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Social Marketing for Social Change: Community Engagement and Policy in Preventing Women's Killings

Toplumsal Değişim İçin Sosyal Pazarlama: Kadın Cinayetlerinin Önlenmesinde Toplum Katılımı ve Politika Süreçleri

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ABSTRACT

Violence against women remains a persistent global challenge, particularly in contexts where honor-related norms regulate gender relations, reputation, and social legitimacy. This study examines how social marketing and communication-based interventions are conceptualized in the literature as mechanisms for preventing violence in honor-regulated environments. Adopting a qualitative, exploratory, literature-based design, scholarly articles and policy reports were analyzed thematically. The study focuses on intervention logics linking communication strategies, community engagement, and policy influence in violence prevention. Five interconnected mechanisms emerged. First, honor-related violence operates through systems of normative control embedded in patriarchal social orders. Second, culturally resonant reframing strategies reinterpret the meaning of honor to reduce resistance and promote gender-equitable narratives. Third, community ownership and stakeholder coalitions enable locally legitimate and sustainable prevention processes. Fourth, engaging men and boys as allies through positive masculinity frameworks supports shifts in gender norms and accountability structures. Fifth, multi-channel communication strategies, combined with institutional and policy scaffolding, strengthen prevention infrastructure and governance responses. The findings suggest that social marketing contributes to violence prevention through awareness campaigns and by linking norm transformation, community participation, and institutional accountability, offering a conceptual framework to inform social work practice, policy development, and future research on gender-based violence prevention.

Keywords: Women's Killings, Honor-Related Violence, Social Marketing, Community Engagement, Gender-based Violence Prevention

ÖZ

Kadına yönelik şiddet, özellikle namusla ilişkili normların toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkilerini, itibarı ve sosyal meşruiyeti düzenlediği bağlamlarda önemli bir küresel sorun olmaya devam etmektedir. Bu çalışma, sosyal pazarlama ve iletişim temelli müdahalelerin namus normlarının güçlü olduğu ortamlarda şiddetin önlenmesinde nasıl kavramsallaştırıldığını incelemektedir. Nitel, keşifsel ve literatür temelli bir araştırma tasarımı benimsenmiş; akademik yayınlar ve politika raporları tematik analiz yöntemiyle değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışma, iletişim stratejileri, topluluk katılımı ve politika etkisi arasındaki ilişkileri açıklayan müdahale mantıklarına odaklanmaktadır. Bulgular beş temel mekanizmayı ortaya koymaktadır. İlk olarak, namusla ilişkili şiddet ataerkil toplumsal düzen içinde yerleşmiş normatif kontrol sistemleri aracılığıyla sürdürülmektedir. İkinci olarak, kültürel olarak uyumlu yeniden çerçeveleme stratejileri namus kavramının anlamını dönüştürerek direnci azaltmakta ve eşitlikçi toplumsal cinsiyet anlatılarını desteklemektedir. Üçüncü olarak, topluluk sahipliği ve paydaş koalisyonları yerel düzeyde meşru ve sürdürülebilir önleme süreçlerini güçlendirmektedir. Dördüncü olarak, erkeklerin ve oğlan çocuklarının olumlu erkeklik yaklaşımlarıyla müttefik olarak sürece dahil edilmesi toplumsal cinsiyet normlarının dönüşümünü desteklemektedir. Son olarak, çok kanallı iletişim stratejilerinin kurumsal ve politika altyapısıyla

bütünleşmesi önleme sistemlerinin etkinliğini artırmaktadır. Bulgular, sosyal pazarlamanın norm dönüşümü, topluluk katılımı ve kurumsal sorumluluğu birbirine bağlayan bir mekanizma olarak şiddetin önlenmesine katkı sunduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Kadın Cinayetleri, Namusla İlişkili Şiddet, Sosyal Pazarlama, Toplum Katılımı, Toplumsal Cinsiyete Dayalı Şiddetin Önlenmesi*

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women remains a pervasive and persistent global social problem, manifesting in diverse forms and shaped by complex social, cultural, economic, and institutional structures. It encompasses physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence and is deeply intertwined with enduring gender inequalities, patriarchal norms, and unequal power relations that restrict women's autonomy and life choices. Within the broad spectrum of gender-based violence (GBV), women's killings constitute the most extreme and irreversible outcome of these structural inequalities. They represent an overarching category of lethal gender-based violence, within which honor-related killings emerge as a particularly severe and deeply entrenched manifestation (Razaghi et al., 2022; Tekkas Kerman & Betrus, 2020).

Honor-related violence is rooted in socially constructed belief systems that associate family or community reputation with women's behavior, sexuality, and perceived moral conduct. In such contexts, women's actions—or even suspicions surrounding their actions—are interpreted as potential threats to collective honor, legitimizing violent reprisals intended to restore social standing. These practices represent an extreme form of social control over women's bodies and autonomy, as cultural norms rigidly define acceptable female behavior and directly link it to family honor. Consequently, women may be punished for behaviors considered transgressive within these frameworks, including choosing their own marriage partners, seeking autonomy in social relationships, interacting with men outside family boundaries, or, in some cases, merely being suspected of violating prescribed norms (Ceylan-Batur, Sakallı et al., 2023; Staxäng, 2024).

In contemporary international scholarship, honor-related killings are increasingly conceptualized not as isolated cultural practices but as a specific subcategory of violence against women embedded within broader systems of gender inequality and patriarchal power. While notions of "tradition" or "custom" have historically been used to describe such practices, feminist and human rights-oriented literature has strongly criticized these framings for their tendency to essentialize culture and obscure the structural and gendered foundations of violence. Accordingly, this study adopts the term *honor-related violence* in alignment with dominant international usage and does not employ "tradition-" or "custom-based" explanations as primary analytical categories. Instead, honor-related violence is situated within the wider continuum of gender-based violence, emphasizing its roots in social control, inequality, and the regulation of women's lives rather than in culture alone.

In line with contemporary feminist and human rights-based scholarship, this study situates honor-related killings within the broader category of women's killings, understood as the lethal endpoint of gender-based violence. The concept of women's killings is increasingly preferred in international literature because it foregrounds gendered power relations, structural inequality, and the continuum of violence women experience throughout their lives. By contrast, culture-centered labels risk obscuring the role of patriarchal control, state inaction, and institutional complicity. Accordingly,

honor-related killings are treated here not as culturally exceptional acts, but as gendered forms of lethal violence embedded in systems that regulate women's mobility, sexuality, and autonomy.

Honor-related killings are most frequently reported in parts of South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, although documented cases also exist among diaspora communities in Europe, North America, and other regions. In these settings, patriarchal social structures and gender hierarchies are often reinforced by economic dependency, social surveillance, and limited access to legal protection, increasing women's vulnerability to violence (Iyengar & Varghese, 2025; D. Singh & Bhandari, 2021). Where legal systems are weak, inconsistently enforced, or influenced by customary norms, honor-related violence may be inadequately prosecuted or punished leniently, contributing to cycles of impunity and intimidation. This environment discourages reporting and help-seeking, as women may fear social exclusion, retaliation, or victim-blaming within their communities (Jamal, 2020).

Beyond lethal outcomes, the threat of honor-related violence shapes women's everyday lives through constant surveillance, restricted mobility, and anticipatory self-regulation. Many women adapt their behavior to avoid suspicion, thereby limiting social interactions, educational opportunities, employment, and access to support services. Fear of social sanctions, family retaliation, and institutional indifference further constrains reporting and help-seeking. These dynamics illustrate that honor-related violence functions not only as episodic acts of killing but as a continuous mechanism of gendered control embedded in daily social relations.

