Schlytter, 2002; Sjögren, 2006).

Moreover, “honor-related problems have been an issue in schools.” (Alizadeh et al., 2010; Norberg & Torbnsen, 2012:855) It exists in many societies, they added “Honor-related culture is complex. It is a worldwide phenomenon that is not linked to a specific national culture or religion; therefore, it should not be stereotyped as a phenomenon within certain groups (Alizadeh et al., 2010; Norberg & Torbnsen, 2012:855). From that, honour related problems can be found in any society, in different cultures, but the meaning of honour is different from one society to another. Honour could be “defined as a patriarchal expression existing within a culture or community; the entire group is concerned about members’ sexuality and chastity, focussing mainly on the female members”. (Norberg & Tornsen, 2012:857)

According to Niklas Juth, Torbjörn Tännsjö, Sven-Ove Hansson & Niels Lynøe (2013): “If a woman wishing to leave her family encounters difficulties, she can ask the social authorities, and if necessary, the police, for assistance and protection. But this rarely happens. In effect, without help, many of these women are forced to live a double life.” Many women do not dare to ask for the Swedish authority help, forcing themselves to live a double life avoiding troubles. (Juth, Tännsjö, Hansson & Lynøe, 2013:455)

By reading about honour killings in depth, and from my background, I can identify honour happens as a crime when people lose power over other individuals. Honour does not relate to any religion but to power and control.

In the coming sections, I write about how honour related violence is seen by the Swedish Law and the Sharia Law.

## **5.1 Honour killings and the Swedish Law**

According to Mehrdad Darvishpour Pirjo Lahdenperä (2014), the concept of shame still exists in modern Swedish society, and the concepts of shame and whilst honour has “not played a particularly large role in “modern society”, the meaning of honour and shame have “different meaning in the past and the present”.(Darvishpour & Lahdenperä, 2014:17,18) From that, the concept of honour is known but was not on a focus or not that important in Swedish society. After different honour related violence and the murder of Fadime and other Middle Eastern

Muslim girls, attention has been drawn to honour related violence and the concept of shame. In line with that, Darvishpour & Lahdenperä state that honour and shame are based “on contextual, relational, historical and social factors that have affected perceptions of gender, family, honour and glory” (Darvishpour & Lahdenperä, 2014:18) The Swedish Law has no direct honour violence policy, but it was mentioned in gender equality policy that men violence against women must stop (Government office of Sweden,2018).

## **5.2 Honour killings and the Sharia Law**

Sharia law was founded in the sixth and seventh centuries, since then it formed the legal system of Islamic society. Sharia law is based on the Quran, the Islamic Holy book. The Quran according to Muslims is God’s word which every Muslim should follow. Muslims follow Sharia law and all the concepts in Quran. (Samuelsson, 1999:135) Sharia Law is important to many Muslims in the Swedish society. For them, it is the God’s words that they must follow.

In line with that, Mashhour states that Sharia is “an Arabic word that means the Path to be followed” and the “primary source to the Islamic law is the Quran”. (Mashhour,2005:565). Hisham Abu-Raiya states that “Islam is deeply embedded in the lives of many Muslims” (Abu-Raiya, 684).

Amira Mashhour added, “1 billion Muslims around the world share some common values, beliefs, and codes of ethics, their socioeconomic, political, and cultural realities vary considerably”. (Mashhour, 2005:564) Many of the Middle Eastern Muslim families in Sweden hold their religious beliefs, sharing them with their children and families. An example of that is children who are compelled to wear vail at an early age in Swedish schools. This example is discussed in many journals, articles, and studies. Many of the young Muslim girls in Sweden are also forbidden by their families to swim at schools. Many Young Muslim girls fear their family’s reaction and judgment in practising their rights in Swedish society.

In addition, Darvishpour and Lahdenperä states that the Minister of Education Jan Björklund, and the former Minister of Integration Nyamko Sabuni mentioned in the article *End exemptions from school sex education* the following: “Primarily, these (honour-related problems at schools) concern girls who grow up in families with strong “honour traditions”. In these groups, women’s freedom is often considered a threat to the family. A girl will be

subordinated, as this is seen as what is considered best for the family; the men's, or the group's, "honour" is based on the girls' sexual behaviour. To control their daughters, some parents do not want them to participate in certain school activities, for example, gym class, swimming, or sex education. Sometimes they may not be allowed to attend class trips or parties. The girls' lives may be strictly controlled and violating family rules may lead to harsh punishments including tighter restrictions, threats and, worst of all, violence. (DN, 2009- 05-31) From an intercultural perspective, the issue of "honour-related family" may involve families with a variety of religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds". (Darvishpour & Lahdenperä 2014:32) I agree that honour related believe is a mixture of religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds where that mixture is the basic for the traditions that people at the society follow.

I write here an example which is similar to the paragraph above. I was visiting my friend who moved from Iraq a long time ago, at her home, I met her daughter who was ten years old. When I was asking the girl about the school, she told me that she is started a swimming course, then she told me that her mother does not allow her to change her clothes and shower with her class. I was curious to ask the mother why does not the girl shower and change as everyone else at the swimming pool. The mother then asked the girl to answer me, the little girl said it is Haram, which means forbidden. Her mother said, "that's my girl, she knows what is forbidden and why is it forbidden". I was surprised that the girl who was born in Sweden is forced to practice issues that her parents believe. Kids at early age do not know much about religion, rather than they follow their parents if they believe in religion. From that, religion could be power rather than peace in many cases. Religious norms, therefore, are the power that control individuals in life, formulating the way of living, presenting the acceptable and the forbidden issues in a long term in life.

Sharia Law, as a result, is a legal system to Muslims, and it is used in the society in everyday life. Sharia Law and Swedish law are different. Sharia law agrees that men are superior to women and Swedish law agrees that gender equality is basic in all life situations, such as equality at home, at work, as a parent are priority and not a choice. Women in Sweden are born equal to men and practice their equality in their society, while Middle Eastern women were born in a society where men are worth two women, that men support women economically and control her actions in life. By that, some Middle Eastern women do not know their right rather than obeying to their men who by law are superior on them.

