



folk/ed. Derg, 2022; 28(4)-112. Sayı/Issue -Güz/Autumn  
DOI: 10.22559/folklor.2203

*Araştırma makalesi/Research article*

# The Representation of Honor Killings in Turkish Media \*

Türk Medyasında Namus Cinayetlerinin Temsili

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## **Abstract**

Violence against women is one of the most common violations of human rights in the world. Women have been subjected to honor violence throughout history and continue to being subjected to such violence in different cultures worldwide. Killing in the name of honor are justified in a society when the rules of honor are dictated by men and shaped around women's bodies and sexuality, which are disregarded by women. The study aims to understand whether the way media treatments femicide reinforces the existing perception of honor or not. In other words, the purpose of the study is to examine if the media uses a patriarchal language, how it captures the victims and perpetrators, how it normalizes and justifies the violence while publishing the news about honor killings. News regarding violence against women, published in two of the national newspapers daily between 2012-2014 were examined within the scope of the study and femicide reports committed on

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Geliş tarihi (Received): 1-04-2022 – Kabul tarihi (Accepted): 11-10-2022

\* An earlier draft of this paper was presented at *VIII National Sociology Congress*, 1-3 December 2016 METU, Ankara.

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behalf of honor were selected. Selected news is analyzed using critical discourse analysis. As the result of this analysis, it was observed that the news on honor killings focused more on the popular aspect of the murder in a sensational manner. Such news used a patriarchal language, justified the violence based on the honor issues, and emphasized that women were killed due to their lack of obedience towards their husbands, and that they dishonored their family.

**Keywords:** *honor killing, media, gender, violence*

## **Öz**

Dünyada ve Türkiye’de kadına yönelik şiddet önemli sosyal problemlerden birisidir. Geleneksel toplumlarda ataerkil iktidar ilişkilerini yeniden üretmek kadınlar üzerindeki eril tahakkümü meşrulaştıran namus saikiyle işlenen cinayetler kadına yönelik şiddetin en dramatik türlerinden birisini oluşturmaktadır. Namus anlayışı toplumsal yaşam içerisinde her ne kadar farklı kaynaklardan beslense de medya, dil ve söylem aracılığıyla namus kavramının sosyal olarak inşa edilmesinde önemli bir etkiye sahiptir. Ataerkil toplumun kültürel değer ve normlarıyla şekillenen namus ve namus adına işlenen cinayetler medyaya da yansımaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı medyanın namus adına işlenen cinayetleri ele alma biçiminin, toplumsal ve kültürel açıdan namus algısının inşa sürecini nasıl etkilediğini anlamaya çalışmaktır. Başka bir ifade ile çalışma, medyanın kadın cinayeti haberlerini verirken, eril bir dil kullanıp kullanmadığı, mağdurları ve faileri nasıl resmettiği, şiddeti normalleştirme ve meşrulaştırma biçimlerini sosyo-kültürel bağlamda araştırmayı hedeflemektedir.

Çalışma kapsamında öncelikli olarak ulusal çapta günlük yayın yapan iki gazetede (Radikal ve Posta) 2012-2014 yıllarında yayımlanan kadına yönelik şiddet haberlerinin tümünü tarayarak özellikle namus adına işlendiği belirtilen kadın cinayeti haberlerinin tamamını seçtim ve söylem analizi kullanarak çözümledim. Araştırmada namus bahaneli kadın cinayetlerinin gazete haberlerine çoğu zaman bireysel bir sorun olarak yansıdığı, yapısal ve kültürel nedenleri olan sosyal bir problem olduğu gerçeğinin gözden kaçırıldığı sonucuna vardım. Ayrıca kadın cinayetlerinin genel olarak haberlerde sansasyonel biçimde cinayetin magazin yönüne odaklanarak verildiği, cinayetlerin sosyal bağlamından soyutlanarak bireyselleştirildiği, şiddetin namus temelli meşrulaştırıldığı, kadınların kocalarına itaat etmedikleri, ailenin namus ve şerefini “lekeledikleri” için öldürüldüğü ve haberlerde eril bir dilin kullanıldığı bilgilerine ulaştım. Araştırmanın en çarpıcı verilerinden birisi de haber metinlerinde failin cinayeti namus gerekçesiyle işlediğinin vurgulanarak toplumdaki saygınlığını yeniden kazanma talebine yer verilmesidir. Bu durum eril tahakküme dayalı cinsiyetçi şiddet söylemini pekiştirici bir rol oynamaktadır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** *namus cinayeti, medya, toplumsal cinsiyet, şiddet*