Cultural narratives surrounding honor-related violence frequently intersect with religious discourse, particularly in contexts where religious concepts are selectively interpreted or manipulated to legitimize control over women. However, it is essential to distinguish cultural practices from religious teachings, as many religious traditions explicitly emphasize human dignity, justice, and the protection of life (Ceylan-Batur, Sakallı et al., 2023). International human rights frameworks unequivocally condemn honor-based violence as a violation of fundamental rights, including the rights to life, security, equality, and freedom from discrimination. Consequently, advocacy and intervention efforts increasingly stress the necessity of combining legal reform with community-based educational and normative change initiatives aimed at dismantling the social acceptance of such violence (Bhatia et al., 2024). While several countries have introduced legal provisions targeting honor-related crimes, international organizations continue to emphasize the importance of prevention strategies that address the social norms sustaining violence against women (H. Singh & Pandey, 2025). In contexts where honor-related violence is sustained by shared norms, informal sanctions, and collective silence, social marketing offers a distinct advantage over information-based or punitive interventions. Its emphasis on audience segmentation, cultural sensitivity, and behavior-focused messaging allows interventions to engage communities from within rather than imposing external moral judgments. By addressing beliefs, social expectations, and perceived consequences of behavior, social marketing can facilitate gradual normative change while simultaneously supporting advocacy efforts aimed at institutional and policy reform.

Addressing GBV, and honor-related violence in particular, requires sustained and meaningful community engagement, as these forms of violence are embedded in collective belief systems, social expectations, and power relations. GBV—including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse—is often reproduced through societal structures and attitudes that normalize gender inequality. Without active participation from community members, interventions risk being perceived as externally imposed or culturally misaligned, limiting both their legitimacy and effectiveness (M. E. Kim, 2021; Mittal & Singh, 2020). Engaging women, men, youth, local leaders, and service providers in the design, implementation, and evaluation of prevention initiatives allows interventions to respond more effectively to local needs, beliefs, and power dynamics, while fostering a sense of shared responsibility and local ownership (Sabri et al., 2023; Thomas et al., 2022).

Community engagement also plays a critical role in reducing barriers to reporting and help-seeking by building trust between survivors, service providers, and institutions. Stigma, fear of retaliation, and concerns about confidentiality frequently prevent women from accessing protection and support services. Community-centered awareness programs, dialogues, and educational initiatives can challenge misconceptions about GBV, expand knowledge of legal rights and available resources, and create safer conditions for disclosure (Block et al., 2022; Sapire et al., 2022). When communities actively support such efforts, survivors may feel more confident seeking assistance and justice, strengthening access to protection mechanisms and support networks (Fotini et al., 2022; Stabile et al., 2020).

Beyond service access, community engagement is essential for transforming harmful gender norms that condone or trivialize violence. Programs that encourage critical reflection on gender roles and inequalities—particularly those that actively involve men as allies—have been shown to promote positive masculinity, accountability, and respect for women’s rights (Graham et al., 2021). Peer-led discussions, mentorship initiatives, and public campaigns that highlight non-violent role models can challenge entrenched stereotypes and redefine acceptable social behavior. Such approaches are transformative in that they reshape collective expectations and establish non-violent standards for relationships and social interactions (Edwards et al., 2021; Shannon & Mannell, 2021).

Effective community engagement further depends on collaboration among multiple local stakeholders, including schools, health services, religious institutions, and law enforcement agencies. Coordinated multi-sectoral efforts enable comprehensive responses that address prevention, protection, and recovery simultaneously. Educational institutions can integrate gender sensitivity and violence prevention into curricula; religious leaders can publicly condemn GBV and support survivor protection; and healthcare and law enforcement professionals can improve their capacity to respond sensitively and effectively to cases of violence (Autiero et al., 2020; Okonofua et al., 2024; Rodella Sapia et al., 2020; Tsapalas et al., 2021; Waterman et al., 2021). Such collaboration reinforces the collective message that GBV is unacceptable and punishable, while strengthening institutional accountability.

Within this complex social landscape, social marketing has emerged as a strategic approach for addressing deeply rooted social problems by shaping public attitudes, influencing norms, and supporting policy reform. Distinct from commercial marketing, social marketing applies audience-centered strategies to promote behaviors that enhance individual and collective well-being (Frechette et al., 2023; Üçok Hughes, 2025). Through targeted campaigns, behavior-change techniques, and culturally sensitive messaging, social marketing has been widely applied in public health, environmental sustainability, and social justice initiatives. By integrating data-driven insights with an understanding of audience values, motivations, and barriers, social marketing interventions can resonate across diverse demographic and cultural contexts, facilitating norm change and social progress (Tkaczynski et al., 2020).

Despite sustained scholarly and policy attention to violence against women, the literature remains uneven in explaining how prevention can be achieved in social environments where violence is not only tolerated but also embedded within culturally legitimised systems of gender regulation. In contexts shaped by honor-related norms, violence often operates through diffuse mechanisms of surveillance, stigma, reputational control, and collective enforcement, rather than through isolated acts alone. This makes prevention particularly difficult. Formal legal reforms, criminal sanctions, and survivor-support infrastructures are indispensable, yet they are frequently insufficient where the social legitimacy of violence is reproduced through family expectations, community narratives, moral codes, and institutional ambivalence. In such settings, prevention requires more than punitive deterrence or general awareness-raising; it calls for interventions capable of reshaping normative climates, activating community-level accountability, and connecting social-change processes to policy and institutional response systems.

It is precisely at this point that social marketing becomes analytically important. Although social marketing has been widely used in public health, behavior change, and violence-prevention campaigns, its role in honor-regulated environments has not been examined in a sufficiently integrated manner. Existing scholarship tends to remain fragmented across separate fields: some studies focus on patriarchal norm enforcement and honor-based violence; others examine communication campaigns, digital advocacy, community mobilization, or gender-transformative programming; and still others discuss legal reform, service coordination, or policy implementation. These strands, however, have rarely been brought together within a single analytical framework capable of explaining how social marketing and communication-based interventions interact with community engagement processes, masculinity transformation, culturally embedded norm change, and policy scaffolding in the prevention of violence against women. As a result, the literature offers important but dispersed insights while lacking a conceptually organized account of the mechanisms through which social marketing may contribute to prevention in settings where gender regulation is socially normalized.

This study addresses that gap by examining how social marketing is discussed across the literature, not merely as a campaign tool, but as a broader mechanism for multi-level social change. More

specifically, the study investigates how social marketing and communication-based interventions are conceptualized in relation to five interrelated domains that emerged from the analysis: normative control and gendered regulation; culturally resonant reframing of honor; community ownership and stakeholder coalitions; engaging men and boys as allies through positive masculinity; and multi-channel communication linked to policy and institutional scaffolding. By organizing the literature around these domains, the study moves beyond narrowly behavioral or campaign-centered understandings of social marketing and instead situates it within the wider ecology of violence prevention, where community norms, institutional responses, advocacy systems, and policy mechanisms are deeply interconnected.

The significance of this inquiry is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it contributes to the literature by clarifying that violence prevention in honor-regulated contexts cannot be adequately understood through single-level explanations. The findings suggest that prevention is discussed in the literature as a layered process in which norm enforcement, cultural meaning-making, community mobilization, male engagement, and communication-policy infrastructures interact. This makes social marketing analytically relevant not only because it can influence attitudes or behaviors but because it can act as a bridging mechanism between symbolic reframing, social participation, and institutional change. Practically, this matters because interventions in honor-regulated contexts often fail when they are socially tone-deaf, institutionally fragmented, or disconnected from the lived normative realities of the communities they aim to influence. A more integrated understanding of these mechanisms is therefore necessary in order to design context-sensitive and socially legitimate prevention strategies.

