



Female murderers: Examination of the relationship between childhood traumatic experiences and anger expression

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Abstract

Adverse childhood period and abuse experiences may lead to some problems later in life. One of these problems is aggressive behavior, which is thought to be a reflection of the child's increasing anger (Page, 2004; Olive, 2007). Based on the fact that negative childhood experiences can lead to aggressive emotions, investigating the relationship between traumatic childhood experiences and female convicts' aggression expression styles was considered important.

Sample of the research consists of 77 females who are homicide convicts selected from correctional institutes in three different cities. Data gathered from the participants were examined by using the Turkish versions of The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire and The State-Trait Anger Scale.

A positive and meaningful relationship between childhood trauma experiences and trait anger levels of participants was observed. In addition, there was a significant relationship between childhood trauma experiences and domestic violence as well as perceived problematic relationship with family members during childhood. Trait anger and internal anger were also found to be significantly related to perceived problematic relationship with family members during childhood. Results of the analyses were discussed in detail.

Keywords: Female Murderer; Trauma; Childhood Trauma; Anger Expression Styles; Trait Anger.

1. Introduction

Childhood is the developmental period in which individuals need protection, love and care the most. In that particular period, the satisfaction of the child's needs like nutrition, support and protection by the primary caregivers is very important (Breidenstine, Bailey, Zeanah & Larrieu, 2011). A troubled relationship between the caregiver and the child may have a negative impact on

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both physiological and psychological development of the child (Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg & Zwi, 2002; Rossegger, Wetli, Urbaniok, Elbert, Cortoni & Endrass, 2009; Van der Kolk, 2014).

According to World Health Organization (WHO, 1999), childhood abuse and neglect are public health problems, which are the concerns of every society. Child abuse and neglect includes all behaviors (or absence of behaviors) of a mother, father or any adult caregiver; which inhibit child's development, and defined as inappropriate or detrimental by laws or society. As a result of those behaviors (or absence of behaviors), the child is socially, emotionally and sexually harmed, his/her health and safety are threatened (Taner & Gökler, 2004; Van der Kolk, 2014). According to the estimates of World Health Organization, approximately 40 million children between the ages of 0–14 are subject to abuse and neglect. The offender is damaging the child by using his or her power on the child and their trust relationship (WHO, 1999; as cited in Ranyan, Wattam, & Ikeda, 2002). Being subject to physical, sexual or emotional abuse and neglect, or witnessing domestic violence in childhood has an important impact on children's health and development (Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg & Zwi, 2002; Van der Kolk, 2014).

Adverse childhood period and abuse experiences may lead to some problems later in life. One of these problems is aggressive behavior, which is thought to be a reflection of the child's increasing anger (Page, 2004; Ovayolu et al., 2007; Olive, 2007). Anger is defined as the primary emotion which is experienced when the individual's expectations do not occur, wishes and needs are not met, individual's existence or personality is perceived as insulted or threatened (Soykan, 2003). Although, under normal circumstances, anger is a healthy emotion with a survival value, the way it is manifested may create some problems (Balkaya, & Şahin, 2003). There are three patterns of anger expression: inward (suppressed), outward and controlled (Spielberger, Jacob, Russel, Crane, 1983). If the anger is controlled, the feeling is managed properly, in a calm way. When it is inwardly directed, it is suppressed. On the other hand, if it is directed outside, the feeling is expressed with aggressive behaviors (Arslan, 2010).