### ***Introduction***

Honor killings closely related to the cultural values and norms of the society, are one of the important social problems of patriarchal societies. As a matter of fact, honor killings, which are a way of putting pressure on women's bodies and sexuality, have been practiced in many parts of the world for thousands of years. Each year, a notable number of women are murdered in the name of so-called "honor" (Khan et al., 2018; Ne'eman Haviv, 2021). But it is not easy to define and draw the boundaries of the concept of honor that continues to regulate the family and the society. The concept of honor and shame was introduced in early 1950's and 1960's with a volume edited by John G. Peristiany and it was titled precisely as "Honor and Shame, The Values of the Mediterranean Society" (Peristiany, 1965). Moxnes (2004: 21) has noted that honor and shame differ according to gender, and he emphasizes the power of men dominating the public sphere to determine public discourse on honor and shame. Men who competed with other men to defend their masculinity had to defend the chastity of women under their dominance to protect their honor since women occupied the private sphere, their effects on honor and shame were limited. The loss of women's chastity was regarded as shame of the entire family. Bangash and Muhammad (2017) defined honor killings as a cultural violence that largely supported by ideology, religion, language, and the arts, and make it acceptable in society. Killing for the sake of family honor is a socially structured phenomenon. According to Vandello and Cohen (2003), honor is described as the respect, social status and morality of the woman and her family in addition to her respectable sexual behavior suitable for the societal desires.

Although the killings in the name of honor appear in most of the world, the description of the concept of honor has some cultural differences. The concept of honor in the West is usually described as a moral integrity, virtue, or a respect for one's abilities whereas the depth and the extent are considerably different in the East (Abu-Lughod, 1986). Sev'er and Yurdakul who also draw attention to the differences of honor concept in the East and the West state that honor is an inseparable part of the West where it is regarded as a valuable entity in its purest and most desired form. Neither the rich nor the poor are exempted from trying to do their best to live an honorable life and protect their family names from dishonorable events. Briefly, honor has valid rules for individuals both for upper and low classes (2001: 972).

Honor is described based on women's bodies and sexualities in Turkey (Yıldız, 2009; Bağlı and Özensel 2011). Noting that there is a tendency to associate honor with a woman's sexuality and her surveillance according to the Dynamics of Honor Killings in Turkey, Suggestions for Action Plans, Final Report (2005: 16) it is emphasized that female virginity, extramarital sex, codes of dressing and behavior, performing her duties suitable for the traditions are all closely related to the concept of honor.

According to Abdo (2006: 63), the killings in the name of honor which is a universal phenomenon is a part of an ownership culture, patriarchy and exploitation determining the basic features of a state. Standish (2013: 113) has emphasized that while honor crimes are practiced worldwide by various cultural and religious traditions, they are most often associated with Arab culture and Muslims. The torture and killings including sexual violence

against women occur in different forms and in different cultures since it is not unique to Arabs or Islam. European's traditional burning of witches in Middle Age, the practice of "virginity belt" in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, "passion crimes" in Brazil and "dowry crimes" in India are some universal examples of these killings. Baron (2006: 1) has stated that activists in the Middle East and beyond have increased their fight against honor killings in the last decade and emphasized that these killings occur throughout the region among diverse ethnic populations and are not limited with the Muslims.

The point distinguishing murders in the name of honor or custom from other types of violence against women is that these murders are committed conspiratorially. In those murders, there can be a family meeting with relatives and the decision to kill the victim can be taken by them. Although it is presented as an idea that the woman who is claimed to violate the rules of honor deserves that punishment, protection of patriarchal privileges is important in such murders. It is not important to prove "dishonorable behavior" in these murders, the important thing is the society's perception of dishonor and its effect on the social situation of the family (Ertürk, 2007: 12). Similarly, Reimers (2007: 239) describes honor killings as follows: "Honor killings are defined as acts of violence based on a conception of family honor as related to the chastity of women to the impact that when a woman is suspected of breaking a chastity code, the honor of her entire family becomes severely damaged, and the only way to restore it is to eliminate the woman." Thus, as Ferwerda and van Leiden (2005: 25) emphasized, honor killings are any form of psychological or physical violence based on a collective mentality, and it is perpetrated as a reaction against the violation of the honor of a man or woman. Their families are known by the outside world, or they are threatened to become known. Consequently, honor related violence is the cruelest form of violence directed against females who are supposed to go beyond the roles assigned to them in a society or the moral norms that vary with respect to the individual, society, region, or time.

### **Honor killings and gender**

Honor and the killings in the name of honor are closely related to male power and patriarchy. Singh and Bhandari (2021: 1) state that in some patriarchal societies, women reflect the culture, morals, and ethics of the family. They also point out that any lapse on a woman's part allegedly taints the family's name, and punishment must be given to the erring party to restore the family's honor. Mojab (2006: 41) has stated that patriarchy is a system of gender relations like the state implementing the political power of patriarchy. Moreover, she notes that "this system just as capitalism and feudalism continues through reproduction. Patriarchy reproduces the male dominance and uses culture, language, religion, education, economy, and other similar social structures to reproduce itself. Violence is one of those to reproduce male dominance." Killings in the name of honor are the way of generating patriarchy within this perspective. Thus, according to Tomer (2015: 16), honor killing is a practice where men kill female relatives who they think giving harm to the family honor. The death of the woman restores the family honor.

