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Exploring Gender and Homicide: Insights from Turkish Media Professionals of Generations X, Y, and Z

Abstract

This study examines how media professionals interpret homicides committed in Turkey and depict murder suspects. The article aims to analyze how journalists from different generations respond to, negotiate, resist, and reinforce the editorial ideology that frames gender-based violence from an anti-feminist perspective. The study includes in-depth interviews with nine media professionals from X, Y, and Z generations and forms conclusions about the helplessness of women, the necessity of murder, involving the female suspect. The research findings demonstrate that media practitioners perpetuate traditional gender norms by using language that reflects masculine traits. Furthermore, their adherence to the principle of “so-called” objective journalism hinders the thorough examination and analysis of facts through a feminist lens. The study demonstrates that journalists, whether consciously or unconsciously, contribute to the dissemination of stereotyped perceptions of the gender messages by reproducing them without conducting thorough analysis. The perspectives of Gen X, Y, and Z Turkish media professionals on gender and murder provide valuable insights into evolving societal attitudes and media representation. It is crucial for journalists and media professionals to critically analyze their biases and strive for fair, inclusive, and responsible reporting that promotes gender equality and challenges harmful stereotypes.

Keywords: gender; femicide; homicide; murder; journalist; Turkey

Introduction

Gender and its intersection with the crime of murder have long been topics of interest in academia and society. Understanding how different generations perceive and report on these issues can provide valuable insights into societal attitudes and media representation (Downing,

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2013; Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1990; Heidensohn, 1996; 2002; Wattis, 2017). In the context of Turkish media professionals from Generations X, Y, and Z, the perspectives on gender and murder may vary due to evolving social norms, cultural shifts, and technological advancements.

Like in many other societies, the media industry has historically been male dominated in Turkey, perpetuating a systemic imbalance that shapes not only the composition of media organizations but also the content they produce (Gürkan et al., 2022). This imbalance extends to editorial policies, often reflecting patriarchal norms and reinforcing gender stereotypes, thereby influencing how gender-based violence is portrayed and perceived in the public sphere. Challenging and transforming these entrenched dynamics within the media landscape becomes imperative for fostering gender equality and promoting more inclusive and equitable representations of individuals involved in criminal activities.

However, within this context, there have been journalists from different generations who have shown resistance to these established norms and have strived to challenge the prevailing narratives. The resistance posed by different generations of journalists in general may be understood as a reflection of their unique experiences and perspectives, shaped by their time's social, cultural, and political dynamics (Haggerty, 2009; Jiwani and Young, 2006). For instance, the older generation of journalists (Generation X) may have witnessed the rigid enforcement of traditional gender roles and the marginalization of women in both the media industry and society. Their resistance could manifest in efforts to bring attention to gender-based violence through investigative reporting or by amplifying the voices of survivors and advocates for change. Generation Y, often called millennials, grew up in a time of significant social change and increased access to technology and information. They have been exposed to feminist movements, increased awareness of gender issues, and a greater emphasis on inclusivity and equality. Generation Z, the youngest journalists, has been raised in a highly connected and digitalized world. They are known for their activism and engagement in social justice causes. Their resistance may be citizen journalism, grassroots movements, and collective action to challenge the mainstream media narrative and demand more inclusive and accurate representations of gender-based violence.

Violence, increasingly central to society, is undeterred in Turkey. As Wykes and Welsh (2009) mention that as long as the traces of violence emerging for various reasons in every subject are not followed, it brings murders. A primary determinant of the social structure, the media is expanding its sphere of influence daily. Singh and Nity (2017) argue that the media mirrors societal norms and portrays the functioning of society. Therefore, media has a robust connection that shows us how it works and what it constitutes for society. As the media draws its power from news stories chosen from thousands of events, the violence and murders it reports become the media's most unchangeable and irresolvable factor (Fox et al., 2021; Levin and Wiest, 2018).

In this article's specific context, the concept of honor primarily invokes notions of female sexual purity -although honor may also carry additional connotations-. If a woman acts contrary to the rules of sexual abstinence determined by custom, her honor is tarnished. In fundamentalist sectors of society, the penalty for this is death, and honor killings occur (Abu-Rabia, 2011; Cohan, 2009; Rosalind, 2011; Nesheiwat, 2004;). Women are subordinated and exposed to male violence (Hunnicut, 2009; Makama, 2013; Sultana, 2010) as male-dominated social systems, which control political, economic, and social areas, include unequal power relationships. In-depth research on the murders in the media shows murders in general are primarily femicides that live under patriarchal society and emerge in this direction (Awwad,

2001; Caputi and Russel, 1992; Gilchrist; 2010; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2003). The concept of honor, especially in patriarchal societies, represents values that men use to control women, in particular female sexuality (Hamzaoglu et al., 2019; Kalam, 2014; Naz et al, 2012).

