An Exploration of the Experiences of Izzat and Domestic Abuse Held by South Asian Women.

1. Introduction

Honour (Izzat) is a family’s respect within the South Asian community. It is seen as a code of conduct, particularly for women (Wellock, 2010).

As a ‘Cultural law’, it requires individuals to behave in a manner which does not bring shame (sharam) to themselves, their family and the South Asian community as a whole (Pearl, 2012).

Women can make or destroy one’s family honour (Izzat) and must avoid bringing shame upon their family and community.

Serious consequences may occur when women do not conform to social rules (Gill, 2004).

Honour Based Abuse (HBA) are actions committed towards women who are seen to breach social rules, thus bringing shame to one’s family and community (EACH, 2009).

It serves as a means to restore a family’s Izzat and can involve mutilations, beatings, forced marriages and honour killings.

HBA encapsulates physical, sexual and psychological abuse perpetrated by partners, parents, siblings and the extended family.

2. Aim:

This project is concerned with the experiences of South Asian Women who have lived with Honour Based Abuse (HBA). It will focus, in particular, on what role honour (Izzat) may play within the domestic abuse of South Asian Women (SAW).

3. Method:

Research Design: Qualitative Approach.
Epistemology: Phenomenological Stance.
Data Analysis: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

IPA explores in detail how the person makes sense of their individual and social world (Smith and Osborn, 2008; Smith, 2011).

An IPA approach will be used due to its emphasis and value for the thorough analysis of a participant’s personal account (Smith, 2011).

Ethical Approval: Granted by the Departmental Ethics Committee of City University London.

One to one semi structured interviews will be conducted with eight women living in the UK, who identify themselves as South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, or Bangladeshi).

Participants will be presented with a series of questions to explore their experiences of Izzat and domestic abuse, to gain information about the individuals own particular understanding and experiences.

Results: Recruitment is still in progress.

4. Application to Counselling Psychology:

- Insight for policy makers in order to improve and tailor mental health services for the South Asian female community.
- It is important that these SAW women encounter a culturally sensitive approach to their needs from practitioners and mental health care professionals; in order to create effective mental health interventions.

1. Eventually help develop specific therapy methods.
2. Change the way SAW are assessed when encountering mental health services.
3. Further increase its scope within the ethnic minority population living in Britain.

In 2011, 2823 incidents of HBA were recorded by 39 UK police forces. 495 incidents were documented by the London Metropolitan police force alone (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2011).

5. References:

  http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-16014395