Honor suppressing women gives the responsibility to men to be the guard of women (guard of honor). It is not only the husband who is expected to control and protect the honor

of the woman in honor-based societies but also the woman's father, brother, relatives, and neighbors are responsible.

Sirman (2006: 58) has stated that "a woman should control her own sexuality to show her love towards her family and country while a man shows his love as being ready to sacrifice himself for his family, country, and honor. Sirman (2006: 49) also states that "A woman is dishonorable when she cannot control her own sexuality while a man is dishonorable when he cannot control the sexuality of that woman under his control. A dishonorable man is someone who is not a trustee and furthermore cannot prevent people from talking about a woman's sexuality he is responsible for." In a society where there are different considerations concerning honor between men and women, one of the affective means to cause and reproduce honor killings is the media.

### **Killings in the name of honor in the media**

The news about violence in the media can normalize and lead to violence while it can also contribute to the solution of the problem in terms of drawing the attention to the negative social aspects of violence. Newspapers are an important tool in bringing attention to honor killings, and most of the data on honor killings are based on newspaper case reports (Doğan, 2014; Husseini, 2009). The crucial point is how the media presents the news about violence or rather with which discourse the news is presented to the readers. The individuals subjected to violence through media can perceive the world as full of violence or become indifferent to the violence (Yıldırım and Dudu, 2014: 31).

Hartley (2001:7) has stated that the language of the news turns the raw material into the things familiar to us by emphasizing that it does not only implicate the social and historical determinatives but also transforms them. Accordingly, the newspapers as a mass medium have the potential to change and transform some existing sexist attitudes in a society. Dursun (2008: 83) has pointed out that news as cultural productions/texts do not only reflect the society but also give the form of that society.

The fact that the newspapers as a printed media organ present the news about crimes of violence by exaggerating them through moving away from responsible publishing on occasions with commercial reasons to increase the circulation of the newspapers can have negative effects on readers. Accordingly, even though most of the individuals in a society are not directly subjected to any kind of crimes, they can be subjected to a crime indirectly due to the news about violence in the media (Potter, 1999: 1).

According to Berns (2004), honor killing is not depicted as a matter of hatred or revenge. It is not perceived as a personal act, or one based on psychological deviance or pathology, but an act intended to assure the surrounding community that the male family members are in power.

The news with such words as "honor" and "custom" which are considered significant in the eyes of the society contribute to the justification of killing women in the name of honor. Furthermore, socio-cultural reasons and structural elements underlying such acts are

hidden through presenting the crime as if it is an individual act in the news. Yıldırım and Dudu (2014: 31) have revealed that media in such news draws the attention to the woman's suffering is subjected to violence as in the role of a victim while concealing the act of the perpetrator. The most important reason to justify the violence against women is to clarify it as an honor-based or morality driven crime. The news through personalizing the acts is presented as some certain individuals' acts, therefore they prevent the examination of social and economic factors lying under such controversial issues (Dursun, 2008: 80). Thus, violence against women and honor-based crimes are normalized by presenting such news as individual judicial acts rather than revealing their social dimensions.

In conclusion, the news presented in newspapers has an important role to establish the social reality concerning the news by conveying the messages and providing an interpretation for the readers. This process of construction and interpretation through language depends on the existing power relations in society.

### **The method of the study**

The study aiming to analyze whether the way of presenting the news about honor killings reproduce the perception of honor, the news about the killing in the name of honor in two newspapers with different press policies are evaluated based on the critical discourse analysis.

Critical discourse analysis used in this study is related to how various social notions such as power relations, values, ideologies, and identity description's function and how they are reflected into individuals and social order through linguistic construction (Van Dijk, 2003). Discourse analysis examining the functions and use of the language aims to reveal how social system with the relations of inequality and oppression is reproduced by means of the language used in the news texts. From this point of view, it seems possible to analyze how inequalities between men and women are reflected and reproduced in news discourse specific to honor killings. The news is analyzed within two themes as follows:

- 1. Description of honor killings/ Individualization of honor killings:** Is the news described as an individual act or a social problem resulting from the socio-cultural structure of the society and traditions?
- 2. Faded perpetrator / Victim accused:** Description of the accused and the victim: Is the accused who commits an honor crime disclosed clearly or made invisible? Is the victim of an honor killing described through her gender roles and therefore emphasizing that she has not conformed to social norms and values?

The aim of the study is to analyze the news of murders committed in the name of honor with the method of discourse analysis and to investigate how the murders are reflected in the news. Purposive sampling technique, which is one of the non-probability sampling techniques, was used in the study. Newspapers with high circulation, different ideologies and reader profiles were tried to be selected for the period determined in the research. In this context, Posta Newspaper, which stands out with its tabloid third page news, and Radikal, which represents the centre-left, were chosen.