In the literature, the abuse experiences and anger were found to be related (Arslan, 2009; Papps, & Carroll, 1998; Taner, & Gökler, 2004; Tıraşçı, & Gören, 2007; Tunçelli, 2008). Research suggested that, children exposed to violence at home often have higher levels of anger reactions and aggressive behaviors (Ford, Fraleigh & Cannor, 2010; Milletich, Kelley, Doane, & Pearson, 2010; Öztop, & Özcan, 2010; Taner, & Gökler, 2004). Additionally, they supported the assumption that individuals who experienced childhood trauma have a higher risk of behaving violently in their future (Annerback, Wingren, Suedin, & Gustafsson, 2010; Cankurtaran & Baykara, 2005 as cited in Coşgun, 2010; Grotevan, van Dulmen, Dunbar, Nelson-Christinedaughter, Christensen, Fan & Miller, 2006; Lansford, Miller-Johnson, Berlin, Dodge, Bates & Pettit, 2007; Özmen, 2014; Wolfe, Wekerle, Scott, Straatman & Grasley, 2004) and this in turn, increases their probability of being involved in violent crimes (Maxfield & Widom, 1996; Widom & White, 1997; Weizmann-Henelius, 2006; Starzyk & Marshall, 2003; Rodway, Norrington-Moore, While, Hunt, Flynn, Swinson, Roscoe, Appleby & Shaw, 2011). This result was confirmed for both men and women. Women who are physically abused in their childhood and those who witnessed domestic violence were found to have a higher risk of behaving aggressively towards their partners (Milletich, Kelley, Doane & Pearson, 2010). On the relationship between female criminality and childhood trauma, studies show that there is a high ratio of childhood physical, emotional and sexual abuse experiences of female criminals (Steffensmeier & Broidy, 2001; Weizmann-Henelius, Viemero & Eronen, 2003; Weizmann-Henelius, 2006; Putkonen, Weizmann-Henelius, Lindberg, Rovamo & Hakkanen, 2008; Rossegger, Wetli, Urbanioki, Elbert, Cartoni & Endrassi, 2009). When the reasons behind these aggressive behaviors and anger is studied, it was suggested that they might be the manifestation of the loss of control, feelings of helplessness and frustration that the child

experienced while being abused (Taner & Gökler, 2004, Ovayolu, Uçan & Serindağ, 2007). In individuals with traumatic experiences, feelings of anger and revenge towards themselves and environment may be intense. Those children may not leave fear, hatred and anger that they experienced behind for long period; that may also be caused by the inability to find a rational explanation to those manmade destructive behaviors (Algül ve dig., 2009). Burgess, Hartman and Clements (1995) stated that childhood trauma leads to premature reactions, avoidance, feelings of helplessness and, such behaviors and emotions were maintained in adulthood by cognitive schemas. On the other hand, Van der Kolk suggested that, childhood traumatic experiences make the individual's biological system prone to evaluate most of the stimuli as threats and their bodies react accordingly, which may make them overreact in some situations. That is the main underlying reason of their excessive reactions when they are confronted with something (2014).

In the light of the literature findings, it may be argued that the childhood traumatic experiences may be a critical factor in understanding the violent behavior. Since the data available for female offenders is limited, accordingly, investigating the relationship between the childhood trauma experiences and anger expression styles of women who committed homicide was considered to be important in this context. Conducting research on this subject is thought to have an important influence on the development of new rehabilitation methods and support services for convicted women. Additionally, since crime rates of female are lower than men, the issue of female criminality has been neglected for a long time (Saygılı & Aliustaoğlu, 2009). A study on the female criminality may bring an emphasis on the issue and may help to clarify the dynamics of women murderers.

In this study, it was hypothesized that women who were found guilty of homicide, if the childhood trauma experiences increase, their trait anger, internal anger and external anger would also increase, while their anger control would decrease.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The sample of the study consists of 77 females who were convicted of homicide. They were incarcerated in prisons in the cities of Kocaeli, Denizli and Eskişehir in 2012. Participants of the study were selected by purposive sampling and participation was voluntary. Participants were requested to fill the questionnaires by themselves.

The age of the participants varied between 21 and 63, with a mean age of 38.39 and a standard deviation of 10.89. Most of the participants were between the ages 21-40 (62.3%). Majority of the participants were primary school graduates (36.4%), married/widows (27.3%) and housewives (45.5%). Most of the participants (27.3%) stated that they used to live with their family before being imprisoned. Detailed information about the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample was provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

n= 77	N	%
Age Range	21-63	Standard Deviation: 10.89
Mean Age	38.39	
Age Distribution		
21-40	48	%62.3
41-51	17	%22.1
52-63	12	%15.6
Education Level		
Literate	11	%14.3
Primary school graduate	28	%36.4
Secondary school grad.	21	%27.3
High school graduate	16	%20.8
College graduate	1	%1.3
Marital Status		
Single	16	%20.8
Married	21	%27.3
Divorced	19	%24.7
Widow	21	%27.3
Profession		
Housewife	35	%45.5
Worker	29	%37.7
Self-employed	10	%13
Student	3	%3.9

2.2. Materials

In the battery prepared for data gathering consisted of a Socio-Demographic Information Form, The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire and Trait Anger and Anger Expression Scales as well as forced choice questions about childhood family relations.