This research utilizes a feminist theoretical approach to analyze the interplay between work and personal aspects within a gender-based division of labor (Pateman, 1995). The primary objective of this study is to investigate how journalists from different generations frame cases of homicide. A comparative analysis is necessary to explore the varying approaches across generations. Specifically, this study examines the profession of journalism in Turkey, where gender inequalities are ingrained. It investigates how professionals in this field, both men and women, navigate their generational dynamics (X, Y, Z) concerning gender and homicide. The study aims to ascertain whether journalists perceive these incidents through gender-focused lenses and explore the underlying narratives surrounding these crimes. In this context, the study raises important questions: (i) To what extent do journalists deviate from concrete editorial policies and challenge gender stereotypes? (ii) How successful are they, driven by personal agency, in transforming journalistic narratives surrounding gender-based violence? (iii) How do different generations moderate these variables?

Literature Review

Media, Gender, and Violence

Throughout the world the traditional media includes news about violence against women daily, making violence against women in society highly visible (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005; National Research Council, 1996; Snider, 1998; Zaman, 1999). Regardless of the subject of violence against women in the news, the discourse, language, how the media handles the news and how it is shared with the society are important (Altheide, et al. 1999; Meyers, 1996). In many countries, women's right to life is being taken away by patriarchal values and concepts of family (Sultana, 2010). 47 thousand women worldwide are killed by male violence, often in the presence of sexual violence (UNODC, 2021). Adler (2010) states that historically male dominance in society, compared to today's conditions, was not a natural right; rather, many laws were enacted by men over time to strengthen and protect this power. Adler (2010) emphasizes that the perception of superior masculinity is sustained through traditions, laws, and social norms. It is vital to explore and analyse how this perception is reflected in society to understand the cause of all gender-based violence against women.

Certain scholars argue that media narratives have historically reinforced the dominance of masculinity and perpetuated a culture of violence. These assertions may vary in applicability across different regions and periods, reflecting evolving societal norms and media landscapes (Harvey, 2019; Roose et al., 2022; Stevenson, 2002). For example, in the United States during the mid to late 20th century, media representations often portrayed men as strong, dominant figures. At the same time, women were frequently relegated to subordinate roles, reinforcing traditional gender roles and power dynamics. Similarly, in regions such as the Middle East and North Africa, media narratives have often emphasized patriarchal values and glorified violent behavior, contributing to the perpetuation of gender-based violence and inequality (Arhin-Asamoah, 2023; Shoaib, 2021). The news is the primary source of information about crime and violence and shapes social and moral views. Some researchers of media

violence offer a bidirectional argument, concluding that there is evidence for both selective viewing and media effects. There has always been a market for violent images and many viewers undoubtedly watch violent or stereotyped programs. News stories shape individuals' perceptions of social reality reflect the public's interest, and influence people's understanding of social issues, especially crime (Wozniak et al., 2010).

The prevalence of violence in society enables the media to report violent acts intensely and to perceive violence as habitual and expected behavior. The frequent reporting of violence invites the imitation of violent acts (Huesmann et al., 2003). Society perceives violence and the murders it brings as commonplace, and the media is instrumental in the normalization process.

At this point, social media emerges as a way out, bringing a new perspective to femicide and raising awareness. Social media has revolutionized the discourse surrounding femicide by providing a platform for marginalized voices to share their experiences and perspectives freely (Comofero and Görgülü, 2023; Fileborn and Loney-Howes, 2020). Unlike traditional media, social media allows individuals to bypass gatekeepers and directly disseminate information, enabling a more diverse range of narratives to emerge. This democratization of content creation has facilitated a more nuanced understanding of femicide, shedding light on the intersections of gender, race, class, and other social factors. Moreover, social media discussions of femicide have played a crucial role in raising awareness and mobilizing public action. Hashtags, online campaigns, and viral posts have galvanized online communities, resulting in increased pressure on authorities to address femicide more effectively and implement meaningful reforms (Cohen, 2022; Unal, 2022). The emergence of social media has introduced a novel approach to both depicting femicide and catalyzing collective action against it, amplifying marginalized voices and fostering a more inclusive and proactive response to gender-based violence.

News and Gender Construction

Murders are portrayed by the media with different perspectives and styles. The language used incorporates the journalist, as it is shaped by the journalist's perception of gender (Turkish Journalists Association, 2016). While determining the role and position of women in society through the media, the words and titles used to vilify women are the most powerful tools. Studies, such as the Global Media Monitoring Project (2010) and the Gender Equality in the Media Mapping and Monitoring Study (2018), offer valuable insights into the portrayal of women in the media landscape. For instance, the Global Media Monitoring Project (2010) revealed that women are often underrepresented, misrepresented, or relegated to stereotypical roles in media coverage worldwide. Similarly, the Gender Equality in the Media Mapping and Monitoring Study (2018) found that despite some progress, women continue to face significant challenges in achieving equal representation and fair portrayal in the media. These studies highlight persistent gender biases and discriminatory practices within the media industry, underscoring the need for continued efforts to promote gender equality and combat harmful stereotypes in media representations. Women are portrayed in the Turkish media not through their identities and achievements but through their bodies and their grievances. Women, who come to the agenda mostly with entertainment and magazine news, are second in crime and violence news (Turkish Journalists Association, 2016).