Against this background, the study is guided by two research questions. First, how can social marketing and communication-based interventions effectively engage communities in socio-cultural contexts where honor-related violence persists? Second, in what ways can such interventions contribute to shifts in public policy, institutional response, and broader societal norms that support long-term violence prevention? These questions are intentionally framed to reflect the dual character of the problem. On the one hand, violence in honor-regulated settings is sustained through everyday regulatory practices operating at family and community levels. On the other hand, durable prevention depends on institutional protection, coordinated service systems, public accountability, and policy environments capable of supporting norm change rather than merely reacting to its failures.

The aim of the study is therefore not to test causal hypotheses or to determine the universal effectiveness of particular interventions. Nor does it seek to provide a systematic or exhaustive review of all available literature. Instead, consistent with its qualitative, exploratory, literature-based design, the study treats scholarly publications and policy-oriented reports as analytical material in order to identify recurring conceptual mechanisms through which social marketing is linked to community engagement and policy influence in violence-prevention contexts. The objective is interpretive and analytical: to synthesize dispersed evidence into a coherent thematic framework that

explains how prevention is imagined, structured, and communicated across different strands of the literature. In doing so, the study provides a mechanism-oriented reading of the field rather than a claims-based assessment of intervention effectiveness.

The expected contribution of the study is fourfold. First, it develops an analytically coherent framework for understanding how social marketing is positioned within violence-prevention scholarship in honor-regulated contexts. Second, it identifies five dominant thematic pathways through which prevention is conceptualized, thereby clarifying the relationship between communication strategies, community participation, masculinity transformation, culturally grounded norm change, and policy support systems. Third, it offers a more precise language for discussing prevention beyond the conventional binaries of awareness versus enforcement or culture versus rights, showing instead how effective approaches are often discussed as combining cultural legitimacy, collective engagement, and institutional accountability. Fourth, it provides a theoretically grounded basis for future empirical research, intervention design, and policy experimentation by identifying the conceptual conditions under which social marketing may be relevant to violence prevention.

From a social work perspective, the study is particularly important because it speaks directly to the profession's multi-level intervention logic. At the micro level, the themes identified in the analysis illuminate how stigma reduction, safer disclosure, referral communication, and survivor-sensitive messaging may shape help-seeking and access to support. At the mezzo level, the findings demonstrate the importance of culturally resonant engagement, community participation, local coalition-building, and the inclusion of men and boys in norm transformation processes. At the macro level, the study shows how communication systems, advocacy infrastructures, and policy-linked institutional responses operate as necessary supports for sustainable prevention. By integrating these levels within a single analytical structure, the study aligns with social work's commitments to gender justice, community empowerment, rights-based practice, and structural change.

Taken together, this study argues that the prevention of violence against women in honor-regulated contexts requires a broader conceptualization of social marketing than is often assumed in the literature. Rather than treating it as a discrete set of persuasive campaigns, the findings suggest that social marketing is more productively understood as part of a wider architecture of norm transformation, community engagement, relational accountability, and policy scaffolding. It is this wider architecture that the study seeks to map and interpret.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory, literature-based research design. Rather than reporting primary field data, it treats scholarly publications and policy-oriented reports as qualitative data sources and applies interpretive analysis to examine how social marketing campaigns are conceptualized in relation to community engagement and policy change in contexts where honor-based violence persists. This design is appropriate for capturing nuanced, context-specific mechanisms that are often underrepresented in predominantly quantitative work, enabling a deeper understanding of how social and behavioral change is discussed and operationalized in complex socio-cultural settings (Renjith et al., 2021; Stevens et al., 2013). Accordingly, the study is positioned as a qualitative research article that uses literature as its primary data source, rather than as a review study seeking completeness or exhaustiveness.

Importantly, this study does not aim to conduct a systematic review or meta-analysis; rather, it employs an exploratory qualitative thematic analysis to identify conceptual mechanisms of violence prevention across selected sources. The objective is not to map the entire literature exhaustively, but to identify and interpret the recurring conceptual mechanisms through which social marketing is discussed in relation to community engagement and policy influence in violence-prevention contexts.

Literature Identification and Selection

The study draws on purposive and iterative literature identification, combining targeted searches with reference-following to capture relevant academic and applied materials. Searches were conducted across PubMed, JSTOR, and Google Scholar to ensure interdisciplinary coverage spanning public health, gender-based violence research, communication, and social marketing. PubMed was used to capture health- and GBV-oriented scholarship; JSTOR supported retrieval of social science and conceptual discussions; and Google Scholar was used to broaden coverage across disciplines and publication types. Because Google Scholar indexes a wide range of journals and sources across major indexing services, additional discipline-specific indices (e.g., SSCI, AHCI, ESCI, TR Dizin) were not searched as separate standalone platforms for this study; instead, emphasis was placed on minimizing duplication while maintaining conceptual breadth.

Selection focused on sources that explicitly address (i) violence against women and/or gender-based violence, including honor-related forms, and (ii) social marketing, communication strategies, community engagement, campaign design, and/or policy influence. Both peer-reviewed articles and selected institutional or policy-facing publications were considered when they provided substantive insight into mechanisms, strategies, implementation features, or outcomes relevant to community engagement and policy change. Materials that were not substantively related to the study's conceptual focus (e.g., purely descriptive content without relevance to social marketing and engagement/policy pathways) were excluded.

Data Corpus

Following the identification stage, a theme-oriented filtering process was applied in order to construct the analytical dataset used in the thematic analysis. Because the study aims to examine specific mechanisms linking social marketing, community engagement, and violence prevention, only sources providing clear conceptual or empirical evidence relevant to these mechanisms were retained for analysis.

Publications that contributed primarily to the broader theoretical framing of the study—such as contextual discussions of gender-based violence, cultural dynamics, or policy debates—but did not directly inform the thematic mechanisms under investigation were retained as background references but excluded from the analytical corpus.

The resulting analytical dataset, therefore, consists of purposively selected sources that explicitly contribute to one or more of the study's five thematic domains:

- Normative Control and Gendered Regulation
- Culturally Resonant Reframing
- Community Ownership and Local Stakeholder Coalitions
- Engaging Men and Boys as Allies
- Multi-channel Communication and Policy Scaffolding

This dataset construction strategy ensured that the thematic analysis focused specifically on sources providing direct analytical evidence for the mechanisms explored in the study, while maintaining conceptual breadth through additional supporting literature. The analytical corpus used in the thematic analysis is documented in a supplementary table to enhance methodological transparency and replicability.

The dataset consists of 104 sources purposively selected from peer-reviewed journal articles and policy or programmatic reports addressing violence prevention, gender norms, and social marketing interventions. The corpus primarily covers the period from the early 2000s to 2024 and includes studies conducted across South Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and diaspora contexts. Sources were selected based on their explicit discussion of intervention mechanisms related to gender norms, community mobilization, masculinity transformation, or policy-linked communication strategies. The complete dataset is presented in Appendix A to ensure analytical transparency and replicability.

Thematic Coding Procedure

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis in order to identify recurring patterns, strategies, mechanisms, and reported outcomes associated with community engagement, communication strategies, and policy influence in violence-prevention contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Neuendorf, 2018). The purpose of the analysis was to uncover the common mechanisms underlying successful social marketing interventions, as well as the barriers and enabling factors observed across the examined studies. By systematically coding and categorising patterns across the analytical corpus, the analysis sought to illuminate both the theoretical foundations and practical applications of social marketing approaches in violence prevention, and to inform the design of future intervention strategies.

The coding process followed an inductive and iterative procedure informed by the principles of reflexive thematic analysis and qualitative content analysis. First, all identified sources were read in full to achieve familiarity with the material and to identify explicit intervention mechanisms related to violence prevention. Second, these mechanisms were translated into initial analytical codes capturing specific strategies such as community mobilization, faith-based messaging, masculinity transformation, communication approaches, and policy-linked interventions. Third, conceptually similar codes were compared and grouped into broader sub-themes reflecting common intervention patterns and engagement mechanisms.

