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Letter to the Editor, New Approach to Familial Homicide in Tehran, Iran during 2014-2019

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Dear Editor

The family is viewed by most people as providing a loving environment, but for some, the family environment can be deadly and pernicious (1). Five million adults have experienced the killing of an immediate family member (2). According to the increasing trend of familial homicide in our country, Iran, in recent years, we overviewed different aspects of familial homicide to better understand characteristics of this social dilemma and help to develop further social policies and training programs for high-risk population.

During a 5-year period between April 2014 to March 2019, data of 138 cadavers were reviewed which were died due to familial homicide in Tehran. There were 75 (54.3%) females and the mean age of victims was 33.60±14.90 (the mean age in male was 34.10 (SD=14.80) and in female was 33.14 (SD=15.06, P=0.722). There were 17 victims aged under 20 years (12.3 %), 84 victims between 21 and 40 years (60.9 %) and 37 victims more than 40 years (26.8 %). Of 138 cases, the most common murderers were husband (38%), brother (16.7%), father (8.7%), wife (8.0%), sonship (5.1%) and mother (1.4%). Intimate partner killing (46%) was the most common type of homicide and killing a wife was 5 times more than killing a husband. Sharp force trauma (50%) was the most common cause of death in victims and blunt trauma (22.5%) was in the second rank.

There were 14 victims (10.1%) with a history of substance abuse include opium (35.7%), stimulants (28.6%), opium and stimulant simultaneously (21.4%) and other drugs (14.3%). Of 138 victims, 4 (2.9%) cases had a history of chronic depression disease.

We found that the female to male ratio was 1.9 and the mean age was 33.60 (SD=14.90) that was similar to other studies (3-5). The majority of offender-victim relationships was an intimate partner (46.4 %) and the majority of the gender of offenders was the man. Prior researches showed that female is more vulnerable to be murdered by men in an intimate relationship (6-10). Although the type of relationship between intimate partners is an important factor in other countries and cohabitate partners are at more risk than married partners (9), but we have just faced married persons in terms of intimate partners due to our religious beliefs. In other words, we don't have any information about a homicide in intimate partners out of marriage. Nevertheless, other studies showed that women who have separated are at higher risk of homicide by an intimate partner than women in the current relationship (9, 10). Claudio et al. showed that female homicides accounted for 30.8%, 47.3%, and 22.4% of all homicides in Italy, Germany, and the U.S. in 2014, respectively. The majority of female homicides are related to intimate partner/ family-related violence (11). It seems there are no strong protective laws to defend women against domestic violence and honor killings.

Most studies show that poverty, unemployment, and marginalization are directly linked with violence (10). Psychological instability, violence and crime were found in all these categories of familicides (12). In a Systematic Literature Review, they coded methodological aspects of the studies. Familicides were almost exclusively committed by men and about half of the familicide cases led to the suicide of the offender. Mental health problems, relationship problems, and financial difficulties were preva-

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lent (13). The contradiction between culture and human rights continues in countries where penal codes provide immunity for when a murder is conducted in the name of honor. Countries like Lebanon and Jordan that permit such acts are silencing women and allowing the act to continue without objection (14). We can express that community should protect unsafe families and families with dangerous behaviors, also families with a history of domestic violence. Family homicides are more than a problem and becoming a catastrophic problem that should be considered a danger to the community. In addition, all members of the community should be trained to control their anger. Poor regulation and implementation of the provisions set out to protect women, especially where countries fail to take action and where the perpetrators of such crimes feel that their actions are morally and ethically legitimized by the culture codes, allow these homicides to be continued. With comprehensive study and investigation of victims' cases by categorizing and analyzing the information from all over the country, more comprehensive and fundamental solutions can be obtained.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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