

## Negotiating the Societal and Cultural Impact on a Perpetrator's Psyche in Elif Shafak's

### *Honour*

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### *Abstract*

*The present study focuses on investigating the behavioral psychology of the protagonist, Iskender as a killer from the text Honour by Elif Shafak, a renowned Turkish novelist. Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1977) presents the importance of Observational Learning, Imitation, and Modeling in an individual's social learning and personality development. He propounds that behavior, cognition, and other environmental influences: all operate as interacting determinants to influence the development of an individual. Hence, by taking the cognitive framework of Bandura, and by tracking the factors behind the felony committed by Iskender in the name of honor, the researchers have analyzed Iskender's behavioral psychology and guilt-oriented self. The study showed that Iskender was not criminal by nature but had been forced to act on honor ideology. Honor serves as a social code in Turkish Islamic culture and the analysis shed light on the moral principles or ethos in Turkish society implying that moral degradation and honor-killing practices are an everyday phenomenon in Turkish Islamic culture. The arguments in the study provided a lens to the readers to understand the psyche of the accused; Iskender was a victim of culturally transmitted ideology. Society, culture, and immediate relations served as the powerful influences on him in instigating him to commit this felony. Besides, the analysis exposed the subaltern position of women in Turkish culture. The study is a positive addition to Turkish literature and literature on honor killing.*

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Felony, Honor Killing, Subaltern, Social Learning Theory, Turkish Culture

### **Introduction**

In this study, the researchers aim to investigate the fact as to how far Iskender is solely responsible for committing an act of honor killing. Saltik argues that "Iskender is not only the perpetrator of the crime but the victim of the same crime" (2016, p 176). Thus, the study negotiates the position of an accused in this regard. Secondly, the study further investigates who the actual victims and the real perpetrators of honor are killing crimes. Rose states in this regard, "How often, outside fiction, are we invited to understand the perpetrator of violence?" (2017, p 157). It highlights that the text has several instances which support the above-mentioned propositions that society and culture have a strong impact on pushing an individual to commit a violent act of killing. The same is the case with Iskender, who, being the young and sole male member of his family becomes a victim to so-called norms of Turkish Muslim patriarchal society and culture.

The novel *Honour* is a family tale of the Turkish-Kurdish Topraks, which stretches back to three stereotypical patriarchal generations and focuses on the killing of the aunt, Jamila, by her fundamentalist and socio-culturally influenced nephew, Iskender. The text *Honour* is a feministic study, and it brings to limelight the key issues of Honor killing, subjugation of women, and the impact of religion on a Muslim family experiencing diaspora. This is not only the story of one generation rather it is the story of three generations. The text starts with first-person narration by Esma, Iskender's younger sister, then with the shift in time and places, multiple narrators take their turns as the text moves forward. Saltik argues in her thesis that Shafak "invites readers to feel Iskender" (2012, p 169). This statement serves as an impetus and invites the readers to draw on multiple perspectives to analyze Iskender's behavior and his psycho-social development.

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### Research Methodology

This research being descriptive in design is qualitative research. It proceeds to the interpretation of the key incidents, the protagonist's psyche, and relevant factors in the framework of Albert Bandura's *Social Cognitive Theory*. Out of his ideas, imitation, modeling, and reinforcement were taken to analyze Iskender's personality.

### Literature Review

This section contributes to our understanding of how honor killing appears as a culture-bound ideology. Saltik in her thesis *Exploring Honor Killings through Literature: An Investigation of Motivations for Honor Killings* argues, "It is important to remember that honor killers are not monsters, but they are usually ordinary people who are motivated by their society to kill for the honor. The killer's feelings and motivations should be investigated to understand the nature of the phenomenon" (Saltik, 2016, p 189)

Honor killing, a disgraceful, appalling, and heinous crime, is an extreme form of violence against women. The patriarchal figures while strictly adhering to their traditional values take honor as a code of living and lose the lives of their loved ones in the process of honor killing. Honor killing is generally associated with the Middle East Asian countries and South Asian countries but it occurs all over the world. Besides, the practice of honor killing is exercised in many Muslim countries such as Pakistan, Malaysia, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kurdistan. Methods for killing in the name of honor are stabbing, acid burning, shooting, beating, murder, abduction, mutilation, stoning, and beheading of women.