Two different laws are practised in two different societies and cultures. The citizens in nature follow their society's rules, traditions, and law. Thus, many individuals who move from

the Arabic countries to Sweden are still following their society's law which on the other hand, does not promote human rights law. According to Mehrdad Darvishpour and Pirjo Lahdenperä in some societies "rules and norms can result in honourable or respectable behaviour, whereas aberrant behaviour can result in shame and loss of honour". (Darvishpour & Lahdenperä,2014:19)

In many countries, but not in Sweden, honour crimes still have "judicial system that lenient to perpetrators of `honour`-based crimes". (Westmarland,2015:75) From that, there are many countries supporting honour crimes killers. From an interview I did, all interviewee agree that honour killings are normal set in the societies they came from, where men chose to kill and punish their daughters for different reasons, and rumours is one of them.

## 6. Analysis

### 6.1 What are Rumours and the Link to Shame and Guilt?

According to Collins dictionary rumour is “a story or piece of information that may or not be true, but that people are talking about” (Collins, 2020). Rumour has many synonyms one of them is gossip.

Amani Awaad in her article *Gossip, scandal, shame, and honour killing: a case for social constructionism and hegemonic discourse*, said that gossip is a tool which has functions, and it is the: “center of a family’s code of honour. Once shame threatens the family’s honour, it becomes a concern of the entire community and not just the family” also “gossip is a tool used by communities’ members to spread the unpleasant reality or truth that a certain family’s honour has been tarnished, and therefore a family’s social and prestigious status is in danger” (Awaad,2001:45).

Awaad discussed how the role of the cultural factor gossip “plays in legitimizing and perpetrating the violence of honor killing”. (Awaad, 2001: 39) Honour killings, on the other hand, happen when “a male family member” believes that the shame was brought to their family. The honour killing thus takes place when the same person loses control (Awaad, 2001:40). Similarly, Wikan mentioned that the factor of tradition related to honour killings, she called it the “silent factor” which “often shared in certain regions, regardless of religion” (Wikan,2008:78). Awaad clarified that “the family is pressured through the continuation of gossip to take the necessary steps to purify or "purge" its honor. This results in restoring the family's social standing in the neighbourhood and the community” (Awaad,2001:45).

Shame has different values to different people; it also does not exist in many Middle Eastern families. Middle Eastern Muslim families fear shame which is connected to their social status in any society they live in. For example, when I have moved to Sweden, I wanted to understand the meaning of shame in depth. I started to examine how people think through conversations. I took the chance to talk to people who are Muslims and come from the Middle East via my work as integration supervisor. I found out that many men compared to women have the same definition of shame. Shame is an important term to be aware of. The conversations summaries that shame is connected to the family honour. Family traditions are

important to follow and the shame is not accepted. Some Middle Eastern women, thus, would like to change their lives by adopting the Swedish traditions, but, going out of their traditions can be counted as a shame, and practicing the Swedish way of living can cause to honour violence or killing. I agree with Wikan that honour killings are linked to tradition and culture. (Wikan,2008:87)

However, Awaad added, that the roots of honour killings belong back to the “pastoral societies of the Middle East”, these societies were “centered on the power and the privilege of the family that is linked to its chances and opportunity to access important contested societal resources.” Honour killings, also “exist in the Modern Middle East” societies, additionally, it is not related to Islam rather than it is a “cultural practice”. (Awaad, 2001:40,41).

According to Unni Wikan

*in many regions of the world, you can find communities where insult, humiliation, and shame are central ideas and common actual experiences. In some places, shame is too weak a word. Dishonor is the demon, the ultimate disgrace, the point of no return—except if you act to avenge your honor. (Wikan,2008:3)*

Shame in the Middle East is connected to sexuality. The Islamic religion is based on the Sharia Law which is a dictionary to Muslims. In Sharia Law there are many forbidden and acceptable rules. For example, marriage in Islam can only be with someone of a different gender, by that, only a man can be married to a woman, but same gender marriage is unacceptable. Outside relations are forbidden in Islam, and those who practice outside relations are called Zani and Zania who should be judged by Sharia Law. Many women in the Middle East live under patriarchal power, holding old traditions, and religious rules firm. In such societies, there is no choice for women but force and obedience. According to the Quran, the Islamic book, in Al Noor:

*The [unmarried] woman or [unmarried] man found guilty of sexual intercourse - lash each one of them with a hundred lashes, and do not be taken by pity for them in the religion of Allah, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a group of the believers witness their punishment. (Quran, 24:2)*

The unaccepted relations bring shame to the family, in that case, the family tries to regain that honour, and in many cases the violence ends to a murder. The Middle Eastern culture is a masculine culture where the forbidden things are judged differently according to gender.

For example, in the society where I was born, sex was not allowed before marriage for females and that was connected to virginity. People in that society talk about girls who are in relationships. Rumours in that case could affect many things, future marriages, friendships, and family relations. Thus, honour in that case “men’s honor depended to a large extent on the sexual behaviour of women”. (Wikan, 2008:49)

Guilt, on the other hand, the feeling after getting ashamed. Shame and guilt are connected to each other.

From Fadime’s case, her relationship to Patrick was unacceptable in her family’s religion, Islam, by that, Fadime’s family did not accept the outside marriage relationship and asked her to leave her boyfriend. Fadime’s family could not accept the Swedish way of living and judged her to death because of the shame that came on her family. That shame does not exist in the Swedish society rather in the Middle Eastern society.

From the interviews I did, the third interviewee Rd proved by the last example, that rumours matter and the victims could be men or women. In that example, a guy was killed by the girl’s family. According to Lunneborg, on the same example that the interviewee has mentioned, that six persons were judged in Ramin Scherzaj case of honour killing. (Lunneborg, 2017)

From above, shame is connected to women and her sexual actions. Sexuality thus is connected to “purity” and Middle Eastern women are controlled by their society. If such rumours spread in society, women, in that case, are guilty and men use violence to take away the shame from the society. (Awaad, 2001). Awaad has summarised many important issues in her article, presenting the link between rumours and honour killings, and explains why such actions happen. That proves that rumours can be classified as an intersection of honour violence and the main reason for the killings in such societies.

## **6.2 Rumours as an Intersection of Honour Violence**

*Her relationship was perfect, but she was not married to the person that she shared life with. Like many partners in Sweden, they lived together, and they do not have to be married. They completed each other in many ways. Wisdom, care, music, dance, joy, laughter, calmness, and loyalty were the keys to their relationship. Her family are Muslims, and she knows that they*

*would not accept her relationship. She moved far away, to enjoy the small things in life, with a rejection of the old traditions, religion, and the masculine society. She chose life, joy, happiness and him. (A personal example)*

Honour violence has different intersections as I mentioned before in my last thesis on women's bodies and men's honour (Al. 2017). The intersections of honour are the interactions or reasons that lead to honour such as outside marriage relationships, virginity, rape, homosexuality, and now I explore rumours as an intersection of honour. To briefly explain how intersections can lead to honour violence.