Socio-Demographic Information Form:

Researchers created a form according to the aim and the topic of the study. Socio-demographic information like age, birthplace, education, marital status, and psychiatric status were included in this form.

The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire:

Bernstein and his colleagues developed this questionnaire in 1994. Cronbach alpha coefficients were reported between .79 and .94 and a high validity and reliability was found. It was translated to Turkish by Aslan and Alparslan in 1999, and the reliability and validity study by the same authors found a reliability of .96 (Aslan & Alparslan, 1999).

The aim of this questionnaire is to determine the trauma experienced before the age of 18. It includes 40 items with the answer options of (1) never, (2) rarely, (3) sometimes, (4) frequently, (5) very frequently. The highest possible score from the scale is 200, while the lowest being 40. In the original questionnaire, four subscales were found: physical and emotional abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect and physical neglect. In the Turkish version, three subscales were included: emotional abuse and neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse. Emotional abuse and neglect subscale consists of 19 items, with scores between 19 and 95. Physical abuse subscale consists of 16 items, with scores between 16 and 80. Sexual abuse subscale consists of 5 items, with scores between 5 and 25 (Aslan & Alparslan, 1999).

The State-Trait Anger Scale:

Spielberger developed the State-Trait Anger Scale in 1983 and it was adapted to Turkish by Özer in 1994 (as cited in Özer, 1994). For the original scale, the Cronbach-alpha values were found to be between .73 and .84. When the internal consistency is measured, total item correlation was found to be between .14 and .56. In the Turkish version, the Cronbach alpha values were calculated separately: .79 for trait anger, .84 for controlled anger, .78 for externalized anger and .62 for repressed anger (Özer, 1994).

It is a 1-4 Likert-type scale (1) never, (2) sometimes, (3) mostly and (4) almost always). There are no reversed items used. For any subscale, total score of 6 are obtained. The first 10 items in the scale are the ones measuring trait anger. The score of internal anger scale (internalized anger, repressed anger) is obtained with summing up the scores taken from items 13, 15, 16, 20, 23, 26, 27 and 31. The score of external anger (externalized anger) is obtained with summing up the items of 12, 17, 19, 22, 24, 29, 32 and 33. When the items 11, 14, 18, 21, 25, 28, 30 and 34 are summed up, the score of anger control is obtained. High scores obtained from trait anger show a high level of anger, high scores obtained from controlled anger show that anger can be controlled, high scores from externalized anger show that anger is expressed easily and high scores from internalized anger show that anger is repressed (Özer, 1994).

Questions regarding Family Relations during Childhood:

In addition to Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, the participants answered the question about whether there was a domestic violence during their childhood or not and whether they had a good or problematic relationship with family members.

2.3. Procedure

After the necessary permissions were granted by Turkish Ministry of Justice, data was gathered in Kocaeli, Denizli and Eskişehir prison where all of female murderers stayed. They were verbally informed about the aim of the study and the confidentiality principle. Additionally, a consent form was signed by them. Participants read and answered the questions in the test battery by themselves. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS 20. The relationship between the subscales of Childhood Trauma Questionnaire and The State-Trait Anger Scale was investigated by Pearson-Correlation Test. In addition, series of One-way ANOVA analysis were conducted to investigate the relationship between family relations during childhood and childhood traumatic experiences as well as anger expression styles.

3. Results

When the relationship between the childhood traumatic experiences and anger expression styles of participants was investigated, a positive and statistically significant relationship between the total points the participants got from childhood trauma questionnaire and trait anger questionnaire ($r=.31$; $p<.01$) was found. Accordingly, as the frequency of childhood traumas increase, increase in trait anger was observed (Table 2).

Table 2. The Relationship Between the Childhood Traumatic Experiences and Anger Expression Styles of the Participants

	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(1)External Anger	.717**	.646**	-.088	.188	.189	.175	.196
(2)Trait Anger		.660**	-.195	.314**	.282*	.285*	.275*
(3)Internal Anger			-.119	.191	.146	.204	.144
(4)Anger Control				-.102	.094	-.076	.081
(5)Abuse (Total)					.967**	.959**	.482**
(6)Physical Abuse						.871**	.478**
(7)Emotional Abuse							.332**
(8)Sexual Abuse							1.00

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$

A positive and statistically significant relationship between physical trauma experiences and trait anger scale scores ($r=.28$; $p<.05$) was found. A similar kind of relationship between emotional trauma experiences and trait anger scale scores was also seen ($r=.29$; $p<.05$). Likewise, a positive and statistically significant relationship between sexual trauma experiences and trait anger scale scores was observed ($r=.28$; $p<.05$).