In the Turkish press, violence against women is third-page news, and the issue of male violence is covered as judicial and tabloid news (Elden and Ekal, 2015; Yinal et al. 2022). Vi-

olence against women is not reported by the media in a way that establishes a relationship between violence and gender inequality or reveals its political aspect. Very few media outlets use the term “male violence.” However, the subject of this violence is men. Reportage that questions the appearance and lifestyle of a murdered woman violates both the 5th and 17th articles of the Istanbul Convention¹ and the Turkish Constitution. News stories focusing on violent men victimize women; the violence is repeated by presenting the female body as a ‘pornographic’ provocation and reproducing photographs that contribute to sexist views.

Studies of murders and the media have shown that sexism and discrimination are reflected not only in victimization but also in the subject and the person who committed the murder (Ugur-Tanrıöver et al., 2009). Identification of the perpetrator of the murder as a woman or a man is reflected in many different dimensions in the media. While the media often fails to adopt a discourse that promotes gender awareness and equality, it also neglects to address crucial aspects such as protective measures against violence and information about legal processes. This deficiency in media reporting contributes to a broader societal failure to address social problems with the necessary gender sensitivity. For instance, by not emphasizing the gendered aspects of violence and legal proceedings, media coverage may inadvertently perpetuate gender stereotypes and fail to advocate for policies and interventions that address the root causes of gender-based violence.

Study Purpose and Method

This study discusses how media professionals (Generations X, Y, and Z) interpret and portray the criminal woman or man, explaining how journalistic work scenarios interpret the murder from the gender perspective and when journalists reproduce the existing masculine discourse in their reportage. The research focuses on the interviews with the journalists by asking questions about how they narrate gender-based violence in their news items and discussing the dynamics behind this process. The interviews, conducted with Gen X, Y, and Z media professionals, identify the gender of the perpetrator, whether the perpetrator is exposed to gender discrimination in the media coverage, and whether media professionals with generational differences are affected by gender stereotypes while constructing the news language.

The research sample consists of 6 murders in Turkey in the last fifteen years. The perpetrators include three male killers and three female killers. These murders are as follows: (i) Çilem Dogan (2015), (ii) Melek Ipek (2021), (iii) Dilek Kuşçu (2021): the victims of these people are males. (iv) Münevver Karabulut (2009), (v) Özgecan Aslan (2015), (vi) Aleyna Çakir (2020)², on the other hand, the victims of these people are females, and the suspect here is a man. The selection of the six names for the research sample is based on several factors aimed at examining the portrayal of gender-based violence in media coverage. (i) The names represent a diverse range of cases involving both male and female perpetrators, as well as victims of different genders. This diversity allows for a comprehensive analysis of how media professionals interpret and portray gender-based violence across various scenarios. (ii) The cases chosen to span a period of fifteen years, providing a longitudinal perspective on changes in media reporting practices over time. By including cases from different time periods, the research can explore potential shifts in media portrayal of gender-based violence and the influence of societal norms and attitudes on journalistic practices. (iii) The selection of cases aims to capture a range of circumstances and dynamics surrounding each incident, such as

the gender of the perpetrator, the gender of the victim, and whether the perpetrator faces gender discrimination in media coverage. This allows for a nuanced examination of how these factors intersect and influence media narratives surrounding gender-based violence. (iv) These cases are the ones that make the most noise in the media regarding murder cases in Turkey.

The research conducted in-depth interviews with nine professionals who work in journalism, three from Gen X, three from Gen Y, and 3 from Gen Z. The intention is to understand how these journalists, belonging to different generations, frame and approach the coverage of these murders based on gender issue. By studying their perspectives and practices, the aim is to gain insights into how the profession of journalism, influenced by the system of gender inequalities, intersects with the portrayal of gender and homicide in the media.

The study interviews were formulated to examine two significant factors: (i) the disparities between the 3 different generations (X, Y, Z), and (ii) the diverse occupational experiences of the interviewees by age. This includes various experiences developed in different types of media (print, online, radio, and television) in the city of Istanbul. Table 1 presents the final sample, sociodemographic and employment characteristics.

Table 1: Gender distribution of media professionals by generation

| Generation | Sex | Employment |
|------------|-----|-------------------------|
| X1 | F | Municipal Reporter |
| X2 | M | Police Reporter |
| X3 | F | TRT |
| Y1 | M | DHI (Daily Sabah) |
| Y2 | M | Vatan Daily Newspaper |
| Y3 | F | Turkuaz Media Group |
| Z1 | F | Sakarya Uni. Press Dep. |
| Z2 | F | Istinye Uni. Press Dep. |
| Z3 | M | Sakarya Uni. Press Dep. |

We used snowball sampling for this research. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique used in research to identify and recruit participants who are difficult to reach or belong to specific populations (Gürkan and Echazarreta, 2023). It involves initially selecting a small group of participants who meet certain criteria, such as (i) being a journalist and (ii) belonging a generation based on their age. First of all, we reached some journalists to make in-depth interviews with them, and then these participants were then asked to refer other potential participants who meet the study's criteria.