However, women are exclusively the target of honor killing. The slightest idea that a woman is engaged in an immoral activity or is involved in a relationship that is not acceptable by the society or has brought shame to the family by not following the socio-cultural norms of the society, can lead her on the verge of destruction. Saltik argues in this regard, "while the victims lose their lives for breaking the rules of their society, the killers, for fear of losing their social status and roles, feel so much pressure that they obey the values and rules of the society even if they require them to kill their loved ones" (2016,p 189). Dr. Haile in a paper talked about the Honor killing that each year more than 5,000 women are being killed in the name of honor nationally. He expresses his views addressing the European Parliament as "Honor killing is often mistakenly believed to be an Islamic practice or a practice condoned by Islam since it often occurs in Muslim-majority societies. In actuality, honor killing is forbidden in Islam and there is no mention of this practice in the Qur'an or the Hadiths" (Haile, 2007 p. 02).

As far as the research works done on *Honour* are concerned a scholar, Dr. Sethi has penned down her views about the text in *the International Journal of Research* as:

The central theme of the novel revolves around the traditional bound male psychology devoted to the preservation of the honor of their families which sadly, for these men rests only on the actions of their women. Whereas men can go out free and have the privilege of indulging in extramarital affairs, for which ironically again the wife is to be blamed who cannot keep her husband home, the woman even though dumped by the erring husband has no right to love another man or lead her life according to her wishes (Sethi,2016,p 647).

Akram and Waheed in their study have presented an analysis of Iskender's character in light of Alfred Adlers, who introduced the concept of Inferiority Complex in his monograph, "A Study of Organ Inferiority and its Physical Compensations"(1971). They argue that Iskender suffered from an inferiority complex. According to Adlers, the inferiority complex is associated with physical impairment in the body. The researchers argued that some incidents (bullying) in childhood triggered Iskender's behavior and inferiority complex. "Iskender has to face bullying as a child. The incident is described as being part of his journal entry, emphasizing its significance" (Akram & Waheed, 2018, p 02). The two aspects of Adler's theory Inferiority Complex and pampered child and Adult have been taken to analyze his personality. Overall, they have presented the psychoanalytical analysis of Iskender's personality. They argued that Pembe, his mother has pampered him throughout his childhood which influenced him negatively. This study has endeavored to fill the gap in the researches on Iskender through an analysis of the impact of social and familial factors on his personality.

## Analysis

### Societal and Cultural Impacts on Iskender: A Study of the Multiple Factors

This section of the study endeavors to analyze Iskender's character, the protagonist of the selected text, from the perspective of Bandura's *Social Cognitive Theory*. The text *Honour* by Shafak falls into the category of Honor killing literature where a Muslim migrating family has to face a diasporic situation. The researchers argue that Iskender, though sins murdering his mother for the sake of honor, is not the sole committer of this brutal act, but society, culture, and religion act as instigators to force him for this act of felony. In this regard, Bandura's *Social Cognitive Theory* and particularly his concepts of *Observational Learning*, *Imitation*, and *Modeling* have been taken to apply as the theoretical framework of this study. Bandura is a Canadian-born American psychologist, who is famous for his *Social Learning Theory*, *Modeling*, and the *Bobo Doll Experiment*. Jauchon quotes Bandura as,

Much of the development in human cognition is explained by the interplay of internal personal factors in the form of (1) cognitive, affective and biological events, (2) behavior, and (3) environmental events. People are viewed as having control over 'the motivational, affective, and social determinants of their intellectual functioning, as well as the cognitive aspects (qt in Jauchon, 2016, 02).

The narrator Esma tells the story of her mother, which moves in a fragmented form instead of linear progression. It opens with the family of Berzo. He is the head of the family and had nine daughters but no son to carry his name. Among those nine daughters, Pembe and Jamila are identical twins but Jamila has a heart on the right side while Pembe, on the left which causes the death of Jamila later when she comes to London to meet her sister, Pembe. Saltik in her research mentions Mazhar Bagli, who brings this notion to attention that crime-oriented sinners and killers are not themselves ferocious instead they are stimulated by society to do such violent actions. He opines that those playwrights and authors who migrate to diasporic communities mostly portray the killers in the name of honor in their narratives as brutal murderers instead of blaming those individuals who instigate them to be rapacious.

Bandura postulates that human ideas, thinking patterns, emotions, and cognitive abilities are molded and reconstructed by social influences that convey information and activate the emotional reaction of the learners. Bandura states in this regard: "People function as active agents in their motivation" (50) because there are some specific derives in the human mind which act according to the situation people face such as emotionalism, aggressiveness, hatred, and love, etc. If an individual follows anyone from those who derive intentionally then his behavior will be characterized by that particular drive. Bandura in his *Social Cognitive Theory* has put specific stress on *Observational Learning*, *Imitation*, *Modeling*, and *Reinforcement* which will be elaborated later on by co-relating them in the analysis of the development of Iskender's personality, his psyche, and inner conflicts in the commitment of the felony.