There was a positive and statistically significant relationship between the scores participants got from childhood trauma questionnaire and physical trauma experiences ($r=.97$; $p<.01$), emotional trauma experiences ($r=.96$; $p<.01$) and sexual trauma experiences ($r=.48$; $p<.01$). Another positive and statistically significant relationship was found between physical trauma and emotional trauma experiences ($r=.87$; $p<.01$) and between sexual trauma experiences ($r=.48$; $p<.01$). Likewise, the relationship between emotional trauma and sexual trauma experiences was also positive and statistically significant.

A positive and statistically significant relationship between trait anger and externalized anger ($r=.72$, $p<.01$) and internalized anger ($r=.66$; $p<.01$) was found. A positive and statistically significant correlation between externalized anger points and internalized anger points was found ($r=.65$; $p<.01$).

On the other hand, the results failed to find a supporting evidence for the hypothesis that suggest if the childhood trauma experiences (including all subtypes; sexual, physical and emotional abuse) increase, their internalized anger and externalized anger would also increase, while their anger control would decrease.

In addition to Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, the participants answered the question about whether there was a domestic violence during their childhood or not and whether they had a good or problematic relationship with family members. Table 3 indicated the relationship between childhood traumatic experiences and domestic violence. One-Way ANOVA results suggested that there was a statistically significant relationship between total abuse scores ($F(1)=63.340$, $p<.01$) as well as physical abuse ($F(1)=53.860$, $p<.01$), emotional abuse ($F(1)=52.733$, $p<.01$), sexual abuse ($F(1)=14.812$, $p<.01$) and domestic violence. In general, childhood traumatic experiences were found to be higher among those who are also suffering from domestic violence in family environment.

Table 3. The Relationship between Childhood Traumatic Experiences and Domestic Violence

Childhood Traumatic Experiences	Domestic Violence	N	Mean	Sd	Df	F	Sig.
Total Abuse	Yes	29	133.14	28.95	1	63.340	.000*
	No	44	71.18	34.69			
Physical Abuse	Yes	31	54.26	17.62	1	53.860	.000*
	No	46	25.83	16.01			
Emotional Abuse	Yes	29	69.24	14.38	1	52.733	.000*
	No	44	39.66	18.55			
Sexual Abuse	Yes	31	9.45	6.38	1	14.812	.000*
	No	46	5.43	2.54			

* $p<.01$

Besides the existence of domestic violence, participants also answered whether they perceive their relationship with other family members as good or problematic. Table 4 indicated the relationship between childhood traumatic experiences and the relationship with family members. One-Way ANOVA results suggested that there was a statistically significant relationship between total abuse scores ($F(1)=57.980$, $p<.01$) as well as physical abuse ($F(1)=55.792$, $p<.01$), emotional abuse ($F(1)=49.933$, $p<.01$), sexual abuse ($F(1)=6.602.812$, $p<.01$) and perceived relationship with family members during childhood. In general, childhood traumatic experiences were found to be higher among those who are also suffering from problematic relationship within the family environment with other members.

Table 4. The Relationship between Childhood Traumatic Experiences and Relationship with Family Members

Childhood Traumatic Experiences	Relationship with Family Members	N	Mean	Sd	Df	F	Sig.
Total Abuse	Good	38	67.40	30.83	1	57.908	.000**
	Problematic	35	126.63	35.65			
Physical Abuse	Good	40	23.73	13.22	1	55.792	.000**
	Problematic	37	51.92	19.52			
Emotional Abuse	Good	38	37.74	17.46	1	49.933	.000**
	Problematic	35	66.28	16.96			
Sexual Abuse	Good	40	5.73	3.25	1	6.602	.012*
	Problematic	37	8.48	5.90			

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$

Lastly, the relationship between the participants' trait anger and internal anger scores and relationship between family members were evaluated. Table 5 figured out that the relationship between anger expression styles and the childhood relationship with family members. One-Way ANOVA results suggested that there was a statistically significant relationship between trait anger scores ($F(1)=4.939$, $p<.05$) as well as internal anger ($F(1)=5.719$, $p<.05$) and perceived relationship with family members during childhood. While trait anger scores were found to be higher among those who are suffering from problematic family relationships, internal anger scores were lower among those participants.

