



I39 Juvenile Murderers and Delinquency in Adana, Turkey

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After attending this presentation, attendees will gain an understanding about the general characteristics of minors who committed murder and certain features of their association with crime, in particular, characteristics of the relationship between murder and juveniles and the role in different cultural contexts and criminal etiology.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by establishing the relationship between murders committed by juveniles and their general characteristics so as to develop preventive responses and to prevent juvenile delinquency.

In the studies conducted on juvenile delinquency, internal migration should be addressed along with general factors leading the child to delinquency. Migration is both an affecting and affected process. It is divided into two types: "internal migration" (when it occurs from one region to another region of the same country) and "international migration" (when it occurs from one country to another).¹ There are very few studies which specifically emphasize the correlation of internal migration with juvenile delinquency in Turkey.² The phenomenon of internal migration from rural areas to cities due to unemployment, poverty, and economic reasons is also accompanied by the risk of delinquency for the young generation. If internal migration movements are regulated in Turkey with an eye toward decreasing juvenile delinquency (e.g., by developing preventive government policies to solve problems or improve conditions leading to internal migration), then downstream problems such as unemployment, poverty, and detachment of the child from the educational system may also be handled.³

Today, sharp objects are widely used in homes and workplaces for various purposes. These objects can be kept within reach, except for some special articles, and do not constitute criminal objects except for their out-of-purpose use as set forth by law. However, these objects are used quite often for the purposes of assault, defense, and even murder.

Even though Turkish law limits ownership and possession of firearms, it is common in the surrounding region to carry or possess guns, both licensed and unlicensed. These firearms are owned for a variety reasons, such as traditional customs or vendetta, and they are easily supplied. In turn, this may lead to more frequent murder using firearms.

According to statistics issued by the Turkish Statistical Institute in 2011, based on the type of offense charged and data for persons under 18 years of age, 390 youngsters were charged with the offense of murder, 366 of whom were male and 24 female. In Adana, 18 male minors in 2011 and 17 male minors and one female minor in 2012 were charged with homicide.⁴

This study, based on data from judicial files of persons charged with the offense of murder at a young age, proposes to identify the reasons, motives, and frequency of these murders, the association with internal migration, the breakdown of these offenses in Turkey, and the demographic characteristics of defendants as well as the deceased victims.^{5,6}

Files registered under the Adana Courthouse National Judiciary Information System (UYAP) sent to the Third High Criminal Court of the Adana Courthouse between June 2007 and June 2013 and settled after June 2007 were analyzed to establish significant relationships between the reasons and motives of the murders committed by juveniles and to define the nature and characteristics of such relationships.^{7,8}

Regarding cases of murder by juveniles included in this study, 16 (70%) were committed willfully, three (15%) on a premeditated basis, one (5%) was by torturing, and one (5%) murder involved a child who could not defend her/himself physically and emotionally. In the majority of the cases, (55%) were stabbings, while 25% were firearms cases, and the rest were blunt trauma, strangulation, and fire setting.

Out of 20 youngsters, 18 (90%) were living in slums or detached houses in suburbs, and two (10%) were living in the city and flats. Families of 15 (75%) children were migrants. Of those, 13 (65%) migrated from rural parts of the southeast regions.

Analysis of the socio-demographic data of the deceased victims revealed that the average age was 24.82 ± 10.92 years (min: 12.75, max: 53.66), 19 (95%) were male, and one (5%) was female. Of the murdered victims, 10 (50%) were friends or acquaintances, five (25%) were not acquaintances, and five (25%) were parents, siblings, relatives, and girl/boyfriends.

This study explores the reasons and motives of murders committed at an early age, the frequency of these murders, the impact of migration, and the demographic characteristics of the accused and murdered, and contributes to the recognition and prevention of juvenile delinquency.

Juvenile delinquents included in this study were between 15 and 17 years of age, and 60% committed murder without premeditation based on impulsive decisions made during disputes with the victim. The major difference between childhood and adolescence is that judgment starts to mature.⁸⁻¹⁰ The high-cognition stage begins with a transition from concrete thinking to abstract reasoning, which involves conceptual learning. It is of vital importance to assess, in terms of forensic psychiatry, whether juveniles at the time of crime are capable of considering events willfully, consciously, and freely and if they are able to reason in healthy ways, even if they do not suffer from any psychiatric disorder.⁴

Migrated families may grow poorer as they are detached from productive activities, with their poverty growing deeper and deeper with time. Under harsh living conditions, children may feel responsible for maintaining their families, they may be obliged to drop out of school, they may suffer from language- and culture-based differences, and they may feel socially marginalized. As 75% of children in this study are from migrant families, they may disproportionately experience the strain of these austere conditions.^{6,11,12}

In conclusion, there should be concentrated efforts to carry out training and rehabilitation activities to raise awareness in the community with an eye toward preventing juvenile murders and preventing the carrying of unregistered firearms and sharp objects by means of police intervention, as the use of firearms in murders is widespread.

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