However, extra-marital relationships are not accepted in Islam, and it is clearly proved in the Quran. Muslims believe in God. According to Abu-Raiya:

*Islamic beliefs there is one, unique, unmatched God, who has neither son nor partner, and none has the right to be worshipped but Him alone. He is the true God, and every other deity is false. He has the most significant names and sublime perfect attributes. No one shares His divinity or His attributes. (Ibrahim, 1997, p. 45)" (Abu-Raiya,2013:682)*

Muslim believers, therefore, follow the Quranic statements and practice them in life. Those who do not follow the Islamic religion can be punished by the Islamic Sharia law or their family members.

Virginity, on the other hand, is related to the family honour, with a belief that every female should be a virgin, who did not practice sex before marriage. To exemplify, Nawal AL-Saadawi (1990) mentioned in her introduction a story on honour and virginity from her career as a doctor in Egypt, she wrote: that on one day she was sitting and thinking to close the clinic while a young woman entered the door, and she was not alone, but her husband was with her, he asked Nawal to check up his wife. Nawal asked the young woman what was the problem? The young woman looked at Nawal with sad eyes and did not answer, while her man said with a strange voice, that they got married last night, but he found out that she was not a virgin. The doctor Nawal tried to explain that not all women bleed while first sex and explained more to him about that. Al-Saadawi wrote that she could not forget the young woman's sad eyes. She also, by explaining to the husband about the situation, she saved the young woman life. (Al-Saadawi, 1990:7) Al-Sadaawi added that many women were killed because of virginity and honour, an example on that, year 1972 in Iraq, wrote an Iraqi Doctor Wassfi Mohammed, that he was asked in the court to check a young woman and give a report to her family. The husband

blamed the bride that she was not a virgin because he did not see the blood drops. After checking the bride, the doctor said that she practised sex before marriage. The rumours went to her male cousins who killed her directly. After her death, the body was sent to the autopsy where they checked that she was a virgin, and the doctors report was not correct. (Al-Sadaawi, 1990:19)

Furthermore, Quran states:

*We also sent Lut: He said to his people: "Do you commit lewdness such as no people in creation (ever) committed before you? For ye practice your lusts on men in preference to women: ye are indeed a people transgressing beyond bounds."* (Qur'an 7:80-81)

From that, being a homosexual is not accepted in Quran, and it is punished to death in many Muslim countries. Sexuality is the main reason for the honour violence. Furthermore, I found it important to focus on rumours as an intersection in this paper and explain how it could lead to honour violence exactly as the other intersections. Rumours is the conversation that is told by one person to another. Conversations usually interrupted differently and sometimes people misunderstood conversations and continue telling others about them. If the conversation summarised differently and goes through people to others, it could be dangerous to many Muslim women. How is that possible? I can explain here, let's take an example, Laila lives in Sweden, her family are Muslim believers who do not accept the Swedish way, simply, they do not accept that their daughter who is 18 years old who has in a relationship. Non-marital relationships are forbidden in their religion and traditions. At the same time, Laila's neighbour was happy to hear that Laila has a girlfriend. While drinking coffee, the neighbour told her friend about Laila's news. In that case, the conversation went from that friend to Laila's mother. The positive conversation, which was told by one to another, caused a problem to Laila, because her family do not accept that she practices sex, nor being gay. Both, homosexuality, extra marital relationship and of course virginity are the base for honour. Laila chose to run away with her girlfriend. She changed her name and did not try to contact her family who could kill her because of honour. As Laila, there are many girls facing such problems daily. Some do run away choosing their life, and others are victims of honour violence. The name I have used here is not the real name, and this story is based in Sweden.

Wikan has also observed the importance of virginity in Oman, one of the Middle Eastern Muslim societies where the groom met the bride for the first time at their marriage day. Their family wanted the proof that the bride was a virgin. Wikan wrote: "after five days, the bride's parents had not been shown a blood-stained handkerchief" they took the bride to be checked.

The bride was a virgin, and that took the shame away. (Wikan, 2008:90). Sharing stories from the real daily life help to understand the concepts of shame, honour, and virginity differently.

Furthermore, Al-Sadaawi states that female and male are not equal in the Middle East. When the female is born, her family warns her not to show her genitals to anyone and parents can punish their daughters if they take their clothes off. She added that Arabic families warn their young daughters not to touch their genitals. (Al-Sadaawi, 1990:31).

*She was young when her mother mentioned about the period. Her mother told her, my daughter, soon or later you will get blood on your underwear when you see the droops, you should know that you became an adult woman, you easily can be pregnant. Women do not get pregnant without marriage, we are Muslims, therefore, with a serious voice, you should take care of yourself. (A personal story)*

At that age, I was a kid, I did not understand what my mother meant with the monthly period and I did not understand how women got pregnant. At the school where I studied, they did not use to teach us about sexuality, all that I knew that I had a different gentle than my brother, but I did not know what it's function. I was scared not to get pregnant, and I did not let anyone to see my genital or even I did not dare to touch it. Holding in mind that I am a Muslim, and I cannot be pregnant without marriage. In line with that, Al-Sadaawi states that how parents raise their children can affect their personalities. (Al-Sadaawi, 1990:41) Forbidden things are mentioned in the Islamic religion, thus, Muslim families follow their religion and raise up their kids on what is accepted and what is not accepted. I am also like many other women who were affected by these issues.

After many years of researching in gender studies, religion, and gender, I have removed the old tradition from the mind with a belief that I own my body and decide over my body, ignoring the cultural and traditional beliefs. Al-Al-Sadaawi (1990) claims that, the Islamic religion or culture are not the main reason of gender differences in the Middle East but the patriarchy. (Al-Sadaawi, 1990:703) I agree with Al-Sadaawi that, patriarchy is the main reason form gender differences in the Middle Eastern society. Men grow up believing that they supposed to control women at their family, and they are not equal at home, at work, or in relationships. Middle Eastern, Muslim women who think differently than her society, who go out of traditions are insecure and are committed to restore her family's honour.