Table 5. The Relationship between Anger Expression Styles and Relationship with Family Members

Anger Expression Styles	Relationship with Family Members	N	Mean	Sd	df	F	Sig.
Trait Anger	Good	40	16.80	5.84	1	4.939	.029*
	Problematic	37	20.13	7.29			
Internal Anger	Good	40	15.60	4.51	1	5.719	.019*
	Problematic	36	17.94	3.97			

* $p<.05$

Discussion

Starzyk and Marshall (2003) state that criminal behavior has its roots in early childhood experiences. Individuals who experienced trauma in their childhood may have an increased tendency for social violence and crime in adulthood (Ayan, 2007; Cankurtaran & Baykara, 2005, as cited in Coşgun, 2010; Herrera & McCloskey, 2001). The study of Clark et al. (1999), which included delinquent adolescents who were either physically or sexually abused in their study, found that two thirds of these people arbitrarily attacked somebody for pleasure (as cited in Ovacık, 2008). In a study with males with antisocial personality disorder, a higher level of childhood trauma experiences was reported in individuals who were highly aggressive. Highly aggressive individuals were observed to experience more than one traumatic event compared to individuals who were not highly aggressive (Algül et al., 2009).

Factors that prevent women from exerting criminal behaviors were investigated. It was found that being physically less strong is one of most important factors. Additionally, the protective influence of the environment, victims' close relatedness to traditional roles of being a "mother" and "wife" were the other two factors that were thought to be preventive. However, today, women's places in social areas began to change, they became more actively involved in social and professional lives, thus, leading to a change in the rates of female criminals in a negative way (Özkaya & Çağlar, 2002). When this information is considered together with the fact that, in most of the abuse cases that take place in family settings, females are the most frequent target (Özmen, 2004), the critical value of research on female criminals is inevitable.

This study examined the relationship between experiences of childhood trauma and anger expression styles of women who committed homicide. It was hypothesized that, in homicidal women, when childhood traumatic experiences increase, trait anger, internalized anger and externalized anger would increase with a decrease in anger control. However, a positive and significant relationship was found only between childhood traumatic experiences and trait anger in

homicidal women. That is, the participants' high level of anger was associated with their childhood trauma.

Consistent with the current research's result, various studies in the literature state that individuals with childhood trauma experiences may indicate anger and violence related behaviors in the future (Thomas & Smith, 2000; Korkut, 2012; Ayan, 2007). In Korkut's study (2012) with high school students, adolescents who experienced physical, emotional or sexual trauma in childhood showed higher trait anger, internalized anger and externalized anger while having low anger control. In another study with patients diagnosed with alcohol dependency, the ones who experienced childhood trauma had higher trait anger, internalized anger and externalized anger with lower anger control (Çınar, 2010). Milligan and Andrews (2005) found a significant relationship between trait anger, internalized anger, externalized anger and bodily shame, in sexually abused female offenders. In the current study, no positive correlation between the early traumatic experiences and internalized and externalized anger and anger control might be because of the limited number of the sample. Additionally, the high sensitivity of the topic might be influential in participant's disclosures so that they might not answer truthfully.

The literature shows that women in the middle age group are the ones who most frequently commit crimes (Özkaya & Çağlar, 2002; Aktürk, 2008). This phenomenon is explained by the fact that females are more active during their middle age because they get married, have children and change their social roles. It is argued that women may be more angry and hostile towards negative events when they are trying to cope with the life changes in their young adulthood and middle ages (Özkaya & Çağlar, 2002). Consequently, women who learned to control their anger in the traditional family structure might lose their ability to control their anger with the influence of life changes in the middle age. Additionally, women who were abused as a child, anger control may evolve into repression. They may repress their anger in a more discreet way without externalizing (Biaggio & Godwin, 1987; Balkaya & Şahin, 2003; Avcı, 2009). Women who repress their anger since their childhood may not evaluate their level of anger accurately, this, in turn, may affect this study's ability to measure the level of anger in these women in an accurate way. In clinical observations and case studies that include high rates of violence, repressed anger was stated as a prerequisite for some violent actions (Davey, Day & Howells, 2005).