Participants consented to audio recordings of the in-depth interviews. Taking into account the generational differences, analysis of the audio recordings determined whether gender stereotypes affected the media professionals' perspectives on the murders and their construction of language describing the murders

The interviews aim to record the thoughts of these people on the relationship between murder and gender. The research examines generational interpretations of these murders to understand whether there is any gender discrimination in portraying the relationship between murder and gender. In this context, the research aims to investigate and delineate the demographic, behavioral, and background attributes of both male and female perpetrators of violence:

- to formulate an assumption regarding the characteristics or behaviors associated with male and female perpetrators of violence.
- to examine and compare the characteristics and behaviors, such as social status and use of force, exhibited by male and female perpetrators of violence.
- to observe and analyze the commonalities and differences in the behaviors and characteristics between male and female perpetrators of violence.
- to examine media workers' approach to these people and how they reflect on the media.

The research questions of this study are:

RQ1: Does the portrayal of murder news in the media written in patriarchal language cause gender discrimination influenced by generational differences?

RQ2: To what extent do media professionals perpetuate gender stereotypes in their interpretation and portrayal of male and female criminal individuals?

To analyze the research questions, the following inquiries were posed to the journalists:

- How is the gender of the perpetrator perceived in the media?
- Are male or female killers given more prominence in media coverage? If so, which sources?
- Çilem Dogan, Melek Ipek, and Dilek Kuşçu. How are these names portrayed in the media?
- Münevver Karabulut, Özgecan Aslan, and Aleyna Çakir. What is the media's perception of these names?
- How is femicide depicted and portrayed in media representation within society?
- How is the murder of a man presented in media coverage within society?

The stages of the research were determined as follows:

- Investigation and evaluation of the six murders that have occupied Turkey's agenda the most in the last ten years;
- Selection of the people to be interviewed in-depth and securing the interviews;
- Comparison of the interview results and reporting similarities or differences of opinion;
- Analysis of the results.

The study uses the in-depth interview method, a method of qualitative analysis. In keeping with the aim of the study, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with nine editors working at daily newspapers in Turkey. In-depth interviewing involves intensive individual conversations with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on particular ideas, programs, or situations. Such interviews are valuable when researchers aim to gather comprehensive information about individuals' thoughts and behaviors or delve into new topics in depth. Interviews serve the purpose of providing contextual understanding alongside other data sources, such as outcome data, to present a holistic view of program experiences and their underlying factors (Boyce et al., 2006; Gürkan, 2019). Participants were asked open-ended questions about the relationship between gender and murder related to the six murder stories mentioned above in Turkey. In this research, the names of the respondents were kept

anonymous for confidentiality and to gain further in-depth information by asking questions overtly. Each respondent is referred to as X1, Y1, and Z1.

The examination of any issue can be based on more traditional and/or political characteristics or behaviors. This study is mainly concerned with accessing meaningful, accessible, and evocative research based on personal experiences that will sensitize readers to issues of identity politics, silenced affairs, and forms of representation that enable them to empathize with people (Ellis et al., 2011). The findings of the study, framed through an in-depth interview technique, describes the researchers' reactions, experiences, perceptions, and perspectives within the scope of the media professionals' responses to the questions posed. As the first to combine autoethnographic values with an examination of the relationship between sex and homicide, this study makes an essential contribution to the relevant literature.

This research examines murders in Turkey, focusing on the gender of the perpetrators and how the media professionals depict these incidents. It observes that while murders involving female suspects often emphasize the vulnerability of the woman, those involving male perpetrators tend to highlight the act of murder itself, with the suspect taking center stage. This disparity reflects the reproduction of gender roles in the media, where discourse is often articulated in masculine language.

Findings & Data Analysis

The interest in exploring generational differences stems from the recognition that different generations may have distinct attitudes, values, and experiences that shape their approach to journalism and the issues they cover. By analyzing the perspectives of journalists from Generation X, Y, and Z, the research aims to identify any variations in their framing of gender and homicide, considering factors such as social, cultural, and technological influences that differ across generations. By examining how journalists from various generations navigate the intersection of gender, violence, and media, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolving dynamics within the profession and its impact on the portrayal of gender-based violence in society.

Therefore, we employed text analysis to uncover a comprehensive understanding that delves into the underlying nuances of meaning, focusing on pertinent sections of the participants' responses. At this juncture, the analysis proceeded through various stages without predefined categories (Ruiz-Cabrera and Gürkan, 2023):

- i. The interviews underwent transcription from Turkish to English, with accompanying notes to capture the underlying significance of the respondents' statements.
- ii. Subsequently, the text was segmented into meaningful units and assigned corresponding codes. These units were then condensed into four overarching themes (see Table 2).