Moreover, Cass Sunstein states that Rumours: "are nearly as old as human history. They impose real damage on individuals and institutions, and they often resist correction. They can

threaten careers, policies, public officials, and sometimes even democracy itself.” (Bernardi et al., 2012:1) In line with that, Bernardi et al. state that rumours “circulate among everyday people” and “are everyday speech and writing acts” (Bernardi et al., 2012:13). Rumours also can be expanded, because the story forms as an element of the stories “ make sense of new stories as soon as they enter the narrative system.” (Bernardi et al., 2012:31) From that, rumours can be expanded, and be told differently through conversation from a person to another.

### **6.2.1 Different Cultures: How Rumours Affect Muslim Women**

According to Anna Lundberg, culture is “a set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterized an institution, organization or group” (Lundberg, 2015).

The Swedish culture is different from the Middle Eastern culture in understanding what Honour means. Honour in English language means “fame or glory” but in Arabic, it is connected to moral actions and what is accepted and not accepted in the society. The meaning is the opposite, different just like black and white, easy and difficult, tall and short, just the opposite. But the meaning differs in religion, as societies and from family to another. Honour is connected to everyday language in the Middle Eastern countries, if someone swear, the person could use two words to be trusted and saying the truth, first to swears by the God, and second, to swears by honour. In Sweden, Swedish people do not swear by God or honour, the difference here, that most of the Middle Eastern countries are religious, but the Swedish society is less religious, where swearing is not that important, people believe each other directly.

During the last years, Sweden has accepted many immigrants who moved to Sweden holding their culture, sharing their traditions, and practicing their way. Swedish society, thus, is a mix of cultures. Culture is a set of traditions, ways, power, and behaviour. According to Giavazzi, Petkov, and Schiantarelli that “some cultural traits certainly go back to the distant past and affect today’s economic and institutional outcomes”. They added:

*Immigrants provide a particularly useful laboratory for the study of the evolution of values and beliefs because, as mentioned above, their cultural attitudes are likely to bear the mark of the country from which they, their parents or their grandparents emigrated (Giavazzi, Petkov, and Schiantarelli,2014:2,3).*

From that, culture is something grows up with the person, it is a way of behaviour, it is the food that the people eat, it is the songs that they share at their holidays and the thoughts that they have on the mind and, it is the law they follow. Culture is the base norms that exist in societies, it can be developed, changed, and it is different in different countries.

Furthermore, Michaud states that honour is a kind of power which is an act “of violence carried out in the name of honor may always ultimately be seen as moves in the struggle for power and dominance” (Michaud ,1975: 179). That, the power of honour forces family members to practice violence against victim women staffing their pride. Connecting honour to culture is possible, because culture as I mentioned is a set of norms, traditions that follow each other as a base for a society. Honour on the other hand is as a power, is a reaction against an action that does not belong to a certain society. Therefore, when Muslim immigrant women react differently than what their families used to do at their societies, their men who are struggling for power react differently using violence as a solution.

More than that, rumours as an intersection of honour, affect some Muslim women. Rumours are the stories which are mostly about behaviour or relationships, in other words it is about what is acceptable and unacceptable at the Middle eastern society. Women sexuality is the main reason for the shame. Shame, on the other hand, according to the Middle Eastern traditions can be removed by violence. By that, the victims are punished, and their society and men become free from shame that rumours caused.

It is important to understand what shame means, what rumours can affect and how honour is important in some cultures. According to Beckford, culture and identity are important to be understood in studying honour killings cases in terms to understand how culture affects religious identities. (Beckford, 2003:166) Understanding different cultures and religion will make it easier to Swedish social workers, police, schools, and psychologists to understand honour problems. That will also give the understanding of the individual identity which is based on different traditions, cultures, and religion. That will finally limit honour killings at an early stage of the problem. Many women on the other hand, do not dare to say their problems fearing home discussions and violence. Violence, thus, has different types and some of them could be gender violence, religious violence, and honour violence.

Additionally, immigrant Middle Eastern Muslim women who live in Sweden should share their stories, describe more about their cultural, religious behaviour, share their thoughts with Swedes at work, at school, or anywhere in the Swedish society. Conversations and stories

help the Swedish society to understand the norms, to help if the situation needs help and to learn about cultures and societies. Swedish society has opened the door to many immigrants, aiming for a better population but a peaceful society. I end this part with a personal story which describes how culture differs.

*Around the table, they sing happily. She did not understand the words they were singing, but she felt that they were happy and just happy. Holding the small glasses up cheering for life and health. They gave the first dish to the youngest kid who took the spoon, took the food, and passed the plate to the next kid, the plate ended at the same place, as well as the other dishes. She was then new at this family. She looked carefully to learn exactly all the moves. She holds the small glass, until they finished singing, smiled, looked at their eyes, cheered and drunk. She also learned how to eat Swedish food, the fish, the meatballs, and the different small dishes. She liked to try, and she was curious to learn and to develop her Swedish attitude. When she was young, or at home, the food was different, it smells and tastes different. Even the amount was more. In the Middle East, or at her family, different dishes were served but in much more amount, it is a cultural thing to prepare more than the family eat. (A personal story)*

Food and behaviour are culture for me. The Swedish attitude and food differ from the Middle Eastern. For example, in the Middle East, people pray before eating, and do not talk, while in Sweden, people talk, sing, and share happiness around the table. Each person though, choose to keep the cultural behaviours from the societies that person live in, I choose in that case, to hold both the Swedish cultural attitudes, that helped me integrate in Swedish society, and I also chose to keep the traditional Arabic food, which remind me of home. More than that, I understood that religion is what we choose to believe and is how to communicate with God. Religion is freedom and not force. Where I was born religion is the family choice, and belief.

## **6.2.2 Islamic Religion and Gender Equality**

Women were mentioned in Quran many times, but responsibility, work, and power were referred to men.