In the next stage, sub-themes were organized into higher-order themes representing dominant mechanisms of violence prevention within the literature. Each source included in the analytical corpus was assigned to one primary thematic domain based on the dominant mechanism addressed in the text in order to maintain analytical clarity and consistency. Within each thematic domain, additional sub-themes were identified to capture more specific mechanisms or intervention strategies discussed across the studies.

The thematic structure was refined through repeated comparison across sources to ensure internal coherence, conceptual consistency, and analytical relevance. Sources that did not provide clear evidence in relation to any of the five thematic domains were excluded from the analytical corpus in order to maintain conceptual coherence and methodological rigour. This theme-oriented filtering ensured that the resulting thematic structure was grounded in identifiable textual evidence rather than in purely interpretive synthesis.

The final coding framework, therefore, reflects an iterative analytical process linking individual sources, initial codes, sub-themes, and overarching thematic domains. To enhance analytical transparency and replicability, the mapping of sources to themes and sub-themes, as well as the complete coding framework, are presented in the supplementary materials (Appendix B).

FINDINGS

Theme 1: Normative Control and Gendered Regulation

Theme definition

This theme captures how gender-based violence—particularly honor-related violence—is embedded in normative systems that regulate gender roles, sexuality, and family reputation through culturally sanctioned expectations. Across the reviewed studies, violence emerges not merely as an individual act but as a mechanism of norm enforcement within patriarchal social orders. Honor ideologies, religious interpretations, patriarchal authority structures, and community reputation systems function as regulatory frameworks that discipline women's behavior and, in some contexts, also shape masculine identities and expectations. These normative systems legitimize surveillance, coercion, and violence as tools for maintaining gender hierarchies and protecting collective honor. The literature consistently demonstrates that honor-based norms operate as social control mechanisms

embedded within families, communities, and public discourse, shaping attitudes toward violence and influencing institutional responses (Bas et al., 2022; Ceylan-Batur et al., 2023; Esholdt & Necef, 2024; Mayeda & Vijaykumar, 2016; Mittal & Singh, 2020; Singh & Bhandari, 2021).

Mechanism

The studies reveal several interconnected mechanisms through which normative control operates. First, patriarchal honor systems regulate female sexuality and behavior, where women's conduct is tied to family reputation and collective identity (Mayeda & Vijaykumar, 2016; Mittal & Singh, 2020). Within such systems, violence becomes a form of moral policing, enforcing conformity to gender expectations and punishing perceived violations (Esholdt & Necef, 2024). Honor ideology also shapes social attitudes toward violence by normalizing coercive practices when they are framed as protecting cultural or religious values (Ceylan-Batur et al., 2023; Singh & Bhandari, 2021).

Second, normative regulation operates through collective enforcement mechanisms within families and communities. Social pressure, reputational concerns, and communal surveillance reinforce behavioral control, enabling family members or community actors to act as agents of normative discipline (Mayeda & Vijaykumar, 2016). In migrant and diaspora contexts, these mechanisms may intensify due to identity preservation dynamics and perceived threats to cultural continuity (Singh & Pandey, 2025).

Third, the literature shows that normative control also shapes victim experiences and coping strategies. Women subjected to domestic violence in patriarchal contexts often adopt survival strategies characterized by accommodation or "inevitable adjustment," reflecting constrained agency under sociocultural pressure (Razaghi et al., 2022). In addition, patriarchal honor systems may produce gendered victimization patterns affecting men and boys, particularly through forced marriage or familial coercion linked to masculine expectations (Idriss, 2022).

Finally, normative regulation is reinforced through discursive and symbolic mechanisms, including media narratives and political framing. Digital media can simultaneously expose and challenge gender violence by mobilizing public engagement and counter-discourses (Bas et al., 2022). At the same time, political narratives may instrumentalize honor-related violence in ideological debates about national identity, shaping public perception and policy responses (Staxäng, 2024).

Policy connection

The literature emphasizes that normative systems sustaining gender violence cannot be addressed solely through criminalization. Effective policy responses require multi-level interventions that target both legal frameworks and underlying social norms. Several studies highlight the need for stronger legal protections and enforcement mechanisms addressing honor-based violence and coercive control (Mittal & Singh, 2020; Singh & Bhandari, 2021; Singh & Pandey, 2025). However, legal reforms alone remain insufficient where honor ideologies continue to legitimize violence within communities.

Consequently, policy approaches increasingly incorporate norm-transformative strategies, including gender equality education, public awareness campaigns, and community engagement initiatives

designed to challenge cultural narratives that justify violence (Ceylan-Batur et al., 2023). Social media activism and public discourse also play a role in shaping policy agendas by amplifying survivor voices and generating pressure for institutional change (Bas et al., 2022).

Migration and asylum contexts introduce additional policy challenges, as gender-based violence intersects with legal status, language barriers, and institutional trust. Coordinated responses involving healthcare, legal systems, and asylum policies are required to support survivors and ensure disclosure and protection mechanisms (Rodella Sapia et al., 2020). At the macro level, research also underscores the importance of addressing structural inequalities—such as poverty and social marginalization—that interact with normative systems to increase vulnerability to violence (Stabile et al., 2020).

Social work lens

From a social work perspective, this theme highlights the profession's role in addressing both the structural and cultural dimensions of gender-based violence. Social workers operate at the intersection of individual support, community engagement, and policy advocacy, positioning them to challenge harmful norms while supporting survivors.

At the micro level, trauma-informed practice and culturally responsive interventions are essential for supporting survivors of honor-related violence and domestic abuse. Social workers must also navigate complex family dynamics where perpetrators and victims may be embedded within the same social networks, requiring sensitive risk assessment and protection strategies (Rodella Sapia et al., 2020; Singh & Pandey, 2025).

At the mezzo level, community-based interventions play a critical role in transforming gender norms and fostering collective accountability. Educational programs, dialogue initiatives, and community mobilization strategies can disrupt the normative legitimacy of violence and encourage alternative models of gender relations (Renjith et al., 2021; Singh & Bhandari, 2021).

At the macro level, social workers contribute to policy advocacy and structural reform, promoting gender-equitable legislation, strengthening institutional responses, and addressing socioeconomic inequalities that reinforce vulnerability to violence (Stabile et al., 2020). In addition, critical engagement with public discourse—such as nationalist or cultural framings of honor violence—allows social workers to challenge stigmatizing narratives and promote more nuanced, rights-based approaches to prevention and intervention (Staxäng, 2024).

Theme 2: Culturally Resonant Reframing of “Honor”

Theme definition

This theme captures interventions and discursive strategies that seek to transform harmful honor-related norms not by rejecting cultural frameworks outright, but by reframing the meaning of honor and gender relations within culturally resonant narratives. The reviewed studies show that violence prevention initiatives become more effective when they engage with existing cultural values,

identities, and community authority structures rather than confronting them in purely external or legalistic terms. In this perspective, honor is not treated solely as a source of oppression but as a contested cultural concept that can be reinterpreted to support gender equality, dignity, and nonviolence. Across the literature, reframing occurs through multiple channels—including social marketing, digital feminist activism, faith-based engagement, and community communication strategies—each attempting to shift normative meanings while maintaining cultural legitimacy (Andrade et al., 2018; Gul et al., 2021; Hou, 2020; Lutkenhaus et al., 2022; Mittal & Singh, 2020; Rovira-Sancho, 2023; UN Women, 2021; UN Women, 2025b; UN Women, 2025c).

Mechanism

The studies reveal several mechanisms through which culturally resonant reframing operates.