While the research sample may not be fully representative of the entire population, it was crucial to engage individuals from various generations within the Turkish media sector to discern commonalities in experiences when confronting similar challenges.

Table 2: Coding derived from the questions

| Coding derived from the questions | The main objective to be achieved |
|--|---|
| Dead women are remembered rather than dead men | To examine how the gender of the perpetrator is portrayed in media representations. To investigate whether male or female killers receive greater attention in media coverage, and to identify the sources contributing to this prominence. |
| Gender of the murder | To analyze the portrayal of individuals such as Çilem Dogan, Melek Ipek, and Dilek Kuşçu in media narratives. To explore the media's perspective on individuals like Münevver Karabulut, Özgecan Aslan, and Aleyna Çakir. |
| Justifying the death of a woman | To understand how femicide is depicted and represented in media narratives within society. |
| The intergenerational relationship of murder | To assess how the murder of a man is depicted and covered in media representations within society. |

The following themes were identified from data collected through the in-depth interviews:

i. Dead women are remembered rather than dead men

Participants were asked whether they remembered the names of female killers and what perception existed in the media about them. X1 and X2 said these situations where women were left defenseless were preventable and unfortunate. X1 stating that the murders committed are generally uncontrollable as a result of acts of violence and oppression in self-defense or because of anger when it is not wanted, she stated the following about the reflections of homicide news in the media: *“It was spoken as an instant agenda, and the situation was analyzed with short narratives in the public security news. Everyone expressed their opinion, good or bad. Some media groups bring the subject up again, but we cannot see if a practical perception is formed. I don’t find it right to justify some murderers. The dead men have no names, not even remembered. Again, the emphasis is on female names...”* X2 argued that the guilty cannot be made innocent with media coverage. X3 said, *“Male murders are not exactly the norm,”* claiming that there cannot be a category of male murder. X3 further stated that the reasons underlying female and male murders are different, saying that murders committed by women are acts of self-defense.

X3 *“The same cannot be said for murders committed by men. When we look at the reason’s men commit these murders, we see jealousy, divorce, and defiance of male authority.”* Considering this approach of X3 from the perspective of social roles and social structure, men exhibit a ruthless, authoritarian demeanor while women exhibit a sensitive, calm, and emotional demeanor. A woman with such characteristics does not go insane and kill someone.

Y1 said that these murders created a generally positive perception in the media. Y1’s comments reflect the masculine point of view and criticize empathy towards the women involved in these crimes: *“News is slanted towards self-defense. We see so many male killers that everyone, including the media and the public, looks for strong women, even if they are murderers.”*

I do not find these depictions correct.” Y2, on the other hand, said that the situation of Çilem Dogan and Melek Ipek seems to be self-defense and that there is an attitude of “good luck to you” in the media. In contrast, saying that Dilek Kuşçu’s situation developed differently, and the other media events had the opposite perception. He cites support messages and even campaigns on social media platforms. Çilem Dogan’s imprisonment was equated with the Kadir Teker incident in social and traditional media. However, as murders increased in the news in Turkey, a feminist struggle took shape in social media. As these murders rise to the top of the national agenda, the feminist struggle gains traction and women are making their voices against violence heard. The Istanbul Convention showcased these events and made a splash on social media. According to Y3, “Whatever the conditions, these women who murder men are at least as guilty as those who murder women, and maybe there are those who give rights in the media.”

Z3 said that he had only heard of Çilem Dogan’s name in the media and that there were convincing reports that the woman was in the right. Z1, on the other hand, viewed the murders in a general way, focusing on only one of the three names; she commented that Dilek Kuşçu killed the man “disgustingly”. In addition, she stated that Dilek Kuşçu was saying that “he was beating us” in her statement and Z1 said that the woman was guilty and added these statements: *“There is a perception in society that we find a solution to everything if a bad person is punished, but it’s always the way to kill the bad. Therefore, I think the murders of men are as critical as the murders of women.”* Z2, on the other hand, thought that there are solid female names who use their right to self-defense in line with the tortures they have been experienced by their husbands. Z2 said, *“One group of people regards the incident as a crime against humanity without looking inside; another group of people says that the women named are compelled to commit murder, or they are a part of it.”*

The phenomenon of dead women being remembered more than dead men in media representations is deeply intertwined with socio-cultural and political factors in Turkey. Historically, patriarchal norms have shaped societal attitudes towards gender roles and violence, resulting in the marginalization and devaluation of women’s lives. This societal imbalance is reflected in media coverage, where cases of violence against women often garner more attention and public outcry compared to cases involving male victims. Institutional and ideological factors further contribute to this disparity, with media outlets frequently prioritizing stories that align with prevailing gender narratives and societal expectations.