When the text opens, the readers find Iskender behind the bars, counting the days of his imprisonment. The images through flashback techniques from his previous life are presented to the readers, which bring before our eyes a different Iskender. There would be no exaggeration to say that as the text unfolds itself from the beginning to the end, we have three different personalities of Iskender ...Iskender as Sultan of his beloved mother, Iskender... a killer of his mother.....and finally Iskender, a remorseful son repenting on his violent act of murdering his mother. Shafak herself has talked about why this is important to know about the factors involving in promoting Iskender's psychology. "If we do not understand the pressure that men like Iskender feel and in which way they are constructed as men, the problem of violence against women cannot be solved"(Shafak,2013,p 169).

However, to strengthen our understanding of Iskender's personality, the analysis of his three selves is important. Iskender as Sultan is brought up in a very caring and affectionate manner by his mother, Pembe because he is the first child. Pembe loves her son and calls him Sultan and uses different words of endearment such as "Promise, my sultan", "My son", "Malamin. My sultan" (Shafak, 2013, p 30). Originally, Sultan is an Arabic word that means "power", "rulership", and "authority". It has been derived from the word "Sultan", meaning "authority" or "power". Afterward, this term was started to be used as the designation of certain rulers who asserted and professed almost full sovereignty in practical terms. The dignified name, "my sultan" has been bestowed upon him.

Pembe's naming of her son after the name of a great commander, Iskender, which means heroism, is an important incident in understanding his personality.

Pembe, being the mother of a son, loves Iskender more than anything in the world. Contextually, Carol Delaney presents his views as, "hence, the concept of having the son is the essential part of the concept of heredity" (Shafak 2013, p 36). Pembe fears to name her son because she believes that her mother, Naze, would envy the birth of Iskender. After all, her mother was unable to give birth to a son and 'craved and prayed for a son. Saltik argues: "Shafak emphasizes the importance of mothers on the masculine formation of their sons" (Shafak, 2013, p 175). In this way, the text is constructed upon the mother-son- relationship framework.

Iskender as the killer of his mother brings another image of him before the readers. Iskender's faith in his mother shatters when he comes to know about his mother's adulterous relationship. He believes that his mother has deceived him by engaging in an illegal affair with Elias and subsequently kills her. He gives vent to his feelings in these sentences: "my sultan.' Don't call me that, I wanted to say. Don't call me anything...She used to love me more than anything - her first child, first son... Everything was difficult now...I could sense her movements, touch her guilt, smell her shame...I wasn't gonna hurt anyone. I only wanted to scare her - or him" (Shafak, 2013, p 51).

Iskender undergoes the experience of being duped and cheated by his mother when he finds her letting in some strange man in their home. He forbids his mother to work in "Crystal Scissors", a salon. His feelings have been aptly conveyed by Shafak by telling him that "never had it occurred to him that you could deceive the person you held dear. It was his first lesson in the complexity of love" (Shafak 2013, p 31). Thus, he perceives that his mother does not love him anymore as the sentence "You could deceive the person you held dear" is appropriate in his judgment of his mother which leads him to perform an act of felony. Shafak puts her stance in the text regarding this honor killing issue as: "It is growing cancer in modern society,'...given that, in numerous countries, the honor of the family is deemed to be more important than the happiness of its individuals" (Shafak, 2013, p 72).

Iskender as a remorseful son is third self of Iskender. He repents over his crime of stabbing his mother to death. The sentence "I slapped again, harder" from the previously stated statement, clearly shows his reluctance in committing the disgraceful act. His days in prison and his letters full of his repentance and remorsefulness, present that aspect of his nature which contributes to the proposition that he is a victim of Turkish patriarchal norms. Iskender's initial years in prison are highly regretful. He flares up with anger and fury and often starts beating himself violently. Iskender, immersed in deep sorrow, blames himself as the cause of his mother's death. He tells the reader his agony in these words, "I harmed myself. My head. Because I didn't like what was in there. I burned cigarettes inside my palms. They swelled, like puffy eyes. I slashed my legs. Lots of meat on a leg, the thighs, the knees, the ankles" (Shafak, 2013, p 70). This remorse inculcates in the minds of the readers, the image of Iskender as a remorseful son. The swelling of palms and burning of cigarettes are appropriate actions on his part to ponder upon his remorseful self.