First, social marketing and culturally tailored engagement strategies are used to reshape attitudes toward violence among specific communities. Place-based campaigns targeting immigrant youth, for example, integrate culturally meaningful narratives and local communication channels to promote nonviolent norms and healthy relationship models (Andrade et al., 2018). Similarly, research grounded in culture-of-honor theory demonstrates that prevention strategies must address reputational concerns and social expectations embedded in honor cultures, reframing honor as compatible with respect, safety, and equality rather than aggression or control (Gul et al., 2021).

Second, digital feminist activism plays an important role in transforming cultural narratives surrounding violence. Online movements convert personal testimonies of violence into collective narratives that challenge normalized gender oppression and reshape public understanding of honor, shame, and accountability (Hou, 2020; Rovira-Sancho, 2023). Hashtag activism and networked feminist communities amplify survivor voices and construct affective publics capable of influencing public discourse and institutional responses to violence.

Third, reframing also occurs through collective identity narratives and advocacy communication. Public health and violence prevention frameworks emphasize the importance of aligning advocacy messages with community values and shared identities to facilitate cultural change (Lutkenhaus et al., 2022). Social marketing and advocacy communication, therefore, function not merely as information campaigns but as mechanisms for reconstructing cultural meanings associated with gender roles and honor (Mittal & Singh, 2020).

Fourth, several studies highlight the role of faith-based and traditional authorities in norm transformation. Religious leaders and community elders possess symbolic authority that allows them to reinterpret religious texts, cultural traditions, and moral values in ways that challenge gender violence while remaining culturally legitimate (UN Women, 2021). Training faith leaders to recognize domestic violence, challenge stereotypes, and facilitate referrals to support services demonstrates how culturally embedded actors can act as mediators in norm transformation processes (UN Women, 2025b; UN Women, 2025c).

Finally, legal and human-rights frameworks can also contribute to reframing processes by linking cultural narratives to universal rights discourses, thereby challenging the legitimacy of honor-based violence within both national and international normative systems (Kadu et al., 2025).

Policy connection

The literature indicates that culturally resonant reframing strategies are most effective when embedded within multi-level governance and policy frameworks. Violence prevention policies increasingly combine legal reforms with communication-based interventions that address social norms. Educational programs, awareness campaigns, and community outreach initiatives play a crucial role in shifting attitudes toward honor-related violence and gender inequality (Gul et al., 2021). Digital activism has also become an influential policy driver by shaping public debate and increasing institutional accountability regarding gender-based violence (Hou, 2020; Rovira-Sancho, 2023). These movements contribute to policy change by mobilizing public pressure and bringing previously silenced experiences of violence into the public sphere.

Faith-based engagement programs illustrate how culturally grounded policy approaches can operate within broader institutional frameworks. Initiatives that train religious leaders and collaborate with community organizations create referral pathways, prevention campaigns, and survivor support systems aligned with national and international gender equality policies (UN Women, 2021; UN Women, 2025b; UN Women, 2025c). At the same time, international legal instruments addressing honor-based violence reinforce state obligations to protect victims and challenge harmful cultural justifications for violence (Kadu et al., 2025).

Social work lens

From a social work perspective, culturally resonant reframing underscores the importance of culturally competent and context-sensitive practice in addressing gender-based violence. Social workers frequently operate in settings where harmful norms are deeply embedded in community structures, making culturally informed engagement essential.

At the micro level, social workers support survivors by recognizing the cultural dynamics shaping victim experiences and disclosure processes. Digital advocacy networks and community support structures can strengthen survivor empowerment and collective awareness (Rovira-Sancho, 2023). In crisis situations—such as those observed during pandemic conditions—integrated social work responses are necessary to address structural vulnerabilities and provide coordinated psychosocial and legal support (Mittal & Singh, 2020).

At the mezzo level, social workers contribute to community-based prevention strategies that engage youth, families, and cultural leaders in dialogue around gender equality and violence prevention (Andrade et al., 2018). Partnerships with religious institutions and traditional authorities enable social workers to facilitate culturally legitimate discussions about gender norms and survivor protection (UN Women, 2021; UN Women, 2025b).

At the macro level, social work professionals participate in policy advocacy, program design, and cross-sector collaboration aimed at transforming harmful norms while respecting cultural diversity. This approach recognizes that sustainable prevention of honor-related violence requires not only legal reform but also culturally embedded norm transformation processes.

Theme 3: Community Ownership and Stakeholder Coalitions

Theme definition

This theme captures approaches to violence prevention and response that are grounded in community ownership, participatory engagement, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. The literature consistently demonstrates that gender-based violence cannot be effectively addressed through isolated institutional interventions alone. Instead, sustainable prevention requires collective action involving community members, civil society actors, public institutions, service providers, and survivors themselves. Within this perspective, communities are not treated merely as sites of intervention but as active agents of norm transformation and prevention governance. Community mobilization, participatory research, and coalition-building processes enable local actors to challenge harmful gender norms, develop locally legitimate prevention strategies, and coordinate services across sectors. These approaches emphasize the redistribution of power from centralized institutions toward community networks capable of sustaining long-term social change (Abramsky et al., 2012; Abramsky et al., 2016; EndVAWNnow, 2012b; Raising Voices, 2020; Sabri et al., 2023; Shannon & Mannell, 2021).

Mechanism

The reviewed studies identify several mechanisms through which community ownership and coalition-based strategies operate.

First, community mobilization processes function as central mechanisms for transforming gender norms and power relations. Structured mobilization programs engage community members through dialogue, activism, and collective reflection on gender inequality and violence, gradually shifting social expectations and legitimizing non-violent behaviors (Abramsky et al., 2012; Abramsky et al., 2016; EndVAWNnow, 2012b; Raising Voices, 2020). These staged mobilization approaches build awareness, foster collective responsibility, and generate grassroots pressure for behavioral change. Second, prevention initiatives frequently rely on participatory engagement and local knowledge production. Participatory action research and community-driven research models empower community members to identify violence risks and design locally appropriate prevention strategies (Graham et al., 2021; Shannon & Mannell, 2021; Thomas et al., 2022; Waterman et al., 2021; Whang et al., 2022). Through these approaches, survivors, community health workers, youth groups, and local leaders become active participants in generating knowledge and shaping interventions.

Third, the literature emphasizes the importance of multi-sector service coordination and institutional collaboration. Effective responses to gender-based violence require integrated support systems involving healthcare providers, social services, legal institutions, migration services, and civil society

organizations (Autiero et al., 2020; Block et al., 2022). Such collaborative service networks enhance survivor protection by enabling coordinated case management, referral systems, and trauma-informed support.

Fourth, several studies highlight community empowerment and collective norm abandonment as mechanisms for addressing harmful practices. Community-led education initiatives, empowerment committees, and public declarations can facilitate collective decisions to abandon practices such as child marriage or female genital cutting (Girls Not Brides, 2018; UNESCO, 2016; Cuordifede, 2025). These initiatives rely on social diffusion processes, peer influence, and collective commitment to reshape community norms.

Fifth, the literature also identifies stakeholder coalitions involving civil society and governance actors as key mechanisms supporting policy implementation. NGOs, advocacy networks, and community organizations frequently act as intermediaries between local communities and institutional policy frameworks, ensuring accountability and supporting service delivery (Tramontana, 2023; Kuhlmann et al., 2023).

Finally, many studies emphasize the importance of socio-ecological and multilevel prevention models, which integrate interventions across individual, relational, community, and structural levels (Sabri et al., 2023; Tekkas, Kerman, & Betrus, 2020). These models recognize that violence prevention requires coordinated action across multiple social systems.

Policy connection

The literature indicates that community ownership approaches align closely with public health and social policy frameworks that prioritize prevention, participation, and cross-sector collaboration. National and international violence prevention strategies increasingly incorporate community mobilization programs, participatory governance models, and integrated service systems (EndVAWNow, 2012b; Sabri et al., 2023).