Amira Mashhour (2005) asked the question “Gender equality and Islamic law: could there be a common Ground?” the question was asked by many scholars during the last years. (Mashhour,2005:563) The book mentioned how gender differences exist in Islamic Sharia law,

the differences are based on the Men's right to divorce, Mashhour said "In the Talaq al bidaa divorce, the husband may pronounce the three formula" by that, only the man has the right to divorce and "delegated this right to her" (Mashhour, 2005:573,574). Another issue that shows how men have power over women in Sharia Law is the House of Obedience, where the wife can be judged to stay at an apartment that her husband chooses. If she disobeys her husband, for example, if she "refuses to stop working" or leaves her house without the husband's permission. (Mashhour, 2005:581). From the statements in Quran, women cannot be divorced if their men will not pronounce the divorce sentence, women also are supposed to obey their men, thus, women in Islam are superior and unequal to men. Muslim men who follow the Quran and follow the Sharia Law believe that women are always superior to men. That could be a clash when Middle Eastern women move in with their families in Sweden and try to learn the Swedish law, get knowledge about human rights and women's rights in society. Many Muslim women in Sweden try to discuss gender equality with their husbands some men listen to their wives while others refuse listening believing that men are not equal to women following the statements in Quran. Those who do not believe in gender equality are the same who listen to rumours and punish their wives, daughters, or sisters.

To exemplify, here I present a story I was told by Noor. Noor is a Muslim woman who lives in Europe, and still fighting for her rights.

*Ignorance. He ignores her and her words. She became tired. She tried a lot, and she spoke a lot, but he did not listen to her words. Calling gender equality, a European way of washing his wife's brain. All he wanted her to do is to cook, to prepare his clothes, to take care of her kids, and obey his sexual needs. She started to study, she started to read, she learned, she worked, and she met new people. He wanted to stop her from studying, and from working, but he could not. She became stronger with her knowledge, she became strong speaking about the European law, about gender equality and her rights at home. He ignored what she said, he did not listen and told her not to speak. He shouted, she became tired, she did not talk, she wants to save her little family, she wanted to save the kids. She is fighting for her rights. She stopped talking. She is silent in the storm. She just continues her life. (Noor, 39 years old)*

In this story, Noor is a relative, during many conversations via the phone, I summarised her story and asked her to use it for this paper. Noor is a person who is fighting for her everyday life, using religion, using the law, using everything to continue living with a true Muslim man. That man, she chose at an early age of life. She cannot leave her husband, because her family

believe that women cannot separate and live alone with their children. She could choose to hide her identity and go far away from her family, but something is stopping her, even though she knows that she can. Many Muslim women are afraid to leave their families, fearing the shame and avoiding rumours which brings honour to their families. In many stories of honour related violence, the perpetrators are husbands, brothers, fathers, or male cousins. Men, therefore, have the role to protect their women at the Muslim family. A part of man's role according to Darvishpour & Lahdenperä "is to "protect", "monitor" or, more specifically, control his daughter's, his wife's and/or his sister's sexuality from "male strangers" (Darvishpour & Lahdenperä ,2014:11).

Honour related violence in such cases affects women who chose to go away from obedience, from traditions choosing their own and their kids' lives. In addition, "men's honour is also closely linked to the females' expected sexual virtue" (Darvishpour & Lahdenperä,2014:13).

## 7. Discussion and Conclusions

### 7.1 The Research Results in Three Themes

In this section I present the results of my study in three themes, Religion and Honour, Gender and Honour, and Rumours and the Side Effects. The three themes will answer the research questions.

#### 7.1.1 Theme One: Religion and Honour

Here, I answer the first question, *is there a link between religion, and honour killings?* And, *if there is a link, what factors play a role in establishing this link?*

In both Sorya M and Fadime's cases, honour was the main reason for the killing. Fadime and Sorya were born Muslims. Islam is based on Sharia law, which is the Islamic Law, and its source is the Quran "which Muslims believe to be God's words" (Mashhour, 2005:565).

According to Pavlovich Pavel (2010), stoning was "confessed to adultery before the prophet Muhammed" (Pavl, 2010:1). Payl also has summarised the historical roots of stoning penalty in Islam in four points:

1. Muhammad stoned adulterous persons on numerous occasions (Muslim authors, Sprenger).
2. Muhammad was not aware of the stoning penalty (Caetani; Hirschfeld).
3. The stoning penalty was introduced by 'Umar b. al-Khattāb (Nöldeke, Hirschfeld).
4. The Mā'iz b. Mālik tradition is an old Iraqi doctrine derived by analogy (qiyās). It spread to the Hijaz before the generation of Mālik (Schacht; Burton in a more general context)." (Payal,2010:7)

Payl proved that stoning as a penalty was found before Islam. Sorya's M example was based on the penalty of stoning in the Iranian Muslim society. The penalty of stoning was an old regulation in Iran, "when it comes to adultery of a married man or woman (*zena-ye-mohsaneh*), quite surprisingly, contrary to the old Code, this chapter of the Code is silent and makes no provision in this regard." (Nayyeri,2012) From that, the penalty of stoning existed in the Iranian society.

According to Wikan (2008), “honor killing is a matter of tradition rather than religion.” (Wikan, 2008: 70) Wikan added that many women in Germany, Israel, Palestine, and Pakistan are “murdered for reasons of honour”; these women are not only Muslims but belong to different religions. (Wikan, 2008:80)

On the other hand, Nicole Westmarland (2015) states that honour-based violence is “committed by parents as well as family members.” She added “globally around 5,000 women per annum may be killed in the name of honour.” (Westmarland, 2015:73)

It can be concluded that, honour killings are not linked to religion, but religious practices could be a reason for honour related violence. Religious practices are the basis for many Middle Eastern traditions.

As a problem, honour killings should be stopped, and the new generation should not follow the old tradition. Information about human rights must be shared at the schools and reinforced. Religion should spread love, peace, and equality in all societies. Policies must be stronger to stop all honour actions and avoid honour related violence, and to stop those who kill victims in name of honour and religion.

### **7.1.2 Theme Two: Gender and Honour**

Here I answer the second question, *is gender playing a role in honor killing, if so, how can this link be articulated?*

The literature study explored that there is a link between gender and the concept of honour. Consequently, this question draws attention to gender differences in Muslim Middle Eastern families and their social practices, and how honour is seen through women’s sexuality.

Quran states: “Women are to lower their gaze around men, so they do not look them in the eye” (Quran 2020: 24:31) and:

*Men are in charge of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other ... So good women are obedient ... And those you fear may be rebellious, admonish them... and beat them; they then obey you, look not a way against them.*  
(Quran 2020: 4:34)

As a result of the Quranic statements, women are not equal to men in Islam.

However, some families such as Fadime's and Soraya's, see women as subjects who are not equal to men in the same family. Thus, men in the same family make decisions about the women's lives. Fadime for example, chose her life but her father did not accept it. The father and the brother threatened Fadime with death and then killed her in the belief that their honour would be regained with her death. On the other hand, Soraya did not have choice to say anything about the gossip about her in society, her husband wanted to take action. The men in the patriarchal society decided to kill Soraya, who was unable to defend herself and was stoned to death.

