



## Original communication

## Parricide cases of adult offenders from Turkey: A descriptive study



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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to examine and compare similarities and differences among types of parricide committed by adult offenders. The forensic psychiatric evaluation reports of the 4th Specialization Board of the Council of Forensic Medicine from 2009 to 2011 in Turkey were screened retrospectively. One hundred thirty-five adult perpetrators of parricide (125 male, 10 female) were detected, 51.9% of whom committed patricide, 40% of whom matricide and 8.1% of the perpetrators committed double parricide. Most of the perpetrators used sharp instruments as the killing method. No mental disorders were detected in 58.5% of the perpetrators, while psychotic disorders were identified in 30.4% of the cases. This study supported the predominance of sharp instruments as the killing method and a preponderance of matricide among the offenders with psychotic disorders. Although psychotic disorders were the most commonly detected mental disorders in the parricide offenders, most of them did not suffer from mental disorders.

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## 1. Introduction

Although the parricide term theoretically states to the killing of close relatives, it has generally been used to identify of murder of an individual's parents.<sup>1</sup> There are some definitions about parricide types. This describes were made according to which parent was killed. The killing of a mother by her child was defined as *Matricide*. The act of killing of father by his child was described as *Patricide*. *Stepmatricide* term identifies killing of a person's stepmother and *steppatricide* describes murder of stepfather. If a person kills both mother and father, this act is defined as *double parricide*.<sup>2–4</sup>

Parricide accounts for less than 2% of all homicides, and approximately 3% of homicides in which victims-offenders relationship was known in the USA in 2005.<sup>5</sup> Parricide constitutes 3.7% of all homicides during the period 1991 to 1997 in Canada, 4% during the period 2003 to 2006 in Finland and 5.3% from 2001 to 2010 in Korea.<sup>6–8</sup> Although parricide is a rare type of homicide, it receives intense media coverage and causes significant emotional reactions in communities.

Parricide is a crime that is most frequently committed by sons.<sup>6,9</sup> Walsh et al.<sup>10</sup> reported that males outnumbered females as

parricide offenders by a ratio of 7:1. Hillbrand et al.<sup>9</sup> reported a 5:1 male to female ratio of adult parricidal offenders. The overwhelming majority of parricide offenders were adults.<sup>2,11</sup>

Three types of parricide offenders were described.<sup>12</sup>: (1) the severely abused child,<sup>13</sup> (2) the severely mentally ill child, and (3) the dangerously antisocial child. The literature on parricide is not extensive and has some methodological shortcomings because of the limited research.<sup>14,15</sup> The sample size is not large and the data depends on different sources. Many recent studies depend on clinical samples,<sup>6,8,14,16,17</sup> and some studies are contingent on autopsy reports<sup>18,19</sup> and forensic evaluation.<sup>7,20–24</sup> The studies that do have a large sample size are from the U.S. national database.<sup>2,3,11,25–28</sup>

In order to better understand this phenomenon, we aimed to describe the occurrences of parricides in Turkey. We examined and compared the similarities and differences among types of parricide committed by adult parricide offenders.

## 2. Materials and methods

## 2.1. Subjects

This study was conducted in the 4th Specialization Board of the Council of Forensic Medicine. The Council of Forensic Medicine is the largest forensic expertise institution in Turkey and it is operated by the Ministry of Justice. The 4th Specialization Board deals with

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forensic psychiatry and is composed of psychiatrists, neurologists and forensic medicine specialists. The most important duty of this board is to evaluate the criminal responsibility of adults who are referred by court from throughout Turkey. When the court refers an offender to 4th specialization board for evaluation of criminal responsibility, the board requests criminal investigation file and his/her previous psychiatric records to the court. And then, the board makes offender's forensic psychiatric examination. Finally, the board arrived at a decision about offender's criminal responsibility after evaluated together with forensic psychiatric examination, medical/psychiatric history and criminal investigation file. This evaluation is submitted to the court as a full report. The 4th Specialization Board's records are reliable, because records of The Council of forensic Medicine that largest official forensic expertise institution in Turkey are archived authentically. The records of the 4th Specialization Board between 2009 and 2011 were screened retrospectively. One hundred thirty-five reports of parricide offenders that were referred to 4th Specialization Board of the Council of Forensic Medicine for the evaluation of criminal responsibility were detected.

## 2.2. Assessments

The subjects were divided into three groups according to parricide types (patricide, matricide and double parricide). Demographic characteristics (age, sex, marital status, education,

profession and living area), homicide characteristics (parricide victims, type of weapon, homicide place and motivation of homicide) and psychiatric characteristics (psychiatric history, psychiatric diagnosis and decision of criminal responsibility) of the offenders in these groups were compared. Highly detailed forensic psychiatric reports were written for the courts and included records of police or prosecutor, medical records about offender's mental status before and after homicide, forensic-psychiatric examination findings and decisions of the Board on criminal responsibility. This study was conducted with the approval of the Council of Forensic Medicine.

## 2.3. Statistical analyses

SPSS version 13.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used for analysis of the data and chi-square tests were used for analysis of the relationships. *P* values  $\leq 0.05$  were accepted as statistically significant.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Demographic characteristics of parricide offenders

A total of 135 adult parricide offenders were identified. Demographic characteristics of offenders are shown in Table 1. The vast majority of the offenders were male (125/135, 92.6%). There

**Table 1**  
Sociodemographic characteristics of the offenders.

	Patricide (n = 70)		Matricide (n = 54)		Double parricide (n = 11)		Total (n = 135)	
<b>Age</b>								
Mean	30,26 + 8,750		31,78 + 8,728		28,64 + 7,047		30,73 + 8,613	
Range	18–54		18–56		20–43		18–56	
<b>Age groups</b>	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
18–19 years	6	8,6	4	7,4	0	0	10	7,4
20–29 years	29	41,4	18	33,3	6	54,5	53	39,3
30–39 years	26	37,1	20	37	4	36,4	50	37
40–49 years	7	10	11	20,4	1	9,1	19	14,1
50–59 years	2	2,9	1	1,9	0	0	3	2,2
<b>Sex</b>	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Male	66	94,3	48	88,9	11	100	125	92,60%
Female	4	5,7	6	11,1	0	0	10	7,40%
<b>Marital status</b>	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Single	51	72,9	41	75,9	9	81,8	101	74,8
Married	11	15,7	6	11,1	2	18,2	19	14,1
Divorced	7	10	6	11,1	0	0	13	9,6
Unknown	1	1,4	1	1,9	0	0	2	1,5
<b>Education</b>	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Elementary school or below	46	65,7	29	53,7	4	36,4	79	58,5
High school and university	18	25,7	20	37	7	63,6	45	33,3
Unknown	6	8,6	5	9,3	0	0	11	8,1
<b>Profession</b>	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Unemployed	44	62,9	34	63	7	63,6	85	63
Worker	18	25,7	11	20,4	3	27,3	32	23,7
Craft	4	5,7	3	5,6	1	9,1	8	5,9
Farmer	2	2,9	2	3,7	0	0	4	3
Retired	0	0	1	1,9	0	0	1	0,7
Officer	0	0	1	1,9	0	0	1	0,7
Housewife	1	1,4	2	3,7	0	0	3	2,2
Teacher	1	1,4	0	0	0	0	1	0,7
<b>Living area</b>	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
City	48	68,6	39	72,2	9	81,8	96	71,1
Rural	22	31,4	15	27,8	2	18,2	39	28,9

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