Community-driven initiatives often operate in coordination with legal and institutional policy frameworks, ensuring that prevention efforts are supported by formal governance mechanisms. For example, programs addressing harmful practices such as child marriage or female genital cutting frequently combine community mobilization with national legal prohibitions and monitoring systems (UNESCO, 2016; Cuordifede, 2025).

Participatory prevention initiatives within universities, refugee systems, and healthcare settings also demonstrate how stakeholder coalitions can support policy implementation in specific institutional environments (Edwards et al., 2021; Block et al., 2022; Kuhlmann et al., 2023). These collaborative approaches strengthen policy effectiveness by linking institutional strategies with community-level engagement.

Civil society organizations play an especially important role in bridging community initiatives and policy frameworks. Advocacy networks and NGOs frequently support monitoring, survivor services,

and public accountability within national and international anti-violence frameworks (Tramontana, 2023).

Social work lens

From a social work perspective, this theme highlights the profession's central role in facilitating community engagement, coordinating services, and supporting participatory prevention strategies. Social workers frequently act as intermediaries connecting communities, institutions, and policy systems.

At the micro level, social workers provide trauma-informed services, survivor advocacy, and case management within integrated support systems addressing gender-based violence (Autiero et al., 2020; Block et al., 2022). In contexts involving vulnerable populations such as refugees or adolescents, social workers play a crucial role in ensuring culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate interventions.

At the mezzo level, social workers contribute to community mobilization and empowerment initiatives. Educational programs, community dialogues, and participatory prevention projects enable communities to challenge harmful gender norms and develop locally legitimate solutions (Abramsky et al., 2012; Girls Not Brides, 2018; Shannon & Mannell, 2021).

At the macro level, social workers engage in coalition-building and policy advocacy, collaborating with civil society organizations, NGOs, and governmental institutions to strengthen violence prevention systems. Multilevel prevention frameworks and socio-ecological models further position social work as a discipline capable of integrating structural policy reforms with community-based action (Sabri et al., 2023; Tekkas, Kerman, & Betrus, 2020).

The literature demonstrates that community ownership and stakeholder coalitions are essential for building sustainable, culturally legitimate, and systemically coordinated violence prevention strategies.

Theme 4: Engaging Men and Boys as Allies; Positive Masculinity

Theme definition

This theme focuses on prevention approaches that engage men and boys as active participants in challenging gender-based violence and transforming patriarchal norms. Rather than positioning men solely as perpetrators, the literature conceptualizes men and boys as potential allies and change agents capable of reshaping gender relations and preventing violence. Central to this perspective is the notion of positive or transformative masculinity, which encourages men to critically reflect on traditional gender norms, reject violence-supportive beliefs, and adopt equitable and nonviolent identities. Across the reviewed studies, interventions targeting men and boys emphasize community engagement, behavioral change communication, advocacy networks, and bystander intervention strategies designed to mobilize men against gender violence and promote gender equality (Kim, 2021; Inbreakthrough, 2017; MenEngage, 2024; UN Women, 2025a).

Mechanism

The literature identifies several mechanisms through which male engagement contributes to violence prevention.

First, transformative masculinity interventions encourage men to critically examine traditional gender norms and power relations that sustain violence. Programs grounded in gender-transformative frameworks promote reflection on masculinity, responsibility, and accountability, enabling men to adopt nonviolent identities and equitable relationships (MenEngage, 2024; MenEngage, 2025a). These initiatives frequently operate through workshops, community dialogues, and advocacy campaigns that challenge patriarchal expectations while promoting positive male role models.

Second, male allyship and advocacy networks function as mechanisms for collective action. Global networks such as MenEngage mobilize men and boys to support gender equality movements and participate in international advocacy efforts aimed at addressing structural gender inequalities (MenEngage, 2025b). These networks strengthen policy advocacy and facilitate knowledge exchange among organizations working on gender justice.

Third, the literature highlights bystander intervention strategies as key tools for engaging men in violence prevention. Campaigns such as Bell Bajao encourage men to intervene in situations of domestic violence and support victims, thereby disrupting harmful behaviors and promoting community accountability (UN Women – Asia-Pacific, 2011). Similarly, empowerment-based prevention programs train men and boys to recognize violence, intervene safely, and promote respectful relationships within their communities (No Means No Worldwide, 2024).

Fourth, behavior change communication and social marketing approaches are used to reshape male attitudes toward violence. Media campaigns and public messaging strategies mobilize men to challenge harmful norms and encourage active participation in prevention efforts (Inbreakthrough, 2017; Yetişer, 2023). These campaigns often employ emotional appeals, peer influence, and social accountability mechanisms to motivate behavioral change.

Finally, community accountability and restorative approaches expand violence prevention beyond punitive systems. Network-based interventions encourage community members—including men—to participate in restorative justice processes and collective responses to violence, thereby reinforcing social norms that reject abuse and support survivors (Kim, 2021).

Policy connection

Engagement of men and boys increasingly forms a central component of national and international gender equality policies. Public awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and community-based programs targeting men are widely incorporated into violence prevention strategies and gender equality agendas (UN Women, 2025a).

Global advocacy networks and coalition-based initiatives contribute to policy development by promoting male engagement frameworks within international gender justice movements (MenEngage, 2025b). These initiatives support the integration of male engagement strategies into broader governance structures addressing violence against women.

At the national level, prevention policies frequently include public communication campaigns, bystander intervention programs, and youth education initiatives designed to reshape male attitudes toward violence (Inbreakthrough, 2017; Yetiřer, 2023). In addition, institutional referral networks and specialized support services strengthen coordinated responses to honor-based abuse and related forms of violence (Metropolitan Police, 2024).

Together, these policy initiatives reflect a growing recognition that violence prevention requires addressing the gender norms and masculinities that underpin abusive behavior, rather than focusing solely on victim protection or criminal justice responses.

Social work lens

From a social work perspective, engaging men and boys represents a crucial dimension of preventive and transformative intervention strategies addressing gender-based violence. Social workers often facilitate community programs, educational initiatives, and dialogue processes that encourage men to critically reflect on gender norms and develop nonviolent identities.

At the micro level, social workers support male clients in recognizing harmful behaviors, developing emotional accountability, and adopting healthier relational practices. Social marketing and behavioral interventions targeting male attitudes can complement counseling and prevention programs aimed at reducing violence (Yetiřer, 2023).

At the mezzo level, social workers participate in community education and bystander intervention programs that mobilize men and boys as allies in violence prevention (UN Women – Asia-Pacific, 2011; No Means No Worldwide, 2024). These initiatives empower men to intervene in situations of violence and contribute to community-level accountability.

At the macro level, social workers contribute to policy advocacy and coalition-building efforts that promote gender-transformative approaches to violence prevention. Engagement with global networks, advocacy initiatives, and community mobilization programs strengthens the integration of male engagement strategies within broader violence prevention frameworks (MenEngage, 2024; MenEngage, 2025b).

Overall, the literature suggests that involving men and boys as allies in gender equality movements can play a significant role in transforming harmful gender norms and supporting sustainable violence prevention.

Theme 5: Multi-channel Communication & Policy Scaffolding

Theme definition

This theme captures strategies that combine communication interventions, advocacy campaigns, institutional coordination, and policy frameworks to address gender-based and honor-related violence. The reviewed studies demonstrate that violence prevention and response increasingly rely on multi-channel communication ecosystems that connect media campaigns, digital activism, institutional referral systems, and legal advocacy structures. Rather than functioning as isolated awareness initiatives, communication strategies operate as policy scaffolding mechanisms that

reinforce institutional responses, shape public discourse, and facilitate access to survivor support systems. Across the literature, these communication infrastructures connect grassroots advocacy, professional service systems, and governance frameworks, creating integrated environments for prevention, reporting, and policy reform (Evans & French, 2021; Fotini et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2023; UN Women, 2024).