Additionally, letters written by Iskender to himself during his imprisonment in *Shrewsbury Prison* in the 1990s reflect his three selves. Those letters were very significant in the structural as well as thematic framework of the novel. Shafak incorporates the letters very skilfully in the narration to reveal Iskender's sinner conflict on one hand and on the other hand, the influences from the past which are instrumental in shaping up his psyche. These letters show Iskender's remorseful condition after committing the act of killing. They have cathartic value as he gives vent to his confusing and disturbing thoughts in them that how he was socially and culturally influenced to kill his mother. His letters are instrumental in revealing his battered self and tormented mind. Contextually, the nine letters written by Iskender are significant in the analysis of his personality and serve as an important stylistic device used by Shafak. They helped the researchers to contest their arguments regarding the multifaceted influences on Iskender's personality. All the relevant information regarding his immediate relations, his comrades in prison, and his three selves have been conveyed to the readers through them.

Taking Bandura's *Social Cognitive Theory* as a theoretical framework of this study, the researchers strive to analyze further Iskender's personality in the framework of *Observational Learning, Modeling, and Imitation*. There is a role of *Observation, Modeling, and Imitation* in shaping the personalities of individuals. A child learns either through keen observation by imitating the action or by modeling. Imitation is the reproduction of an act that is stimulated by the perception of a similar

act by another person. Children consciously imitate and adopt the observed behaviors. Likewise, modeling is also an important part of Observational Learning.

From Bandura's model of *Cognitive Development* if imitation is taken, then it can be realized there was also influence of Adem, Iskender's father, on shaping his son's personality. The kind of aggression, which is the part of Iskender's personality, comes from his father, Adem and in turn, Adem imitates these aggressive actions from his father, baba. Thus, this was an inherited ideology that Iskender owned. Adem's father, baba, used to behave like an aggressive man and this aggressiveness left a lasting impact upon Adem's memory. Once, when Adem with his brothers, Tariq and Khalil and mother Ayesha went out on a picnic, then his father became infuriated and behaved aggressively as the narration tells the readers: "Grabbing her by the arm, Baba dragged her towards the bonnet of the van...Baba shoved her head down into the engine and stopped only when her forehead hit it with a thud" (Shafak, 2013,p 56). The words, 'the grabbing through arm violently' and 'hitting the head to bonnet' are expressions of physical violence that Adem witnessed about his mother and later on transferred to his own son's personality. There are many incidents in the text where his father appears as a callous and merciless man presenting a model of savage and uncaring husband, who is always full of abusive language and degrading behavior. Besides, Adam takes his father as a model and adopts his roles in his later life as Bandura argues that modeling is instrumental in shaping an individual's personality. Similarly, Adem behaved in the same vein with his wife and he only comes home to get money from Pembe and rebukes her by using such language: "You come home at this hour and you think I'm going to believe your lies. Where's the money, you whore?" (Shafak70). The use of the word 'whore', a version of the socially abused language, used by Iskender's father for his mother in front of her son imprints a bad impression on his mind, hence, strengthening the concept of imitation of his father's ideology and behavior. Iskender took this ideology from his father that women should not deserve respect.

Adem's hitting of his wife with any sharp tool and thing available to his hands and making her injured presents before the readers a negative image of Adem which has been inculcated into Iskender's mind since his childhood. The psychologists argue that negative and violence-oriented incidents leave bad impressions on the psyche of children which later on become the permanent part of their personality. Contextually, it can be inferred that Iskender's father proved himself a bad model for his son through these violent delinquencies. By having relation with another woman Roxana, a club dancer, Adem betrayed Pembe, his pious wife, and started living with Roxana in a separate apartment. Iskender himself was not different from his father as he continued observing his father. Iskender made Katie, his girlfriend, pregnant out of wedlock and still considered his mother impious, who has a decent relationship with Elias.

Iskender bears an image of his father in his mind as an aggressive husband and acts accordingly in his later life when he has to look after his home as the sole male member of his family. He asserts: "I was the head of the family since Dad had gone off and I didn't want her to work anymore" (Shafak, 2013, p 50). It should be borne in mind that these are the contributing factors in transforming Iskender into a killer and resultantly his immediate relations have to face the catastrophic phenomenon of his act of honor killing.