Gender equality is less prominent in the Middle East compared to Sweden. Fadime's case states that honour is related to gender and female sexuality, which is controlled by her father and brother. Fadime was killed because she was in a non-marital relationship with Patrik, who was Swedish and not Islamic. Gender, therefore, is an intersection of honour. Gender differences is a reality in male dominated societies. The Middle Eastern society is male dominated, and Sharia law and Islamic religion grant men power over women in their family. Likewise, Soraya M's case shows that honour is related to gender and female sexuality, as such, women cannot be friends with men in Iranian society. Soraya was killed because she was alone at her neighbour's house. That cost her life. Soraya, was stoned first by her sons, her husband and then the men from her village. Soraya was a victim, like Fadime, both were killed by their families. Honour in both cases is related to the role of gender, to the social practices, to female sexuality and men's power over women in the same family. Honour related killings mainly impact women, with a focus that they are not equal to men, who feel themselves responsible for women's actions, reactions, and life.

But while reading the result you might ask why Muslim men have power over their wives and daughters? And why do women accept inequality and gender differences in their family and society?

Here, I can present what Quran states, and I have presented before that Quran is the main book for the Muslim family and the base for the Sharia Law, that the Middle Eastern Muslim families follow. Quran states that:

*Men are the maintainers of women because Allah has made some of them to excel others and because they spend out of their property; the good women are therefore obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded. (Quran,4:34)*

Therefore, Muslim men who follow Quran and Sharia law believe that they are not equal to women in their society and family. Muslim men, thus, suppose that helping, offering food, money and good life to their wives and daughters, is adequate and that Muslim women should obey their men. That indicates that gender equality does not exist in some Middle Eastern Muslim families.

The literature study shows that Fadime Sahindal fought for her rights as an individual, and for gender equality at her family. Fadime raised her voice against her father, but she could not stop him from killing her. Fadime spoke and introduced honour violence to the Swedish parliament, her voice was raised to reach gender equality for her and many Middle Eastern Muslim women victims. Fadime has died but her voice is still alive, her voice is supporting all Muslim victim women at the Swedish society. As discussed, religious norms affected Fadime and Sorya's lives. Honour related violence happened in both cases by men from the same family, who lost control over their women. Male control over women is mentioned in Quran, and losing control brought shame to these families. They decided to kill Fadime and Sorya, as like many other Muslim women victims, to remove that shame from their families and to stop the rumours which contributed to such murders.

### **7.1.3 Theme Three: Rumours and their Side Effects**

Here, I answer question 3: *How the rumours matter in honour in both cases?*

This question highlights the impact of rumours as a social practice. Rumours exist in both societies, the Swedish as the Middle Eastern, but there are differences. The impact of rumours in Middle Eastern women can end in death. However, Fadime's family did not accept the rumours spread in society and were ashamed of how people who share the same beliefs, traditions, religion, and ethnicity would think. Therefore, both the brother and the father threatened Fadime with death. Likewise, Soraya's man who went out with the rumours about his wife knew that the Iranian religious society which follows the Quran which says that the unfaithful person must be judged:

*The [unmarried] woman or [unmarried] man found guilty of sexual intercourse - lash each one of them with a hundred lashes, and do not be taken by pity for them in the religion of Allah, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a group of the believers witness their punishment. (Quran,24:2)*

From that, the punishment is on both gender male and female. The Quran does not mention stoning. Therefore, stoning is a practice that the patriarchal society uses against women.

Furthermore, non-Muslim societies read about stoning in books, and it is also hard to imagine that stoning exists nowadays. Stories like Soraya's must be shared and known in Western societies, such stories could avoid future honour killings, especially in Sweden, where many Middle Eastern live. Therefore, education about honour violence and social practices are important to be taught to social care staff, adult schools, and school nurses in Swedish society.

The examples show that rumours have side effects on Middle Eastern women, and it can cost their lives. No matter where Middle Eastern women live, the effects can be the same, and honour violence against Middle Eastern women are similar, but less prevalent, in Sweden to Iran, Jordan or Syria for example, where law supports men over women. Swedish law is against honour related violence. Therefore, Swedish society is aiming for gender equality in all terms. According to the Swedish Institute site:

*The overarching Swedish principle for gender equality is that everyone, regardless of gender, has the right to work and support themselves, to balance career and family life, and to live without the fear of abuse or violence. Gender equality implies not only equal distribution between men and women in all domains of society. It is also about the qualitative aspects, ensuring that the knowledge and experience of both men and women are used to promote progress in all aspects of society. (Swedish institute,2020)*

From that, Sweden sees everyone equal and all individuals have the right to work, study, and live in peace.

Furthermore, the problem that I found in the literature I have read, is that the intersection of rumours it was not discussed. What I found between the lines, and according to my experience and understanding of the Muslim Middle Eastern culture, is that rumours can be a main reason for honour-related violence. The three voices of my interviewees supported my experience on rumours, that Muslim Middle Eastern culture has a tradition and religious rules to be followed. All the interviewees mentioned that rumours are not accepted by men in Middle Eastern Muslim families regardless of whether they live in the Middle East or Sweden. The stories that were mentioned at the interviews explained how some Muslim men see women as subjects and inferior.

Furthermore, as rumours are an issue that cause honour violence and killings, they are an intersection of honour violence and killings. Whilst rumours for example, exist in Swedish society, the impact is different.

## **7.2 Conclusions**

Honour related violence is a type of violence against mostly women. It exists in Sweden as well in the Middle East. Lindstedt Cronberg (2005a) refers to honour killing as the murder of a female (or male) relative carried out in order to restore the honour of the family, relative or group. The culturally determined explanatory model focuses on cultural differences and clashes between Swedish and non-Swedish groups in order to explain acts of conflict and violence in Sweden within families from a different ethnic background (Wikan, 2004; Schlytter, 2002; Sjögren, 2006).

From the findings, male control over women's behaviour and actions explain that gender is unequal in the Islamic religion and women are inferior to men. On the other hand, rumours as an intersection of honour have side effects, or impacts, on Muslim women who originally come from the Middle East, and rumours are connected to shame. Shame, likely, could cause to honour violence and killings with a belief that honour could wash away shame. Rumours, thus, can be based on women's sexuality which can bring shame to her family and relatives and in some cases to her society, as the paper found in Soraya's M case.