Mechanism

The literature identifies several mechanisms through which multi-channel communication and policy scaffolding operate.

First, social marketing and public communication campaigns function as central mechanisms for shaping attitudes and behaviors related to violence prevention. Marketing-based prevention strategies employ behavioral insights, communication design, and audience segmentation to influence social norms and encourage preventive behaviors (Evans & French, 2021; Lee et al., 2023). Edutainment campaigns similarly combine information dissemination with storytelling to increase awareness of support resources and encourage help-seeking behaviors among survivors (Fotini et al., 2022).

Second, digital activism and social media mobilization amplify public awareness and generate advocacy networks capable of influencing policy agendas. Hashtag campaigns and online feminist mobilization facilitate transnational conversations around gender-based violence and femicide, transforming individual experiences of violence into collective political claims (Ghigiu, 2023; Stabile et al., 2020). These digital advocacy networks play an important role in agenda-setting and policy pressure.

Third, the literature highlights technology-enabled reporting and referral systems as mechanisms supporting survivor protection and service coordination. Digital tools, including mobile reporting platforms and digital referral networks, enable survivors to access services, connect with healthcare providers, and engage with civil society support systems, particularly in resource-constrained environments (Okonofua et al., 2024).

Fourth, institutional communication and service coordination frameworks strengthen violence response systems by linking multiple agencies and professional sectors. Institutional signposting systems, referral pathways, and coordinated support networks facilitate access to specialized services and enhance the effectiveness of violence prevention programs (Missiaen, 2022; Thomas et al., 2022; Tsapalas et al., 2021). Such mechanisms enable collaboration across healthcare, social services, law enforcement, and community organizations.

Fifth, communication strategies often operate alongside advocacy-driven legal reform and policy accountability mechanisms. Advocacy campaigns conducted by civil society organizations and survivor networks highlight institutional gaps, promote legislative reforms, and strengthen policy frameworks addressing honor-based violence (IKWRO, 2024; Karma Nirvana, 2025a; Stop Honor

Killings Campaign, 2025). These efforts frequently combine public communication with legal advocacy and institutional capacity building.

Finally, several studies emphasize the importance of political discourse and institutional framing in shaping public understanding of honor-related violence and influencing policy debates (Staxäng, 2024). Narrative framing within political and public discourse can reinforce or challenge societal perceptions of violence, affecting policy responses and institutional priorities.

Policy connection

The literature shows that multi-channel communication strategies are closely integrated with governance frameworks addressing gender-based violence. Communication initiatives frequently operate alongside legal reforms, institutional policies, and national prevention strategies, forming part of broader policy infrastructures designed to address violence.

Global advocacy platforms and international campaigns contribute to the development of coordinated policy responses by mobilizing governments, civil society organizations, and international institutions around violence prevention agendas (UN Women, 2024). At the national level, communication campaigns often support legislative awareness, reporting mechanisms, and institutional safeguarding procedures.

Policy frameworks addressing honor-based violence also increasingly incorporate institutional capacity building and statutory guidance, ensuring that frontline professionals—including police, social workers, and healthcare providers—can identify and respond effectively to cases of abuse (Karma Nirvana, 2025a; Karma Nirvana, 2025b). In addition, advocacy organizations play a critical role in monitoring policy implementation and promoting accountability for institutional responses to violence (IKWRO, 2025a; IKWRO, 2025b).

Crisis situations further illustrate the importance of policy scaffolding. During emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, service systems experienced disruptions that required rapid adaptation of communication channels, digital outreach strategies, and institutional coordination mechanisms to maintain survivor support (Sapire et al., 2022).

Social work lens

From a social work perspective, multi-channel communication and policy scaffolding highlight the profession's role in linking communication strategies, institutional services, and policy responses. Social workers often operate within these integrated systems as practitioners, advocates, and coordinators.

At the micro level, social workers support survivors by facilitating access to information, referral networks, and digital reporting tools. Communication campaigns and awareness programs also help individuals recognize abuse, seek assistance, and access appropriate services.

At the mezzo level, social workers contribute to community awareness initiatives, prevention education programs, and digital advocacy efforts that challenge harmful norms and promote help-seeking behaviors (Evans & French, 2021; Lee et al., 2023). Partnerships with civil society organizations and advocacy networks strengthen the reach and effectiveness of these initiatives.

At the macro level, social workers engage in policy advocacy and institutional reform efforts aimed at strengthening violence response systems. Collaboration with advocacy organizations, professional networks, and government agencies enables social workers to contribute to the development of legal frameworks, institutional protocols, and coordinated prevention strategies addressing gender-based violence.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that communication infrastructures and policy frameworks must function together as integrated systems supporting prevention, reporting, survivor protection, and institutional accountability.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how social marketing and communication-based interventions are conceptualized in the literature as mechanisms for preventing violence against women in contexts where honor-related norms continue to regulate gender roles, sexuality, reputation, and social legitimacy. Rather than treating honor-based violence as a culturally isolated category, the analysis situated it within broader structures of gender-based violence sustained by patriarchal control, collective norm enforcement, and uneven institutional protection. Using a qualitative, exploratory, literature-based design, the study analyzed scholarly and policy-oriented texts as qualitative material and identified five dominant thematic pathways through which prevention is discussed across the literature: normative control and gendered regulation; culturally resonant reframing; community ownership and stakeholder coalitions; engaging men and boys as allies through positive masculinity; and multi-channel communication linked to policy and institutional scaffolding. Taken together, these themes suggest that violence prevention in honor-regulated contexts is conceptualized not as a single intervention problem but as a multi-level process requiring simultaneous attention to social norms, community participation, gender identities, communication systems, and institutional accountability.

Key Findings

The first key finding is that violence against women in honor-regulated contexts is embedded in systems of normative control rather than reducible to isolated acts or individual pathology. Across the literature, honor functions as a regulatory logic that ties women's behavior to collective reputation and positions violence as a socially intelligible means of discipline, punishment, and moral enforcement. This finding is important because it clarifies why awareness-only interventions or purely legalistic responses often have limited traction in such settings. Where silence, surveillance, stigma, and reputational sanction are socially organized, prevention must target the normative environment that renders violence legitimate, or at least tolerable, within families, communities, and institutional discourse.

The second key finding is that culturally resonant reframing constitutes a distinct and necessary prevention mechanism. The literature does not suggest that harmful norms can be transformed only

through external condemnation or abstract rights language. Instead, many interventions work by reinterpreting cultural values, religious discourse, and local moral vocabularies in ways that detach honor from coercion and reconnect it to dignity, nonviolence, responsibility, and protection without domination. This finding refines the role of social marketing in violence prevention by showing that communication is not merely about dissemination or awareness but about moral translation, symbolic contestation, and the strategic reconstruction of legitimacy.

The third key finding is that community ownership and stakeholder coalitions are foundational to sustainable prevention. The analysis consistently shows that violence-prevention efforts gain credibility, feasibility, and durability when they are embedded in local networks of trust and participation. Community leaders, civil society actors, educators, service providers, youth facilitators, faith-based actors, and survivors do not merely disseminate messages; they help create the social conditions under which alternative norms become discussable, defensible, and actionable. Coalition-based approaches are therefore significant because they reduce the social risks associated with challenging violence and shift prevention from individualized responsibility to collective accountability.