As far as Bandura's prospect of *Reinforcement* is concerned, Uncle Tariq is the one who provides a stimulus to Iskender to stand against his mother. He provides an incentive and motivates Iskender that he must take a step to protect his family name. Uncle Tariq interferes in the family matters of his brother, Adem's family by igniting Iskender's rage upon his mother for bringing shame to their family name. Shafak sheds light on Tariq's feelings as he thinks that "their honor was his honor" (Shafak, 2013, p 154).

Iskender feels reluctance while killing his mother. He repeatedly ponders upon the commitment of the act but his uncle is the one who reinforces him into the act of killing in the name of honor. Uncle Tariq also influences Iskender's personality by performing his role as an instigator. He is the second dominating influence on shaping Iskender's personality. Tariq makes Iskender realize that now in the absence of his father he is the head of the family and should tackle family matters. He also prompts him to warn his mother Pembe off, of having any kind of relationship with strange men. This was likely to happen as Iskender was raised in Istanbul and UK with strict patriarchal values. Iskender himself feels that now it is his responsibility to preserve the honor of family when he comes to know through his uncle that his mother does have an affair.

Consequently, Iskender, supported and reinforced by his uncles' orders, stabs his aunt on a mistaken supposition that she is his mother. Later, his uncle reprimands him for doing such an act of ferociousness by saying, "what have you done, son?" His voice sounded strangled. "This is terrible" (Shafak, 2013, p 247). Iskender was dumbfounded at the suddenly changed behavior of his uncle. His uncle's reaction was opposite what he was expecting. Iskender expressed: "I was taken aback. 'Bb...but...wee...ttt...alk...edab...ab...au...ttt...this.' 'Surely we did not,' my uncle said. The man who had told me everything and then impressed upon me, over and over again, that I had to do something and do it soon, had vanished into the air, I was stunned (Shafak, 2013, p 247-248).

Uncle Tariq completely withdraws himself from the situation and behaves as if he does not know this and is listening to it for the very first time. He alienates himself from the situation by completely denying it entirely as he says: "Iskender, son, you have to turn yourself in. I'll tell the police this is exactly what I told you when you rang me. You cannot run from the law!" (Shafak 2013, p 248). Although Iskender's intention was not to kill his mother but to frighten and control her as he acknowledges that: "I wasn't gonna hurt anyone. I only wanted to scare her-or him" (Shafak, 2013, p 51). But uncle Tariq acts here as a hypocrite person who turns away from Iskender at the time of distress. Iskender, a boy in charge of honor killing, is portrayed to be deluded by a cruel patriarchal figure, Uncle Tariq.

Furthermore, Bandura has proposed about *Observational Learning* that human beings learn largely from their social surroundings. Thus, the orator, a man with Islamic ideology, also plays an important role in shaping Iskender's personality. Iskender observes him but fails to analyze his teaching methods as the orator says: "In the West people are confused. They confuse happiness with freedom and freedom with promiscuity. Whereas we respect our mothers, sisters, and wives" (Shafak 2013, p 216). Orator, a man of ideas, treats Iskender gently as he teaches him about moral ethos. He annotates that "we respect our mothers, sisters, and wives" but his teachings leave no positive imprint on his personality. He further instructs him to pronounce his full name as: "Alex is not short for Iskender" the orator inveighed. 'Think about it again, brother. Are we going to have to change our names so that the Brits can pronounce them more easily? What else will we have to give up? It should be the other way round. Make everyone learn your full name and say it with respect (Shafak, 2013, p 217).

Iskender is a culturally influenced child who asserts that in the absence of his father he is the head of the family and acts like that: "While Iskender craved to control the world" (Shafak, 2013, p 62). Orator gives him some books related to moral values but he does not find them interesting and returns them to Orator without reading them: "You've got to be strong...But you also need moral fortitude...' The mind needs ideas the way a car needs fuel to run. And ideas come from books, largely" (Shafak, 2013, p 226-227). The Orators' advice also instigates Iskender to kill his mother. Iskender, being immature and adolescent remains confused about the teachings of the orator. He further tells him about the respect of his parents, "If your parents don't know God, you've got to choose God over them. Because God is bigger than your parents. But beware. If you don't know God yourself and if you disobey your parents, you'll be floating in the air. No principles to hold you up, man" (Shafak, 2013, 254). The Orator tries his best to make Iskender clear about the things he was confused about but Iskender misunderstands them. Giving him advice about the development of inner strength he states: "You're your own man. I can see that. No strings attached. That's the way you like it. But don't forget that great fighters are great inside and out. If you had stronger values you'd be invincible" (Shafak, 2013, p 253).