Honour killing in both cases the paper presented, were practiced on Muslim Middle Eastern women by their father or husband. Victims in both cases were punished to death by their families, Fadime was shot to death and Sorya was stoned to death. Changing place from Kurdistan to Sweden did not change Fadime's family traditions and beliefs. Honour killings are linked to gender, but not to religion because honour killings are not mentioned in Quran. Gender differences, on the other hand, are clear in Sharia Law and Quranic statements. Therefore, men in the Middle Eastern "religious and traditional" families take the responsibility by supporting their women and providing their needs (Beckford,2003:2). Muslim women, on the other hand, and according to Quran, should obey their men. The literature study, therefore, finds that the base for honour is linked to gender differences, and rumours are the main reason cause of shame in these cases. When Middle Eastern families move to Sweden, they face cultural differences

and the most important - and unacceptable to some Muslim Middle Eastern men who follow the Sharia Law – is that women are independent in Swedish society. Andersson & Lundberg (2000) reject the theory that violence within immigrant families is a culturally determined phenomenon, as they believe it is problematic to explain this as primarily caused by cultural differences. They argue that abusive men do not solely come from countries where women have a more subordinate position in society and in their families than they do in Sweden. Their research shows that the most extensive forms of violence against women are carried out by Swedish and non-Swedish men who have “imported” their wives.” (Darvishpour & Lahdenperä, 2014:21)

More than that, the problem could be solved in Sweden at least if gender equality is taught at schools at an early age, where everyone understands the importance of gender equality, where everyone is equal in the classroom, at home, at work and in all the places.

From all above and according to Darvishpour & Lahdenperä, “it is therefore important to include how different gender roles are developed and the presence they have in different societies, as well as understanding how issues such as “honour-related problems” come about, i.e. understanding what this means and how this is talked about – how the discourse is portrayed.” (Darvishpour & Lahdenperä, 2014:7)

According to the three interviews, honour related violence and killings are linked to traditions, religious norms, but not religion. Rumours can affect honour, and accordingly rumours can be categorised as an intersection of honour killings. Gender on the other hand, plays a role in honour killings, because women are more affected than men in Middle East society. I observed that Fadime was conscious about her rights, fought for her legal rights and shared her voice and knowledge about honour with everyone in Sweden. Whilst Sorya M, on the other hand, was unaware of her rights because she lived in a patriarchal society, where men have power over women. Women’s rights play a big role in Swedish society, while in Iran gender differences are more apparent in society. Rumours should be mentioned in books about honour related violence, and understood as a norm in the Swedish society, which is a multicultural society. Therefore, domestic violence can cause honour related crimes, which started to take place more in Sweden “at the end of the 20th century” (Darvishpour & Lahdenperä 2014:10). From that, further studies could be useful to discover how different religions deal with honour related violence, with a specific focus on the intersection of rumours and gender. Additionally, a document analysis on Nawal Al-Sadawi books will be useful for

further studies as she focuses on Middle Eastern traditions, religion, and gender differences. That will help to understand in detail how gender inequality exists in the Middle Eastern societies and how it affects Muslim women.

Honour related violence should be stopped in all societies, but especially in Sweden which values gender equality. Also, the religious power upon Muslim women who live in the Swedish society should disappear, starting at their homes. Hence, Muslim Women at the Swedish society should report all kinds of violence and protect themselves from honour related violence. Muslim women should believe that they are equal to men in life, leaving behind men's status and privilege. Islamic religion, thus, is a prominent part of Muslim life, with a balance between peace and conflict. The conflict is based on gender differences in the Quran. All in all, Islamic religion aims to create peace but some issues such as gender inequality could be changed and updated to reflect modern life and to achieve peace in Islam.

It is therefore suggested that Sharia Law should be updated to reflect modern societies. Relationships, therefore, should not be linked to religion. Muslim women, wherever they live, should have the right to live with partners or get married to partners from different religions.

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# Appendix

## Interview and answers in full

Interview's language is Arabic, and I translated it into English.

**The Question:** What do you think about rumours and does it relate to honour killings?

### Interviewee 1- S (Female, Muslim, a student)

**S:** *Al Salmo Alikum* (Greeting in Islam) my name is S and 28<sup>th</sup> years old. I am Palestinian and I live ten years in Sweden. I will talk about gossip or *alnamema* (gossip in Arabic), and the problems that could affect especially women at our societies. Rumours cause many problems and those who talks about others do not care, they just want to do something funny at their empty time. The person who talks about girls does not know that he could end their lives Some people use rumours as a joke, but rumours could cause honour killings. Sometimes some like to speak about young girls and their relationships. Sometimes the talk starts when they see the girl talking with a male classmate. Maybe they talk about their studies, or they are just friends, or maybe they have a relationship, this is a normal way to get to know each other. The traditional way of getting married has disappeared. To talk about someone is a dirty action. As it is said in Quran, when you speak about someone is like if you are eating your brother's skin. It is forbidden in our religion to speak about others, rumours are forbidden. It is unfairness to talk about someone. I think that people do not have the right to talk about each other. In my society men have the power to talk about women. The others, especially families at the same society believe in men. Many men killed their daughters in my society because of rumours. What men witness is the truth in this society. That is controlled in the Middle Eastern way of thinking.

Men give themselves the right to kill their daughters, that was not mentioned in Islam. A father cannot do anything to his daughter, hmm, he should not touch her.

I am wondering if it happened to me and my father does not believe what I say, but he believes his friends, why does that happen?

Umm, yes, it does not mean when I talk to a man that I am a dirty girl, it is my own life that no one should talk about. It is a way of thinking, just that.

Information goes around from one person to another. However, when it comes from the last person maybe they say that this girl is a prostitute. Honour killings could happen then. I do not know what more to say. But generally, I am against rumours and when people used to talk in front of me, I do not accept. What I do not accept to myself, I do not accept to my daughter, sister or any other woman. In the end I wish that everyone stops being interested in rumours. Stop asking why, how and what happened. Some people just want to please themselves by listening to stories. Everyone should take care of themselves and this is a big problem and not an easy one.

I suffered from rumours. (sad voice). A small story became too big and caused a problem to me. I do not want to say details, and I forgive those who gossiped. Honour killings happen in Europe, in the villages or in our counties. It sadly just happens. Men, fathers, or brothers killed their daughters because of rumours. How do they think? How do they think? They lost their family member because some, someone has talked.