ii. Justifying the death of a woman

When the three female murder victims were named, the Gen X participants stated the victims had been brutally murdered. X1 mentioned that the names of the victims rather than the names of the murderers are known by the media, and that sexist discrimination exists in society; but X1 also said there’s an attitude that lovers or spouses killed by women because of gender and position differences deserve death. X2 said these comments on the male murderers: *“Reasons such as why the woman is in the man’s house, why she fell in love with him, and what she is doing in the car at that hour were put forward.”* Regarding the perception of these three murders in the media, X2 stated that the murder of many women had reached a level that normalizes the fact that more men are on the agenda. X3 said that the incident was a case of tabloidization and the sharing of details, she stated that the protests raised by the

families against the murder and the trial in all three murders were to make their voices heard in the society and to seek their rights. And she said: *“Maybe they feel like they have made their voices heard in society, but then Özge Can Aslan’s family had to relocate. Even her siblings’ identities have changed. Visibility comes at a considerable price. In other words, people unbelievably give credit. For Münevver Karabulut, ‘it is said that if the child is rich, the girl is poor’; this situation is unbelievable. There are also some statements on wearing a skirt, drinking wine...”*

Y1 and Y2 interpreted the murder of 3 women as „male violence.“ The two share the opinion that there is a “victim perception.” Y2 stated that he found this attitude of the press to be correct. Y2 said the following on the subject: *“Evidence that society is driven to insanity indicates that the justice mechanism does not function adequately, and that people have lost their sense of conscience.”* Y3 said that femicide is a symbolic name and added: *“A single evaluation cannot be made for all of them; their standard features are that they were murdered, and these murders reveal the moral level of their society.”*

Z1 and Z2 stated that the perception of femicide in Turkey divided the media. Z2 said: *“For all the women killed, the media is divided. The disgusting side of this division is the attitude that the women deserved being killed because of their lifestyle or clothing choices. The other empathizer thinks how inhumane this situation is.”* Z1 agrees, while Z3 is more of an observer. Z1 made an important point about femicides: *“Men brutally murder women, but women don’t murder men like this.”* Z3 pointed out that all the details, including the woman’s dress and the time she was out at night, were divulged in the news, adding: *“Let the society find a reason to legitimize the woman’s death... We are faced with an unfortunate reality of society in these murders. We are trying to persuade each other by arguing for uncountable reasons to justify someone’s death, especially the killing of women.”*

The phenomenon of justifying the death of a woman in media coverage is intricately linked to entrenched patriarchal ideologies and societal perceptions of gender roles. In Turkey, traditional beliefs and cultural norms often perpetuate the notion of male dominance and control over women, leading to the normalization and justification of violence against women. Media representations play a crucial role in perpetuating these harmful narratives by framing incidents of violence within the context of victim-blaming and moral judgment.

iii. Gender of the murder

According to participants, the journalism practices reason that women murder for “love” and men murder for “madness and honor.” X1, X2, and X3 said the journalism practices present femicides as generally honor and love murders and seeks a reasonable reason for them. X3: *“If the woman drank alcohol and was very drunk and was killed, this is somehow indicated. Even if the reporter doesn’t do it, most of those who endorse it does. There are too many women working at the lower level in the media as everywhere else. In male murders, when words such as ‘love’ and ‘honor’ are used, you will alleviate the crime of the act, but this is tyranny and barbarism. ‘The man who caught his wife with her lover went mad.’”* Like X3’s view, X2 also said, *“Murders of men are a disgrace compared to murders of women. Murder must be committed without being innocent.”*

Y1 and Y2 pointed out that the murder is presented according to why it was committed; the presentation of such news as an ordinary daily process normalizes it. Y3 differed from P1 and P2: *“I believe that femicide should be presented as completely unworkable in society.”*

Media professionals of the Z generation stated that the incident was presented as a sexist crime, not as a murder. While a murder of a woman was associated with the concepts of honor and honor, Z2 stated the following: *“In patriarchal societies, the purity of a woman is equated with the honor and dignity of the man. The media incorporates this mentality in its reporting.”* Z1 and Z3 said that the femicide news is reported in a normalized way, adding that the media presents women with disdain because they are women. They stated in reporting male murders, the media seeks to understand the murderer rather than the deceased, and in a murder involving a male victim, the focus is on the woman, not the man. Z2 said, *“When it comes to male murder, headlines such as ‘This is male murder’ are used, and sexist expression is used. But murder is murder.”*

The portrayal of the gender of the murderer in media coverage is influenced by a multitude of socio-cultural and political factors in Turkey. Historically, societal attitudes towards gender have been shaped by patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles, which often dictate perceptions of masculinity and femininity. In media representations of gender-based violence, the gender of the murderer is often framed within the context of these entrenched gender stereotypes, with male perpetrators typically portrayed as inherently violent and aggressive, while female perpetrators may be sensationalized or portrayed as deviant. Institutional factors, such as legal frameworks and law enforcement practices, influence media coverage by shaping the narrative around criminality and culpability.