By taking the concept of *Modeling* out of Bandura's *Social Cognitive Theory* in shaping the personality of Iskender, the influence of Zeeshan on Iskender's personality cannot be overlooked. Learning from models may take varied forms, including new behavior patterns, judgmental standards, cognitive competencies, and adaptation for creating new forms of behavior. Zeeshan, a sixty-seven-year-old man, Iskender's comrade in prison and advocate of love, serves as a role model for him. That is a kind of *direct modeling*, modeling from real-life events and happenings as proposed by Bandura. Zeeshan's soulful and spiritual discussion with Iskender in prison elevates Iskender to the level of calmness. His moral counseling has a cathartic effect on Iskender's personality. His words have a religious flavor. He instructs in this way: "You can't do whatever you want. You only do what God puts in you. I have elements. You have elements. Zeeshan mostly water. You, maybe fire? Yes, I think you fire. If there is no harmony inside, that person always angry, always fight, always a pity.

Sharp tongue like arrow... If your ego is strong you are weak. If the ego is weak, you strong. (Shafak, 2013, p 204)

Here, he is talking about the human self as made of elements of water, earth, fire, and heaven. According to him, Iskender has fire as dominating element and Zeeshan has water as dominating element. What Iskender needs to develop is inner harmony to bring balance and strength to his personality. He continues, "Hell", he says. "You have been there. Ah, your soul is in flames. But it has to be. Because you did a terrible thing. You have to burn. Afterward, you start to work your way up. You know what is at the end of it?" "Heaven?" (Shafak, 2013, p 204).

Zeeshan, whose religion is love, teaches him about love. Zeeshan asks Iskender for meditation to focusing on his present state of mind. "Clear your mind,...Air pollution no good for cities. Brain pollution no good for humans" (p 304). When Iskender started meditating he could not help himself remembering the individuals who have invoked him to kill his mother. Iskender himself acknowledged the fact that society and culture had attacked his moral ethos as: "I cannot stop running through possible candidates. Uncle Tariq, the Orator, my old buddy Arshad...I don't want to see any of them. I blame them all for making me the person I was. And yet they are all free, enjoying their life, while I am here burning" (Shafak, 2013, p 304-305).

"I blame them all for making me the person I was" is Iskender's direct acknowledgment which makes the researchers contest the proposition that moral values and culturally-bound ideology influence the human psyche, thinking patterns, and social behaviors. Zeeshan, with his ideas on Sufism and mysticism, let Iskender enter into the realm of self-realization and self-discovery. His moving and soul-inspiring lectures on love reinforce him to feel his sin, "Always better to look within. Leave other people to themselves. Every bitterness is a heavy bag. Why carry? You are a hot-air balloon. Tell me, you want to go up or down? Let go of anger, hurt. Drop the sacks..... Every human being is constantly moving. Some go down, some go up. If you want to climb, start criticizing yourself. A man who cannot see his faults can never heal" (Shafak, 2013, p. 305).

Thus, it can be argued that Bandura's notion that man learns from society through *observation and modeling* has been analyzed through Zeeshan's powerful speeches in motivating Iskender, as Zeeshan is the one who let him feel that he has done wrong by murdering his mother. After his moral counseling, Iskender spends his days in prison remorsefully. There he regrets, mourns, and repents for the severe action done against his mother and the result was acknowledgment. Iskender, a remorseful son, writes a letter to his mother in a repenting tone. "If I could be sixteen years old again, I'd never do the things that I did to cause so much pain. To you, my sister, my brother, my poor aunt. I cannot change the past. Not a single moment of it" (Shafak, 2013, p 323).

Additionally, while living in London, Iskender adopts western ways of dressing, even he changes his name from Iskender to Alex which is short and can easily be pronounced. Esma addresses him as: 'Alex'. Iskender has had personal freedom. The impact of Western culture on Iskender's personality can be traced to the fact that Iskender formed his gang by imitating westerners and became the leader of that gang. He observed some flamboyant hooligans who used to mock and torment him. Resultantly, he started to bully everyone outside the home and inside the home. He, being the leader of the gang outside the home and sultan inside the home, feels elevated and superior to others. Iskender boasts at his maltreatment with the boy that how they 'assaulted' and 'thrown him into a filthy canal'. "We beat up two of the boys but didn't touch the leader. I wanted to make him sweat" (Shafak, 2013 p 164).

