



Psychiatry & Behavioral Science Section - 2015

I34 Honor-Based Violence: A Cultural Problem!

*Mete K. Gulmen, PhD, MD**, Cukurova University, School of Medicine, Dept of Forensic Medicine, Adana, 01330, TURKEY; and *Sunay Firat, PhD*, Cukurova University, Adana Health Sciences Dept of Nursing, Balcali, Adana 01330, TURKEY

After attending this presentation, attendees will gain an understanding of the relationship that exists between the individual environmental factors of honor-based killings committed by family members and the reasons behind such acts in various cultural contexts, thus assisting in the development of preventive interventions.

This presentation will assist the forensic science community by identifying the causes of culturally and traditionally accepted crimes committed against female members of the family by their male relatives and will assist in the development of preventive programs by preparing the grounds for the establishment of policies and strategies that will eventually pave the way for preventive and ameliorative measures.

Honor can be defined as the commitment to moral principles and social values such as chastity.¹ In particular, its meaning in Turkish refers to the rules regarding sex in the Islamic religion. In Turkey, honor is considered generally to be synonymous with sexual purity.^{2,3}

Despite the different perceptions among different people, it has been observed that the most common trend is to consider women, their bodies and their sexuality, and their control as elements of honor. In this context, to the male members of the family, honor relates to a man's wife, sister, mother, other family members, and even to the other women in his circles. As such, he has a duty to keep an eye on all of these women. This increases the pressure on women, especially in areas where tribal and kinship bonds are strong or where small-scale and face-to-face relationships are established. By controlling her sexual behavior, a woman provides information to society not only about her own honor but also about the honor and pride of her family.⁴

Behavioral repertoires that can be considered as components of a woman's sexuality comprise not only her sexual relationships but also many other forms of behavior, such as her way of dressing, holding hands with the opposite sex, requesting a song for a man on television or radio, kissing, and flirting.⁵

Honor killings are committed as a social reflection of the cultures in which women are considered a commodity.^{6,7} If a woman in Turkey defames her own honor or the honor of her family through her behavior, she may be punished in various ways (verbally and/or physically), as in many other countries. In the case of honor killings, a single perception is enough to trigger a crisis.⁸

According to research conducted by the United Nations Population Fund, more than 5,000 women are killed every year in honor-based killings around the world.⁹

According to The Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM), 1,091 honor-based killings took place between 2000 and 2005, and 322 of those were reported as murders committed in the name of honor. Unfortunately, as the statistical data related to crimes are classified according to the terms of crime, as stated in the Turkish Penal Code, honor killings are recorded only as homicides in the statistics, making it difficult to compile concise data related specifically to honor killings.¹⁰

This study collected only the ten files that were sent to The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th High Criminal Courts of the Adana Courthouse between June 2008 and June 2014 and that were registered in the Adana Courthouse, the National Justice Network Information System.

Providing a clear overview to attendees, focus will be on the individual cases, the cultural infrastructure of the geographical regions in which the killings took place, and the local social attitudes. The cases presented here have all been finalized with court decisions. Focusing only on socio-economic conditions and social pressure as the causes of honor killings may, in a way, cause the violence committed by a person or people to be overlooked. Prevention of honor killings should start by setting aside the current perspective toward the concept. In order to change the traditional perception and judgments of gender, there are a number of necessary steps that must be taken, primarily by public institutions and establishments, who must take effective measures to ensure that the security of life for women is a priority.

Violence against women has been the subject of research for the last 50 years, while forensic science has been taking an interest in the issue for the past 30 years; despite this, significant developments have only been realized within the last ten years. For this reason, it is vital that this matter be a subject of perpetual discussion in the field of forensic sciences so as to improve the level of awareness/consciousness not only in the field of forensic sciences, but also in social development. Accordingly, this study recommends that these cases should be considered on a much broader base and discussed more at an international level.



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Honor, Violence, Cultural Problems