CRIMINAL PROFILING AND THE CHOICE OF MURDER WEAPONS IN TURKEY

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Studies show that about 70% of all murder cases in Turkey involve the use of firearms ([Planty & Truman, 2013](#)). Understanding the psychology underlying the offender's choice of weapons used and the dynamics of an incident may assist in solving a murder. When one looks at the 234 murders involving female victims committed in 2021 in Turkey (Figure-1), one will see that firearms (112) and knives (65) were the most commonly used murder weapons. Other methods used are recorded as strangulation (19), battery/assault (15), fall (5), suffocation (5), fire/burning (2) and torture (2), respectively (Anıtsayaç, n.d.).

Figure-1 Types of Femicide in Turkey 2021

In Figure 1, the weapons and means used in these killings can be viewed in detail. The likely reason why firearms are

preferred is that they are lethal and minimize physical contact with the victim. It is possible to explain this choice through rational choice theory. As such, an offender has the purpose to ensure that the victim will be killed and wants to avoid leaving evidence in contact. People who carry firearms often feel more courageous, thereby making it easier to face the victim. The sense of security that a weapon, such as a firearm or a knife, provides the user can give one the courage to take actions that one would not normally take (Kleck & DeLone, 1993; Phillips & Maume, 2007; Watkins, Huebner and Decker, 2008). In countries with easier access to firearms, the choice of selecting a firearm as a weapon is higher.

When criminals commit murder, they are often acting under emotional circumstances, so they may select a weapon quickly and use one that is conveniently accessible. However, the previous experience of the offender is also among the factors that influence this selection. When we look at the knife usage rate, we see that 65 of the 234 murders were committed with knives (Anıtsayaç, n.d.) There is likely a greater chance of a knife or blunt object being present at the scene than firearms. Decker (1993) has noted the greater likelihood of using a personal weapon due to closer the offender-victim relationship.

Figure - 2 Firearms and knife usage count.

When we look at the data in Figure 2, one can observe that 51 of the 65 stabbing cases and 58 of the 112 firearms cases had occurred within the household (Anıtsayaç, n.d.). Knife usage is lower in the total number of events in the household than firearms, but higher in proportion. It is also important to note that women in the divorce phase are more likely to either be away from home or are prevented by the male spouse from coming home due to a court order. Further clarifying the difference between the type of weapon used, the offender's decision to use more lethal weapons probably depended on the level of the relationship with the victim and the scope of the strain in the relationship. The rational choice theory poses that the benefit cost analysis will drive the offender to choose the most deadly weapon that will guarantee the greatest success, but that will also allow the least likely opportunity for identification and apprehension. These types of murders are usually premeditated. Criminals who act with knives, blunt objects or other convenient weapons are often acting with limited rationality. These types of criminals are often emotional and reactive, so their murders are more likely to be unplanned (Cook, 1983) and result in higher levels of detection and arrest.

Offenders using multiple killing methods (Figure-3) are often seen as motivated by revenge. It has been observed that killers using this method combine the act of cutting, strangling or stabbing with physical force. Forensic psychologists believe that these criminals are more sadistic and aggressive than others.

Figure-3 Use of multiple methods of killing.

In the study cited, 10 cases (Figure-3) were found to contain excessive violence and multiple killings and the common motivation was found to be revenge. Research has revealed that the minimization tactics of killers who choose this method are high. These offenders use physical power combinations to give themselves the upper hand (Kamaluddin, Shariff, Nurfarliza, Othman, Ismail & Matte Clock, 2014).

The choice of the murder weapon is as important as the body area targeted during the killing. The offender's weapon may be able to tell us about motivation. It is therefore important to thoroughly examine the use of the weapon and the locations of the wound and injuries. When one examines the data in research (Figure-4), one will see that in a total of 27

homicides, firearms had targeted the head and neck, while in cutting piercing instruments, 16 of them had targeted the head and neck region (Anıtsayaç, n. d.). This data may not mean anything by itself, but when evaluated with other data, it may provide important details about the perpetrator's psychological state of mind and the underlying nature of the murder. The type of weapon often aligns with the offender's age. In an investigation, the rate of drowning the wife committed by a husband in young couples involving a murder is higher, while the use of a long-barreled firearm or a blunt object in older couples is higher (Pelletier & Pizarro, 2019).

Figure-4 Weapons and preferred Body parts used in Total 234 murders

In conclusion, it is very important to gather evidence and examine the full spectrum of information at the crime scene in the right order to better investigate and solve a murder investigation. In order to do this right, it is necessary to carefully analyze the forensic evidence, the crime scene, and potentially suspicious persons. While evaluating this information, creating a profile of the perpetrator's apparent psychological condition may reveal clearer images of the suspect's state of mind at the time of the incident. This paper has aimed to explore the phenomenon of criminal profile analysis based on the offender's choice of weapon, body areas targetted, and means of death in an effort to determine the perpetrators' anger levels, to gain a better understanding of the motive for murder, and to be able to understand who the offender is. Quickly analyzing profiles and identifying offender motivations are important steps for investigating unsolved murders. While this paper has been limited to examining female murders in Turkey over the course of one year, this may not be enough to draw conclusions or result in general findings. It is therefore believed that more comprehensive analysis and conclusions can be drawn if a larger sample is studied.

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