Rumours could force some parents to kill their daughters, I do not know what to add, but I am against rumours and I do not accept it. But I wish that rumours will disappear and if anyone sees something do not talk about it, just forgot it. Ya, it's finished (with a sad voice), we cannot change how people think.

### **Interviewee 2 -R (Female, Muslim, a wife)**

**R:** Marhaba. (Hi in Arabic). My name is R, and I am 55 years old. I came from Palestine and I live in Sweden. I want to share my opinion and talk about community issues. Community issues are usually shared in our societies as traditions, and it does not relate to religion. Traditions move on from one generation to another. Honour killings as a community issue is different in one country to another. Honour related violence is connected to the old traditions, and it does not have any relation to religion. Honour is different according to regions, cities, and old villages.

We have people who moved directly from the villages. Such societies are close societies where do not understand what is happening in Europe for example. It is different, people who come from the village are different from those who were born in the city. In the city people are more open, and their traditions are different. People think different.

I am going to talk about rumours and how it affects women in our societies.

In my country as many other Muslim regions it is unacceptable to have a relationship. Relationships are refused in my culture, religion, and traditions. Two people cannot be together without getting married, that is known to everyone. (With a strong confident voice). A Muslim woman cannot live with a man without being married. In Sweden, women and men live together without marriage and I accept that, but I do not choose it to my kids. It is forbidden in the villages as the cities of my country. Relationships between men and women are forbidden in Sharia Law. Not Accepted. (with a determined voice)

Marriage should be announced, announced to everyone. A long time ago in the society I was born in, girls were not allowed to talk to boys. If they talk, they get punished by the family. After many years, girls and boys started to study at the same classes at schools and university. Before they were separated. Life started to change but if a girl chooses to live a guy, I mean as a couple, this is honour. People start to gossip about her, and then she will be killed by the family.

Either they kill her or just leave her with him and ignore her. In that case, her family must announce to the society that she is not their daughter, and she do not belong to them.

Many girls were killed because of rumours, and the Sharia law at my country support father's and son's. They see the crime is resendable. In some Arabic countries' men can be not punished for honour crime.

Honour is important to families, even though we moved to Sweden, which is a European liberal country, we still hold our traditions. Rumours is when people talk about others. They talk mostly about women and relationships, but sometimes they talk about men.

People talk about women who have relationships, it is unaccepted, it is a shame. It is a shame to have a relationship. We should respect the Swedish law and our kids also should share the good part of our traditions respecting the Swedish law. But our traditions are different from the Swedish ones.

The Swedish schools teach our kids to be self-confident and teach them the Swedish law, which they learn and should follow. We should accept because we live here. In our countries the situation is different.

Rumours are linked to honour in many terms. Fathers do not accept if someone talks about their daughters. They become angry and want to protect their daughters and save their shame. Some

try to talk to their daughters and others cannot discuss but use their power. Violence is not a way of protection to me, but it is to many.

I am against all kind of violence because our religion is the religion of peace. Islam taught me how to protect my kids in another way. I talk to them and let them choose in life. I do not accept outside marriage relationships but if they would like to get married, they have to choose their partners. My freedom could be stopped if I hurt someone, and I should not hurt someone. Our kids should learn this and not gossip on others. But they learn this at the school, they respect everyone, and everyone respects them. That what I believe, and I follow. I also decided to not follow what my society taught me. Thank you!

**Interviewee 3- Rd (Female, Muslim, works with Integration)**

This interview was face to face at her office and I recorded it.

**Rd:**

Hmm, I do not want to say my name, but I live in Sweden for 12 years, and I am 48 years old. I came from Iraq. Hmm! I have examples on honour or related to honour and not only based on female. A woman who was divorced was walking on a bridge where she met her ex-husband. A rumour went to her family, that their daughter was meeting her ex-husband.

**Me:** Was it in Sweden?

**Rd:** No, in Iraq.

The family believed that their daughter who has two kids talked to her x-man, that caused a big problem. She did not meet him, but people gossiped about her. That caused a big problem. The wife then did not like him. In the 80s, this well-known family did not believe their daughter but the rumours about her. Hm, she was an adult and has two kids, even though her family did not believe her.

It was a big problem. They started to follow her, and she was feeling bad that her family following her. She was feeling bad because no one trusted and believed her. As a divorced woman, she was living at her family with her kids.

I think she was 34 years old, which means that she is not a teenager. She worked but at that time every divorced woman goes back to her family. The problem took its time, and after three months the family understood that it was a gossip. She became depressed and mentally ill.

**Me:** What is the relationship between rumours and honour?

**Rd:** it was a taboo if a divorced woman meets her x-man, and it was related to honour. It was important that her father who take care of her, even at the court, when they were divorced, the father took the kids and went to court but not her. She could not see him even at the court. I do not even understand how they connect this situation to honour, but it is related to honour.

Another example on rumours, this story based in Sweden, that an Iraqi family heard from other people who came from Iraq that their daughter who was divorced is dating a man. The family who moved to Sweden a long time ago, listened to their daughter and the explanation she said, by that, I was surprised that nothing happened to the daughter. I think, hmm, or maybe because her father lives in Sweden for 20 years. He is adapting to the Swedish society and listen to his daughter but not the rumours. I was surprised by his reaction. I was happy to see such a brave father. In Iraq the father will not behave so. That person tried to listen to his daughter first, the rumours and analyse the truth. That person was not as the other Iraqi men, he was different. But if he were living in Iraq, I am sure he would not behave the same as he behaved in Sweden.

A girl was forced to stay at home for a while and after a few weeks and fearing another problem the family decided to let their daughter going to school, but they follow her daily. She was a teenage then. When she became eighteen years old, she run away, and they did not find her, even they were searching hard. The family have reported to the police that their daughter was disappeared. The police on the other hand, found the daughter and told the family that she decided not to go back to you because of the violence that she faces at her family. In Sweden, you know, eighteen years old can decide.

Before ten years, I do not know all the details, but a man has shared his and his ex-girlfriend's picture on social media that he was kissing her. His ex-girlfriend is married today with another man. People who share the same culture started to talk about the girl. Her husband and brothers killed her ex-boyfriend because of their family shame and honour. That shame is based on the rumours and the family's name at their community. The Arabic society believe in rumours, and it causes to honour violence. Many honour violence situations were caused to physical and psychological illness. Thank you!