iv. The intergenerational relationship of murder

Considering the relationship of this perception with generations, X1 and X2 have similar views, while X3 says that she does not believe in the generational situation. However, X1 noted that the new generation of people cared about the issue and had intense reactions on social media and added: *“We observe the new generation’s condemnation of events more intensely for the follower frenzy. Generation Z is trying to record and broadcast even the moment of the murder.”* X2 stated that the Z generation is sensitive to politics or femicide. Still, there is a mass that unconsciously approaches these issues regardless of X, Y, Z. X3 mentioned that people in the 50-60 age group have no idea about these issues, that the Z generation is more sensitive, especially since these issues started to be covered in the 2000s, and that the X and baby boomer generations do not realize the discrimination against women: *“Beware of men over a certain age; he knows he has to say something about women, but he usually says, ‘our mother, our sister.’ Generation X objectifies. The Y generation knows some things but lacks a lot in assimilation. On the other hand, Generation Z is conscious of differences and diversity.”*

All three millennials stated that the difference between generations caused a change in perception. Y1 said: *“Age is significant in terms of perceiving a subject. For example, in femicide news, an older person may try to justify the matter with the victim’s clothes, the time he went out, etc., while a younger person may look at the subject from a contrasting point of view.”* Y2 added these: *“Such a distinction may pose a problem in the future, as past generations do not know the difference between male and female murders. In other words, it is not the gender of the murder that matters but the perpetration of it.”* Y3, on the other hand, said that the Z generation is more open-minded compared to different ages regarding differences and these

issues and that these events may affect them negatively because the Z generation is intertwined with social media.

Generation Z said that there is a change in thought patterns from the past to the present. Z1 and Z2 think that it is the Z generation that has the potential to make a difference among the generations. Z1 said these: "*Generation Z is a generation born into the media. That's why Generation Z can read the media correctly.*" Z2, on the other hand, thinks that besides generations making a difference, education level also plays an important role in making the difference: "*I think that educated and well-educated people from every generation deal with such issues more sensitively and importantly. Since the Z generation uses social media more effectively, they react more to social actions such as murder.*" Z3 said, "Such differences arise only from generation."

Historical legacies of patriarchy and traditional gender roles influence generational attitudes towards gender-based violence, with older generations often adhering more closely to traditional gender norms and stereotypes. This generational divide is reflected in media representations of murder, where interpretations and portrayals may vary depending on the age and perspective of media professionals. Institutional factors, such as media regulations and editorial policies, also play a role in shaping intergenerational dynamics by influencing the content and framing of media coverage.

Discussion & Evaluation

The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of research by shedding light on how media professionals from different generations interpret and portray criminal individuals, with a particular focus on the gender perspective. This research underscores the importance of critically examining the role of media professionals in shaping public perception and understanding of gender-based violence. These findings align with previous studies highlighting the significant impact of media representations on societal attitudes and perceptions. For instance, research conducted by Mateod de Cabo et al. 2014 and Ofordi and Ayodele – Wukari (2023) emphasized the role of media in reinforcing gender stereotypes and perpetuating unequal power dynamics. This study extends this understanding by exploring how generational differences among media professionals influence their interpretations and portrayals of criminal men and women.

Furthermore, the findings emphasize the need for ongoing dialogue and awareness among media professionals to foster more gender-inclusive and unbiased reportage. By identifying instances where journalists reproduce existing masculine discourse, we can highlight areas that require improvement in promoting gender equality within the media landscape. This aligns with recommendations by Santos et al. (2022) and Djerf-Pierre (2011) in their study on media literacy and gender representation. They emphasized the importance of challenging and transcending existing gender biases within journalism to achieve a more accurate and equitable representation of individuals involved in criminal activities.

Furthermore, the study highlights the complexities of generational perspectives on gender issues in the media. While younger generations tend to exhibit greater awareness and sensitivity toward gender issues, there exists the intricate possibility that these perspectives may unintentionally reinforce preexisting misogynistic tropes. This finding resonates with research conducted by Gigi Durham (2004), who explored the nuanced dynamics of gender represen-

tation in media narratives. The study contributes to this discussion by providing insights into how these dynamics manifest within different generational contexts.

The research underscores the importance of addressing generational perspectives and gender biases within media practices to promote a more inclusive and equitable portrayal of criminal individuals. By fostering meaningful dialogues and interventions, media organizations can play a crucial role in advancing progress toward gender equality within society.

Conclusion

While the primary focus of this research paper is to examine how media professionals from different generations interpret and portray criminal individuals, particularly from a gender perspective, the implications of the study findings extend to broader discussions about media practices and gender representation. The findings underscore the importance of promoting gender-inclusive and equitable reporting within media organizations. Media practitioners need to critically assess their editorial policies and practices to ensure they reflect diverse perspectives and challenge gender stereotypes effectively. By doing so, media organizations can contribute to creating a more inclusive and representative media landscape that accurately reflects the complexities of gender dynamics in society. Additionally, fostering dialogue and awareness among media professionals, particularly across different generations, is essential for driving meaningful change in media practices towards more gender-inclusive reporting. This discussion complements the study findings by highlighting the broader implications for media organizations in promoting gender equality and challenging gender stereotypes within their reporting practices.