The fourth key finding is that engaging men and boys as allies through positive or transformative masculinity is not peripheral but central to norm change. Because masculine identities are often implicated in the enforcement of honor, control, and gender hierarchy, prevention requires interventions that challenge harmful masculinity scripts while offering culturally and socially viable alternatives. The literature indicates that social marketing contributes here by specifying visible and practicable roles for men and boys, including bystander action, accountability, care, nonviolent leadership, and active support for gender equality. This finding strengthens the argument that prevention cannot rely solely on survivor-centered services or punitive responses; it must also intervene in the relational and identity structures that reproduce violence.

The fifth key finding is that communication becomes most effective when it is linked to policy scaffolding and institutional response systems. Multi-channel communication strategies, digital activism, advocacy campaigns, referral infrastructures, professional guidance, and service signposting emerge in the literature as interconnected rather than separate domains. This means that communication is analytically important not only because it shapes attitudes, but also because it connects survivors to services, sustains public pressure, legitimizes institutional action, and supports the implementation of legal and policy reforms. The findings therefore suggest that prevention gains scale and durability when message environments, service systems, and governance mechanisms reinforce one another.

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, this study is based on secondary materials and does not include primary empirical data from survivors, practitioners, community actors, campaign designers, or institutional decision-makers. The findings, therefore, clarify how prevention is

conceptualized in the literature rather than how specific interventions are experienced, negotiated, or evaluated in practice.

Second, the study does not aim to provide a systematic or exhaustive review of all available scholarship. The literature identification process was purposive and iterative, and the analytical corpus was constructed through theme-oriented filtering in line with the study's qualitative, exploratory design. Accordingly, the analysis should not be read as a claim about the total distribution of evidence in the field, nor as a basis for numerical inference regarding prevalence, effectiveness, or regional dominance.

Third, each source in the analytical corpus was assigned to one primary thematic domain in order to preserve analytical clarity. While this strategy strengthened conceptual consistency, it necessarily simplified some sources that could plausibly speak to more than one thematic pathway. The findings should therefore be understood as identifying dominant mechanisms rather than exhausting all possible interpretive layers within each text.

Fourth, the dataset includes both peer-reviewed scholarship and policy- or programme-oriented reports. This was methodologically appropriate for an exploratory study concerned with intervention logics and implementation mechanisms, yet it also means that the evidence base contains variation in genre, analytical depth, and epistemic purpose. Some materials are designed to theorize or critically analyze violence, while others are designed to inform practice, advocacy, or institutional response.

Fifth, the literature itself is uneven across settings and forms of evidence. Documented campaigns, international programmes, and institutionally visible initiatives are more likely to appear in the dataset than informal, undocumented, or highly localized practices, particularly in low-resource contexts. As a result, the analysis may underrepresent quieter, community-specific, or non-institutional forms of norm change that are less visible in published or policy-facing materials.

Implications for Key Stakeholders

For social work practitioners, the study provides a multi-level interpretive framework that links micro-level support, mezzo-level community practice, and macro-level advocacy within a unified prevention logic. The findings indicate that interventions should not be confined to crisis response or case management alone. Social workers operating in honor-regulated environments need culturally informed strategies that simultaneously address stigma, disclosure risk, family dynamics, community surveillance, and referral integrity. The thematic framework developed here supports more integrated practice by showing how survivor support, community engagement, male allyship, and institutional navigation can be brought into relation with one another rather than treated as separate intervention domains.

For community organizations and local coalitions, the study underscores that prevention is more likely to be legitimate and sustainable when communities are positioned as co-producers of change rather than passive recipients of externally designed messages. Community-based organizations,

grassroots networks, youth groups, women's organizations, and faith-linked actors can play a decisive role in reframing norms, reducing reputational barriers to participation, and creating environments where contesting violence becomes socially possible. The findings, therefore, support coalition-based and participatory approaches that distribute responsibility for norm change across local actors and institutions.

For policymakers and public institutions, the analysis shows that legal reform, while essential, is not sufficient on its own. Institutional effectiveness depends on coordinated service systems, accessible reporting pathways, confidentiality protections, trained frontline staff, survivor-centered referral processes, and communication structures that make institutional support visible and credible. The study suggests that prevention policies in honor-regulated settings should be designed with explicit attention to norm transformation, institutional trust, and the communication ecologies through which rights, services, and responsibilities are made publicly meaningful.

For campaign designers, communication professionals, and advocacy organizations, the findings point to the need for prevention strategies that move beyond awareness alone. Effective interventions are more likely to be audience-sensitive, culturally resonant, behavior-specific, and structurally connected to service and policy infrastructures. This requires careful attention to message framing, segmentation, channel integration, symbolic legitimacy, and the practical conditions that enable targeted audiences to act on campaign messages. Communication that denounces violence without providing socially navigable scripts for action, support, or accountability is unlikely to generate durable change in contexts shaped by strong normative regulation.

For educators, universities, and training institutions, the study also has implications for professional preparation. Since prevention in these contexts depends on the ability to understand culture, gender, norm enforcement, communication strategy, and institutional response together, curricula in social work and related fields should better integrate these dimensions. The findings support interdisciplinary training that equips future practitioners to recognize honor-related risk, engage communities without cultural essentialism, and operate effectively across service, advocacy, and policy settings.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should build on this thematic framework through context-specific empirical inquiry. Qualitative fieldwork with survivors, social workers, campaign practitioners, religious leaders, youth actors, and community gatekeepers would help test how the mechanisms identified here operate in practice and how they are negotiated across different sociocultural settings. Such research would be particularly valuable in clarifying when culturally resonant reframing is perceived as legitimate, when coalition-based approaches generate trust, and when male engagement strategies are embraced or resisted.

There is also a clear need for comparative studies across regions, migration settings, and institutional environments. Honor-related violence is not uniform across contexts, and the relationship between community norms, communication strategies, institutional capacity, and policy

frameworks likely varies significantly across national systems, diaspora communities, and service infrastructures. Comparative work could therefore refine the transferability of the five thematic pathways and identify which mechanisms are most context-dependent.

Mixed-method and longitudinal research would further strengthen the field by examining how norm transitions unfold over time. Many of the mechanisms identified in this study—such as cultural reframing, male ally mobilization, and community ownership—imply cumulative and relational change processes rather than immediate, measurable effects. Longitudinal designs could help track how communication interventions interact with reporting behaviors, community discourse, service access, institutional responsiveness, and broader shifts in public legitimacy.

Future research should also pay greater attention to under-documented and informal prevention practices. The present literature privileges visible campaigns, institutional programmes, and policy-linked initiatives. Yet much norm change may occur through everyday mediation, informal support, local organizing, peer influence, and community dialogue that do not enter formal reporting channels or academic publication streams. Bringing these practices into the evidence base would enrich understanding of how prevention actually functions in low-visibility or resource-constrained environments.

Finally, there is room for stronger interdisciplinary integration. The themes identified in this study sit at the intersection of social work, gender studies, public health, communication, policy studies, and community development. Future scholarship would benefit from designs that do not isolate these domains but instead examine how symbolic framing, relational norms, service systems, governance structures, and lived experiences operate together in the prevention of violence against women.

Final Remark

This study contributes to the literature by clarifying how social marketing and communication-based interventions are discussed as part of a wider prevention architecture in honor-regulated contexts. Its central argument is that violence prevention in such settings cannot be adequately understood through awareness campaigns, legal reforms, or service provision alone. What emerges instead is a multi-level framework in which norm regulation, cultural reframing, community participation, masculinity transformation, and communication-policy infrastructures interact as mutually reinforcing pathways of change. By organizing these dispersed strands into a coherent thematic structure, the study offers a more analytically precise account of how prevention is imagined across the literature and why socially legitimate, community-engaged, and institutionally supported approaches are likely to matter most. In this respect, the study advances a structurally informed and social work-relevant understanding of prevention that is attentive to gender justice, collective responsibility, and the conditions required for durable change.

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ARAŞTIRMACILARIN KATKI ORANI

Çalışma tek yazarlıdır.

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