The scope of the study was limited to news texts. Other texts were excluded from the study. Besides the study was limited to the subject of femicides committed in the name of honor in Posta and Radikal newspapers published between 2012-2014 in Turkey. The years 2012, 2013 and 2014 were chosen because they were close to the period when the study was first prepared.

**Table 1: The number of killings in the name of honor in printed media between the years 2012 and 2014**

Year	The number of the news	
	Posta	Radikal
2012	5	6
2013	6	6
2014	3	1
Total	14	13

As a result, I searched the term “honor killing” in the internet archives of both newspapers for the years 2012, 2013 and 2014. I reached a total of 54 news in two newspapers in which women and men were killed in the name of honor. I included all 27 news reports in which women were killed in the name of honor and the news of honor killings in the mentioned newspapers were examined from the perspective of women’s studies.

### Findings

Totally 27 news published in Posta and Radikal in the years of 2012, 2013 and 2014 were analyzed in the study. Woman was the victim in these texts. 5 news were reported in both newspapers and 2 murders were reported twice in Posta. In one of the news in Radikal, two different murders were presented as one. Finally, 21 murders were reported as 27 different news texts in two newspapers. Before examining the killings in the name of honor through critical discourse analysis, it was useful to investigate socio-demographic characteristics concerning the murders.

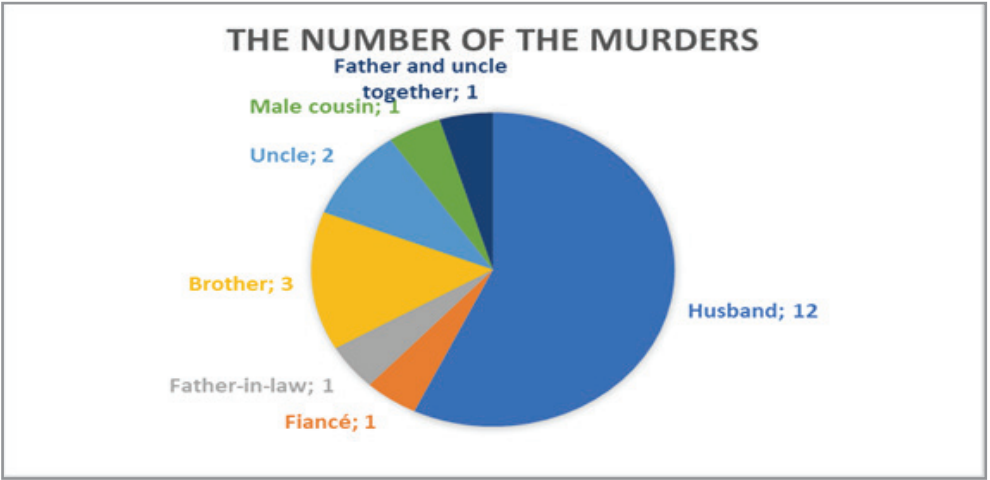
### Socio-demographic findings on honor murders

The ages of the accused were found to be between 16 and 46 while the ages of women murdered ranged between 15 and 39. These findings had similarities with the findings obtained from the study on honor killings conducted by the Presidency of Human Rights in 81 provinces in Turkey. The percentage of children who commit an honor crime is low (%9) in the research mentioned above. The ages of the accused are between 19 and 34 as the oldest (The Report of Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2005). It was also stated in the same study stating that the age of women murdered in honor crimes was under 30 (20% 19-25; 19% 26-30), which seemed to be like the results of our study. As a result, it has been revealed



that it affects young women most of the time (The Report of Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2005). Since the concept of honor is defined through the sexuality of women, honor killings probably occur at a young age when women are sexually more active.

When what the accused does for a living was examined, it was observed that it was stated in nine news. From these texts, it has noted that one of them runs a coffee shop and the others are laborers. The occupations of the women have not stated in the news texts where women are described in private sphere through gendered stereotypes.