Bandura (1977) opines that children imitate at once and their behavior is specifically determined by social influences. They also go through different processes, out of the *attentional process* is also important to mention here. In this process, a child is more observing and attentive. He observes the social actions first and then tries to imitate them because a growing child can easily be molded into any form due to his attentiveness. Similarly, Iskender has adopted various habits which are part of Western culture, becoming oblivion of his Islamic culture. He became addicted to smoking and drinking which are forbidden in Islam and any Islamic family. His words convey this as: "I'm dying for a cigarette....my father never knew this, but I and the boys used to have a cider or beer now and then. Never whisky though" (Shafak 2013, p 72). 'Cigarette' and 'beer' are the appropriate expressions to highlight the impact of Western culture on Iskender.

To keep a mistress is also not a part of Islamic culture but Iskender also has a girlfriend. His language shows the nature of the illicit relation he has with her. "He leaned forward and held her



hand. 'Hello, how do you do? My name is Iskender. You can call me Alex" (Shafak, 2013, p 127-128). Iskender's freedom also contributes to making him bossy, and domineering. The culture of London manipulates his personality with the liberal customs, behaviors, and ways of Londoners. He is free in London to have a girlfriend, to make his gang, to smoke, to drink, and to have a separate key of the gate of the house. He thinks there is a difference between his family and a girlfriend as he gives voice to his ideology by saying that "your girlfriend was your girl, your family was your family. Certain things had to be kept separate. Like water and soil" (Shafak, 2013, p 50). In the same vein, Iskender was not bound to come home at regular hours, and there was no one to own explanation from him to come late at night at home. Even he had his separate room the way the westerners have. Shafak tells us, "Iskender had his world in here, sports gear, and trainers and, most of all, freedom. Nobody meddled in his life" (Shafak, 2013, p240). Iskender's personality and his thinking align in fostering his image as a killer. All these incidents indicate the mindset of the killer himself. The cultural influence is an important factor out of multifaceted factors, though his personality and cognitive development are shaped by Turkish culture and society. Iskender is uncontrolled and liberated because he is not answerable to anyone for his actions.

Allport's definition of personality is the most inclusive one. He defines personality as: "Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of that psychophysical system that determines his unique adjustments to the environment" (Allport, 1961, p 15). Thus both biological and psychological influences play a vital role in shaping an individual's personality. Allport propagates that personality is not merely the outcome of hereditary factors but is formed by our daily experiences too. Taking Allport's notion of personality to analyze Iskender's personality, it can be argued that his personality is also a reflection of environmental factors. The childhood experiences of Iskender made him stubborn and aggressive in behavior which contributes to the formation of his image in his later life. The hereditary influences from his father and grandfather are also reflected in his personality. Allport presents his key notion that; inheritance and social environment are mutually dependent having an equal influence on personality development. Thus, Allport's view strengthens our understanding of Iskender's personality development.

Furthermore, analyzing from the perspective of the culturally transmitted ideology, it would be no exaggeration to say that there is also the role of his mother in making him aggressive, violent and promoting his patriarchal figure. This fact implies that Pembe, being a mother of a male child also maintains patriarchal values in bringing up Iskender. He acknowledges that 'I saw a trace of pride in her eyes. Saltik states in this regard, "To ensure power, the mother has to raise her son in compliance with traditional masculine roles. Pembe presents such a mother" (Shafak, 2013, p 180). If Pembe at this stage of Iskender's development had cautioned him about not being unfair with others then he might have had been a changed Iskender. Pembe's love for Iskender made him over-confident and authoritative. Iskender acknowledges this as: "I expected her to tell me a thing or two. A slap on the wrist A pinch on my ear at least. But she only looked at me long and hard, and I think I saw a trace of pride in her eyes. Then she said, 'What would you like to eat for dinner, my sultan? Shall I make your lentil soup, the way you like it?' We didn't talk about the boy I had assaulted. Neither they nor later (Shafak, 2013, p 165).

She never intervenes in Iskender's illegal actions as far as his girlfriend and outdoor activities are concerned. Even Esme used to blame her mother because her bringing up of Iskender makes her responsible for Iskender's personality. Another important incident from Iskender's childhood contributes to shaping his personality. Once Pembe took Iskender to an old lady for naming his son. The old lady minutely observed his behavior and foresaw his future. The old lady asked Iskender to bring water for her, 'Will you go and get me a cup of water?', then Iskender replied, 'Why don't you go and get your water? I'm not your servant.' From Iskender's haughty attitude, the old lady told Pembe that "Some children are like the Euphrates, so fast, so rowdy. Their parents cannot catch up with them. I'm afraid your son will break your heart to pieces" (Shafak 2013, p 24). Pembe named her son after the name of a great commander, Iskender, which stands for masculinity, superiority, power, will, and achievement. We are told about her choice of names as: "However, the name Sultan has been bestowed upon him and with it, the responsibility of being the carrier of values attached to this sacred name has also been conferred upon Iskender by his mother. Hence the question arises as to why Pembe does not forbid his son from being a traditional spoiled son (Shafak, 2013, p 183).