On the other hand, a study of anger expression styles in girls with and without a tendency for violence, found higher and more intense trait anger in adolescents showing violent behavior (Thomas & Smith, 2000). The findings of the current study revealed that the trait anger is high in female offenders however it is not possible to state that it is higher in women with violence tendency because in this study control group was not included. In the future studies, addition of a control group in the research would help in deriving conclusions.

Positive and significant relationships between physical, emotional and sexual trauma experiences of participants were found in the current research. The research in the literature on women offenders showed that factors like being subjected to violence in the family (Nazlıdır, 2010; Osofsky, 1995; Rossegger et al., 2009), having nonfunctional family relationships (Ayan, 2007; Nazlıdır, 2010; Ortaköylü et al., 2004; Steffensmeier ve Broidy, 2001) increases the individual's trauma experiences. The family characteristics of the child have an impact on the child's future behaviors and attitudes (Çelen, 2007). Studies showed that female offenders experienced a high rate of physical, emotional and sexual trauma in their childhood (Rossegger et al., 2009; Steffensmeier & Broidy, 2001; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2003; Putkonen et al., 2008). As it is known, individuals who are abused in their family are most likely to continue with this cycle of abuse in their adult relationships (Grotevan, et al., 2006; Lansford, et al., 2007; Wolfe, et al., 2004; Widom & White,

1997). That is, besides being abused by their families during their childhood, in adulthood, together with major life changes (marriage, having kids...), domestic problems and violence are often the case in these people's lives. This might be considered to be one of the critical reasons that women cannot repress their anger anymore and act out with violence. It is stated that only a small number of women learn healthy expression of anger (Thomas, 2005). The social pressure on women, especially in patriarchal societies, might be influential on that issue. Thus, women might often direct their anger to themselves and this in turn might lower the possibility of experiencing a situation that makes anger control necessary.

In this study, when one type of trauma was observed in participants, other types of trauma were also observed. In the literature, it was stated that rather than only one type of trauma, at least two types of traumas coexist; the most common combination being physical and emotional trauma and neglect (Ney et al., 1994; Arata et al., 2007; Taner & Gökler, 2004; Coşgun, 2010). According to Glaser (2002), emotional abuse is the invisible face of physical and sexual abuse, and although not recognized, it is the basic type of child abuse (as cited in Ovacık, 2008). In this study, emotional abuse experiences were observed to coexist often with the other two types of abuses and the most frequent combination was between emotional and physical abuse. Therefore, the findings are supported by the literature.

The literature suggests that a positive and significant relationship exist between trait anger, externalized anger and internalized anger of the participants. When the anger expression styles were investigated, internalized anger had the highest ratio, with trait anger and externalized anger following consecutively. In Duran (2005)'s study with 15-18 year old students with high anger levels, an anger control program was administered. The trait anger, internalized anger and externalized anger levels of the students decreased while anger control levels increased significantly. Likewise, in another study with senior high school students, those with aggressive behaviors had high levels of trait anger, internalized anger and externalized anger with low levels of anger control (Albayrak & Kutlu, 2009). Studies show that when there is an increase in trait anger, internalized and externalized anger, anger control decreases. In this study, no significant relationship between trait anger, internalized anger, externalized anger and anger control were found. As it was mentioned above, the reason for this finding might be due to the methodological issues or the participants' hesitance to give the right answer.

The limitations of the study are also important to mention since it can be a starting point for other studies. The operational definitions of the concepts studied in the research were limited to the definitions of the scales used. This might cause some problems especially when different results of the different studies are compared. The validity and reliability studies of the scales were carried out in a particular sample; findings may change in different groups of participants. It is also important to bear in mind that some cultural factors may impact the interpretation of the scales.

Another limitation may be the sample of the study. It consists of women who were convicted of homicide only in three cities. It may not be accurate to assume that the findings can be generalized to all female convicts of homicide. Studies with higher number of participants are necessary to be conducted in order to make more accurate generalizations of the findings. Additionally, in the future, a control group consisting of non-convicted women would give the opportunity to make more reliable interpretations from the results. Although it had some limitations, this study might be considered as a reference point for other studies that will be done in this context.

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