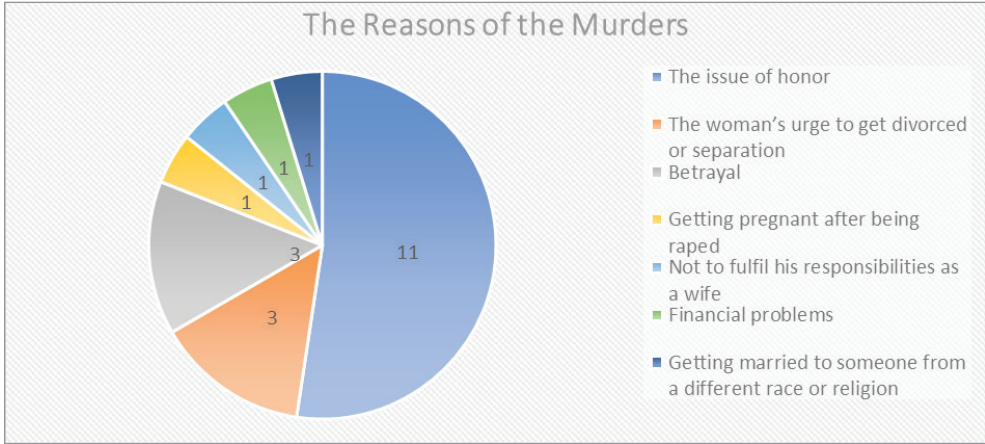


*Graph 1: Relationship between the Accused and the Victim*

The women included in this study were the ones killed by their closest male relatives. It was significant in terms of partner violence that half of the women (10 of them had civil marriage and 2 of them had religious marriage) were killed by their husbands and one of them by her fiancé. Furthermore, three women were killed by their brothers whereas 2 of them by their uncles, 1 of them by her cousin, 1 of them by her father and uncle together and 1 of them by her father-in-law. As it is understood from the news, women are killed by their closest relatives and honor killings are a family affair. Similarly, Chesler (2010) states that worldwide, two-thirds of victims are killed by their families of origin. Murder by his family was the highest in the Muslim world (72 percent). These results were found to be compatible with the findings obtained from the news texts in this study.

In the study of KAMER (2011: 32) between the years 2003 and 2010, it is seen that most of the women who feel the threat of “honor killing” are subjected to violence by their husbands (62%, 3 of them). Moreover, 32%, 6 of them are subjected to violence by their fathers or brothers. The others (41%, 1 of them) were subjected to violence by their uncles and male cousins.





**Graph 2:** *The Reasons of the Murders*

To solve the problem, it is important to find out the reasons lying beneath femicide in the name of honor. It is reflected in the news that men killed women in the name of honor in the 11 murders and they admitted it in the newspaper. In news, it is stated that women were killed because they wanted to divorce or live apart since they were subjected to violence or liked another man. The lives of the three women also ended since they cheated on their partners, or they were under suspicion of cheating their partners. A woman at the age 15 or more precisely a girl was killed by her uncles because she was raped by her uncle's sons, and she became pregnant. In a murder news, it is indicated that the woman was killed since she did not fulfill her responsibilities as a wife and another femicide was based on economic problems. Besides, a woman was also killed because she got married to someone who had a different religious and ethnic origin.

As in the news texts analyzed in this study, 370 of 1091 women who are the victim of honor or custom murders are killed because of honor in the narrowest sense according to Human Rights Presidency Report on Honor and Customary Killings 2007 (2008: 4). The number of women killed due to a forbidden affair is 106 whereas the number of women killed due to a sexual assault is 72, and the number of women killed due to the rape is 18. Regarding forbidden affairs, sexual assault and rape among the reasons for honor, the rate of women killed due to honor increase to 50% (Presidency of Human Rights the Reports on 2007 Honor and Custom Murders, 2008: 4). In a study on honor killings in Pakistani newspapers, it is emphasized that if a woman become the victim of sexual assault, her parents may kill her to save her family's honor (Raza and Liaqat, 2017: 37). Like these findings, it is seen in the news texts that almost half of the women are killed due to honor.

### **Individualization of honor killings**

Honor is described based on women's bodies and sexualities. Moreover, women are expected not to live sexuality out of marriage and to behave appropriately according to the norms of the society by protecting their sexual purity and virginity. Women who go beyond

the lines of honor are faced with different sanctions in a society. The most severe sanction is being killed based on honor.

*...a 19 year old woman named Hacer Gv whose dead body was found yesterday evening in Viranşehir, Şanlıurfa, in a-18-meters-depth-well turns out to be a victim of a custom killing. She was said to be 8.5 months pregnant...According to the claims, she got pregnant after having an intercourse with her boyfriend named Cuma who is a soldier right now...*

*Posta, 31 January 2014*

Honor killing is defined through a 19-year-old woman named Hacer Gv who gets pregnant before marriage and goes beyond the lines of honor requiring sexual purity and virginity for women. The sexuality of women continues to be controlled after marriage as it is before the marriage. In the news texts below, it is understood that women are killed as they have extramarital relationships. Evaluating the reasons behind these 21 murders in this study, it is seen that men commit honor crimes to control women's sexualities and bodies except for three murders.