The notion of motherhood in Turkey has always been a sacred concept about which Shafak has stated, "It must be perfect. There is no room for ups and downs" (Shafak, 2013, p 183). As men perform their roles in constructions of femininity by labeling women 'others', women also have their roles in the construction of masculinity, and in *Honour*, this role has been assigned to the mothers. "Pembe as a mother who is raised with the values of classical patriarchy tries to empower herself through the power of her son" (Shafak, 2013, p 186). This is a sort of patriarchal bargain they do when they dominate their sons and raise them as powerful men.

Contextually, the argument that his mother has a role in promoting his strong masculine self is justified because women are bound by Turkish society to act in a way that demands from them the justification of motherhood duties towards their male children. Secondly, for their survival, they have to take the help of their male children, to exert pride in a male-dominated society that otherwise is bent to marginalize them. Likewise, Iskender's mother, acting on behalf of society and culture, can be held responsible but to some extent. As it is argued, "Under classical patriarchy, women become experts in maximizing their life chances through patriarchal bargain" (Shafak 2013, p186).

Iskender's relationship with his sister is also a controversial one, the discussion of which might help highlight different versions of himself for a better understanding of the reader. Iskender's relationship with his sister is also confused as being friendly at one time and unfriendly and rude at the other. We are told by Iskender himself: "I must have told Esma things I had not shared with anyone else – not even with the boys or with Katie" (Shafak, 2013, p.102).

There are several such incidents in the text which support this argument of the researchers that Iskender proves himself to be a fundamentalist. The post-murder thinking of Iskender in this regard when he says: "I had stabbed her once on the right side of her chest. That would show her how grave her sin was. It would give her time to think about her mistake, to repent. And the man would be scared out of his wits. He would leave us alone. Our family's honor was cleaned" (Shafak 2013, p 247) is quite evident of his rigid religious approach. As far as Turkish culture is concerned, Iskender's prime position in the family as the elder son and the sole protector of the family's name also demands him to act as a strict practitioner of Islamic values. He has been trapped in the shackles of strict fundamental ideologies and his cultural values.

### **Conclusion**

Since every perpetrator is pushed psychologically and culturally by the ideology of the relevant society and its culture, so the impact of society and relevant culture on an individual's psyche and thinking perspectives cannot be negated. The case of Iskender is no exception in this regard. This study tried to structure a cognitive map to present justifications for Iskender's advocacy that he was not the sole proprietor of the action being committed but a range of psychological, ideological, and cultural impacts and factors were involved in instigating him to perform the felony. Saltik rightly said in this regard that "to eliminate honor killings, killers should first be understood" (Saltik, 2016, p198).

Hence, the researchers have tried to approach the crime of honor killing from different angles where every angle is vital in bringing us closer to the main hypothesis that an individual is always prompted by the cultural and societal norms and his immediate relations in the development of his cognitive framework and moral codes. The analysis revealed Iskender's personality, habits, thinking patterns, and culturally- influenced ideology to contest the notion that he is also the victim. This study is significant from this angle because it presented the perspective of an accused to the readers and the role of society in transforming him from an innocent adult into a villainous murderer. The study highlighted different incidents from the text to reinforce and argue the above-stated hypothesis and tried to present the possible answers to the question, why only a killer is blamed in acts of violence, and why not blame the society and culture? Based on the premise that the moral outlook is grounded in the ideology of a particular society and its culture, it has been argued well that an individual's moral ethos is influenced by imitation and modeling, (the cognitive frameworks) as proposed by Bandura in his *Social Cognitive theory*.

### **Recommendations**

This study has approached Iskender's personality from the framework of Bandura's ideas concerning the impact of society and culture on an individual's psyche. But, the researchers in the future can research Iskender's personality in the light of other emerging psycho-social theories. Iskender's fundamentalist self can also be argued in light of theoretical insights of fundamentalism. Besides, the position of women, Pembe and Jamila, can be argued as the colonized selves in perspective of

postcolonial theorists' views. Besides, Iskender's post-killing remorse can be approached as post-traumatic stress which can be analyzed in the post-traumatic stress framework.

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