The analysis reveals that specific journalistic work scenarios influenced the interpretation of murders from a gender perspective. Factors such as editorial policies, societal norms, and personal biases significantly shaped the portrayal of criminal individuals. The influence of these factors varied among the different generations of journalists, reflecting the evolving attitudes and perspectives on gender issues. Furthermore, the study highlights instances where journalists perpetuate gender stereotypes in their coverage. Despite advancements in gender equality, the reproduction of masculine discourse in media reportage is still evident. This suggests the persistence of deeply ingrained societal norms and the need for continued efforts to challenge and reshape gender narratives within journalism. While the perspectives of Gen Z may initially seem more enlightened, a nuanced examination reveals a potential paradox wherein these perspectives may inadvertently deepen existing misogynistic tropes. This paradox prompts an essential exploration to develop a more profound understanding of the intricate dynamics within Gen Z's evolving worldview.

Annex 1: General Information on the Homicides selected for the Study

(i) Homicides where the victim is a man

ÇILEM DOĞAN (2015)

Çilem Dogan shot and killed Hasan Karabulut, the father of her child, whom she married in 2013, with a gun on July 8, 2015, because he was subjected to violence and wanted to drag her into prostitution. Arrested Çilem Dogan was sentenced to 15 years with a “provocation

and good behavior reduction” at Adana 10th High Criminal Court, where she was tried with a request for aggravated life imprisonment. Lawyer Ayşe Zilan said, „If Çilem had not killed her husband that day, maybe she would have died herself.“

MELEK IPEK (2021)

Melek Ipek (31), the mother of two children, who killed her husband Ramazan Ipek (36) with a shotgun for allegedly torturing and threatening her with death on January 7, 2021, in Antalya, said that ‘exceeding the limit in legitimate defense was due to excusable excitement, fear and haste. He was released following the provision that ‘the perpetrator will not be punished’.

DILEK KUŞÇU (2021)

In Denizli, Murat Avcı, married and father of one child, arrived in front of the apartment building where they lived with the jeep driven by his girlfriend, Dilek Kuşçu. Allegedly, when Avcı wanted to get out of the jeep, Kuşçu stepped on the gas. The hunter fell to the ground. Dilek Kuşçu, coming back from the end of the street, passed over Avcı on the ground. Dilek Kuşçu applied the brakes after the front wheels of the jeep passed over Avcı. When she exited the vehicle, Dilek Kuşçu noticed her boyfriend Avcı under the right rear wheel and screamed for help from the surrounding people. Upon the notice of the surrounding people, emergency health, police, and fire brigade teams were dispatched to the scene.

(ii) Homicides where the victim is a woman

MÜNEVVER KARABULUT (2009)

The murder of Münevver Karabulut, whose lifeless body was found dismembered in a garbage container after being brutally murdered in a villa in Bahçelievler, Istanbul, was noticed by the Turkish public, and a great reaction occurred. Murder suspect Cem Gariboglu surrendered 197 days after the murder. The trial ended with the conviction verdict on November 18 2011.

ÖZGECAN ASLAN (2015)

Özgecan Aslan was a university student who was killed in a minibus in the Tarsus district of Mersin on 11 February 2015 for resisting a rape attempt. Aslan’s burnt body was found on February 13, 2015, when the person who confessed to committing the crime with the two people accompanying him took the gendarmerie teams to the scene.

ALEYNA ÇAKIR (Esra Hankulu) (2020)

Sema Esen, known as Aleyna Çakır, died on June 3, 2020. Her boyfriend, Ümitcan Uygun, found the young girl’s lifeless body. After she did not open the door, Uygun had a locksmith open the door and encountered Çakır’s lifeless body. An investigation was launched into the incident, and it was determined that the images of Çakır, whose images were shared on social media with the claim that she died as a result of being beaten by her boyfriend, were taken 1.5 months before the incident.

Notes

¹ The Convention is based on the following principles: (i) prevention of all forms of violence against women and domestic violence, (ii) protection of victims of violence, (iii) prosecution of crimes, (iv) punish-

ment of offenders, and (v) holistic, peer-to-peer violence in the field of combating violence against women. It implements policies that include guided and practical cooperation. However, the President's Decision published in the Official Gazette on March 20, 2021 terminated the agreement for Turkey. It is possible to say that the government sees LGBTQs as a threat and has tried to push social opposition to it in the current agenda. The media, which is close to the government and anti-Convention, not only opposes LGBTIQs but also feminists and women's organizations hostile from time to time.

² Please see the Annex 1 on the homicides below.

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