*After undergoing a treatment at hospital, Necmettin Yarar is taken into custody. He kills his wife named Şerife Yarar who runs away in Bornova with mer İnce the man she lives together. Yarar who was taken to the Homicide Department says to the journalists taking photos of him that "There is certainly a punishment for dishonorable action. Any cruel person is faced to a cruelty for sure..."*

*Radikal 30July, 2012*

*In zkan's first statements, he says that "My wife ran away with my sister's husband last year. I looked for them in every province. I returned home after finding their address. I cleaned my honor. I feel relieved now."*

*Posta, 22January, 2013*

How honor crimes are described in the news texts is important in a sense that whether they are reproduced. When the headlines are examined, it is observed that honor murders are described as something resulted from women's personal problems with their partners or other family members. This situation is revealed in such headlines as "The Idiot! I love another man!", "He cut his wife by seven different knives!", Ex-husband Terror in İzmir".

What is observed in the news texts analyzed in this study is that the man's control over a woman is normalized through defining her as a man's wife, lover or partner and displaying the woman in relation with the man who commits violence (Dursun, 2008: 8). Thus, it provides a basis for the reproduction of femicide by means of spreading the idea that it is "natural" and "acceptable" to commit violence and even kill women with whom the men have a relationship. When the news headlines are examined, -the relationship between the accused and the victim is revealed in such words as "wife, husband, partner, fiancé, brother" in almost half of them.

**Table 2:** The news headlines

THE SAME NEWS	
POSTA	RADİKAL
Lifelong sentence to the murderer husband	Lifelong sentence in a single session to the accused who kills his unmarried partner
I feel relieved	The accused of two murders is caught
Women carry Meltem's coffin	Baydemir: Don't respond to such men's salutes
New developments in double murder	Last message in double murder: Is it from the husband?
The woman is killed for honor	Self-defence in the court: The woman is killed for honor
DIFFERENT NEWS	
POSTA	RADİKAL
Shame on your traditions! A 8.5 months pregnant woman at the age of 19 whose dead body was found in a well is a victim of "custom killing"	There is no conscience!
I cleaned my honor	Her father and uncle confessed the crime
He cut his husband's throat at the hospital	Ex-husband terror in İzmir
Idiot! I love another man!	Terrifying confessions about domestic violence
There is no decision in Ayşe Paşalı case	A lifelong sentence for killing his Christian sister on the basis of honor
Melek will be buried in her village	He killed his fiancée by stoning her head on the rocks.
Look at the defence: She does her wifely duty for only two years	Deniz Şahin -the accused of the murder in Fatih is caught
He cut his wife with seven different knives!	Two more women are victims of their partners
He killed her wife he has been married for 16 years	

As in headlines "The woman is killed for honor", "Self-defence in the court: The woman is killed for honor", "I cleaned my honor", "A lifelong sentence for killing his Christian sister based on honor", the usage of words "honor" and "custom" in headlines can contribute to the reproduction of the sexist ideology and the gender order.

Family ties or love bonds are emphasized not only in headlines but also frequently in the news texts. There are few examples below concerning the issue. Violence is justified through pointing out that the men kill their partners on whom they have a right.

*...Giyasettin Seyrek appeared in court for the first time. He was claimed to kill Güldane Koçak the mother of his three kids by throwing her out of the balcony...*

*Posta 4 December 2013*

*While Filiz Ören was staying as an attendant by her child at a hospital in Van, she was murdered by her husband Rahmi Ören. Rahmi Ören who was taken into custody said that "I killed my wife and her lover for my honor."*

*Posta December 1, 2014*

In a news text below, Nihat Özkan's killing his wife Medine Özkan in the name of honor is described as an individual story. Hall (1973: 183) points out that the news in which certain people create the events and these people are presented as activators are isolated from their social and institutional contexts. In that news text, the event is described as a problem to be solved between two people. On the other hand, the woman's running away with her husband's brother-in-law living with him is not an acceptable situation in terms of social norms and values and it also prevents the man from living his life with honor and reputation and causes the man to lose his status. Briefly, it seems difficult to describe the murder regardless of its social and institutional contexts.

*Last Sunday, Nihat Özkan shot his wife Medine Özkan two times with his gun. An angry man- Nihat Özkan directed his gun towards Mehmet Boztoprak while a mother with two kids- Meliha Özkan was lying in a pool of blood. When the gun misfired, Özkan hit Boztoprak with the pistol of the gun in his head. Meanwhile, Boztoprak entered another room and he locked himself. Özkan entered the room by breaking the door and attacked him with a knife this time.*

*Posta 22 January 2013*

Another similar description of honor killing is seen below. Reber Dayanan killed his fiancée, Neslihan Kutlu. In this news text, the murder is presented as a personal problem and alienated from its social context by giving the names of the accused and the victim.

*The 24-year-old man Reber Dayanan killed his 23 year old fiancée Neslihan Kutlu by stoning her head to the rocks. He claimed that she was deceiving him.*

*Radikal 26 October 2013*

In another honored murder report, personal problems between husband and wife are reflected by the way of underlining the names and family ties of the murder offender and the victim. Furthermore, the fact that they are about to get divorced because of violence is stated and this results in decline in woman's belonging to the man and make the event less personal.

*A terrifying event happened in Diyarbakir last Sunday when Vedat Tanış- a construction worker killed his wife Canan Tanış who wanted to get divorced because of the domestic violence with a knife.*

*Posta 18 September 2013*

As stated in Human Rights Presidency Report on Honor and Custom Killings 2007, penalty increase concerning the killings in the name of honor or custom is not a deterrent factor for individuals. People who have committed honor crimes do not feel any regret. The notion of honor determined traditionally means social and individual existence for those people. A man with such mentality thinks that he has cleaned his honor and reputation and eliminated the reason for his shame by announcing that he murdered deliberately. The murderer regains the reputation he has lost in the eyes of the society. It is emphasized that the accused committed a crime on the grounds of honor reproduces the existing gender order by reinforcing oppressive relations.

*The 40-year-old Vedat Tanış killed his wife Canan Tanış with a knife. They were together for 16 years. A 36-year-old mother with four kids was murdered with the claim that she was deceiving her husband. After the murder, the accused called the police and said: "I cleaned my honor, arrest me..."*

*Posta 16 September 2013*

*The father and the uncle are caught after confessing that they kill Ayşe by saying that "She has blemished our honor, we cleaned it." They learnt that Ayşe had an intercourse with her boyfriend.*

*Radikal 20 September 2012*

*The murderer called the police and said "I killed my sister for my honor. Arrest me." According to the claims, Hatice D. was found by her family and brought home after she escaped with her boyfriend two weeks ago. The family decided to kill her due to honor.*

*Posta 4 July 2014*

Three news texts above create the perception that it is "normal" for men to control and kill women through men's statements like "I killed her to clean my honor".

### **Faded perpetrator / Victim accused**

The structure of the sentence can draw the attention to the subject or the object. The subject is supported with active sentence structures in positive cases and situations. Moreover, using passive sentences in news texts causes the reader to focus on the action rather than the agent which makes the subject invisible. Accordingly, it is important to describe the accused openly or not through the language in honor killings.

In the news text below, the first one makes the murderer invisible by preferring a passive structure ("understood to be killed", "committed by him"). However, the murderer is pointed directly through an active sentence structure including the subject in the second one.

*It is understood that Semra Ok and Dr. Cengiz Ünal were killed with bullets out of the same gun. It was determined that the murder was committed by Semra Ok's husband Natyullah Ok working in a construction company in Northern Iraq.*

*Posta 29 November 2013*

*At midnight, M.R.D. killed his sister Hatice D. with pump rifle when there is nobody at home.*

*Posta 4 July 2014*

In both news texts in Radikal below, the subject is held responsible for his act by stating the subject directly.

*...Necmettin Y killed his wife Şerife Y with a knife...*

*Radikal 30 July 2012*

*In Burdur, Altınyayla, Dursun Duru- a 40-year-old man killed his 36-year-old wife Pınar Duru with a knife. They were living separately.*

*Radikal 12 December 2014*

In the news text below, the victim of honor killing-Hacer Gv is held responsible for her pregnancy with an active sentence structure with the statement of “She became pregnant.” A passive structure is used as follows; “Hacer Gv who was threatened with death.” instead of an active sentence as “Her family threatens her with death.” causing the action to be invisible.

*According to the claims, Hacer Gv who milks the animals in General Directorate of Agricultural Enterprises gets pregnant after having an intercourse with her boyfriend Cuma who is a soldier right now. Gv, threatened with death after her pregnancy sheltered in one of her relatives in Diyarbakır 5 months ago.*

*Posta 31 January 2014*

In the news text below, it is emphasized that the honor crime victim held responsible for betrayal and dishonor could not control her sexuality and it is also pointed out that she deserves the punishment. The claim of the woman’s deceiving her husband leads to justify the murders.

*... The accused stated that “She deceived me. She was not a virgin when we got married, either. I want that to be investigated. I killed her because she deceived me. I feel regret.”*

*Posta 31 December 2012*

Similarly, Taylor (2009) claims that female victims are blamed directly or indirectly by the media for their killings in her study in which she analyzes the news of femicide. Direct tactics include using negative language to describe the victim and highlighting her actions with other men, whether the case involved actual infidelity as contributing to her murder.

In some news texts, the act of the accused is anonymized, and becomes invisible. In three of the 27 news texts analyzed in this study, it is emphasized that male murderers commit the crime by the decision of their family and the family is held responsible for the crime rather than the men. Furthermore, a passive sentence structure is preferred most of the time.

*According to the claims, the family council decides that Hatice D. should be killed due to the issue of honor.*

*Posta 4 July 2014*

*The corpse of Hatice D which was found in Batman River last week was taken by one of her acquaintances today. It was revealed that Hatice D became impregnated by her two cousins’ raping and afterwards she was murdered by the family decision based on “custom”.*

*Radikal 27 December 2012*

*There are new terrifying findings about the murder of the 21-year-old Ceylan Soysal in Hatay, Drtyol. A mother of a child Ceylan Soysal was made to kneel and then killed by her uncle Ramazan Hicri (26) by the decision of family council.*

*Radikal 30 April 2012*

Women at the beginning of their socialization process learn to control their sexualities and bodies, to stay virgin until marriage, not to have an extramarital relationship, to dress up within social norms and values, to perform their duties like motherhood, wifehood and

briefly to learn how to be an honorable woman. As a result, in honor-based crimes, honor killings are justified and values concerning honor are reproduced by pointing out that women go beyond such gendered lines.

*Medine and Nihat Özkan-owner of a coffee house have two kids. Medine Özkan left the house and disappeared approximately a year ago... Meanwhile Nihat Özkan learnt that his wife ran away with his own sister's husband- a father of two kids Mehmet Boztoprak... Nihat Özkan firstly shot her two times with his gun. While she was lying in a pool of blood...*

Posta 22 January 2013

In the example above, a mother of two children Medine Özkan was disgraced by revealing that she did not perform her duties as a wife and a mother, not control her sexuality and in the end she “blemished her honor”.

*My wife's siblings came to our house. I had informed them about my wife's coming home late. My wife Zülfiye argued with her siblings when she came home late and locked herself in the bedroom. I think she deleted the numbers in her phone in the room. Her younger sibling broke the door and took the phone out of her hand...*

Posta 29 November 2012

*According to the claims, Deniz Şahin murdered his sister saying that “I do not like the people she meets. I killed her.”*

Radikal 23 August 2013

Women are controlled and supervised by men around them in the name of honor so that existing male hegemonic gender order, social institutions and family could continue. In the first example given above, it is understood that Zülfiye is controlled by her siblings and her husband. The second example shows that her brother controls her and decides concerning with whom she should meet. He emphasizes that he punishes her as he does not like the persons she is meeting with.

## Conclusion

Killings in the name of honor continue particularly in certain regions of Turkey even though there are various precautions and sanctions concerning the issue. Violence against women in patriarchy where men objectify women and commit violence to control their sexuality and body cannot be merely reproduced through the acts of men. Media is an influential factor in terms of spreading patriarchal and hegemonic sexist discourses concerning honor-based murders towards every part of society and reproducing those ideas in today's communicative age.

In this study, the ages of the victims were in the range of 15 and 39 and the accused are usually in their 40s when the news texts about honor killings are analyzed in newspapers named Posta and Radikal. It has been revealed that most of the women are murdered by their “honor guards” partners (their official or unofficial husbands, fiancés) on the grounds of honor and betrayal. Using such words of intimacy such as “her husband”, “her fiancé”



justifies the violence against women by creating a perception that men kill the women they have the right on. Furthermore, including words as “honor” and “custom” in headlines results in reproducing and reinforcing a gender order and sexist ideology concerning honor-based murders by means of such news.

In news texts, honor killings are mostly presented as an individual problem and the fact that honor killings are social problems with structural and social reasons goes unnoticed. One of the striking results of the study is that the news texts include the murderers’ wish to regain their reputation in the society by emphasizing that they commit honor crimes due to the issue of honor. This situation has a role to reinforce the sexist discourse about violence based on male domination.

In a few numbers of the news, the murders are stated in an active sentence structure holding the man responsible for his act whereas the accused is made invisible most of the time and the events stand out as more important. In addition, when women are raped and become pregnant, they are the ones to be responsible for the pregnancy and they are blamed implicitly. Noting that women go beyond their gender roles and violate the limits of an “honorable woman”, the killings in the name of honor are justified.

In both newspapers including honor murders in their news texts, the sanctions for the accused are not revealed strikingly. However, pointing out the sanctions for the perpetrators can lead to less murders by creating a deterrent influence. Prevention of those murders and the negative consequences of them on all social institutions such as the institution of family and marriage are not included in news texts.

As a conclusion, it will not be wrong to state that a male language is used in most of the news texts in both newspapers and this situation contributes to the occurrence of murders. If there is an intention to fight against this problem, the media should have a sensitive approach towards killings of women and furthermore a language which possibly leads to a decrease in gender inequality should be employed. To increase the awareness and sensitivity of journalists on the subject, adding courses on gender equality to the curriculum in educational institutions that train journalists and in-service trainings for currently working journalists will contribute to the solution of femicide.

**Yazarların katkı düzeyleri:** Birinci Yazar %100

Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article: First Author %100

**Etik komite onayı:** Çalışmada etik kurul iznine gerek yoktur.

Ethics committee approval: Ethics committee approval is not required for the study.

**Finansal destek:** Çalışmada finansal destek alınmamıştır.

**Support Statement** (Optional): No financial support was received for the study.

**Çıkar çatışması:** Çalışmada potansiyel çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.

Statement of Interest: There is no conflict of interest between the authors of this article.

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