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A Qualitative Study of Intimate Partner Femicide and Orphans in Cyprus

Abstract   The paper first contextualizes femicide in the broader context of domestic violence, and homicide in the Republic of Cyprus. It then goes on to report a qualitative study of eighteen intimate partner femicide (IPF) orphans during the period 2001-2014. Findings concerning IPF, offender, and victim characteristics but also pertaining to a broad range of themes that emerged in the face-to-face interviews with the orphans are also reported and discussed. In support of theoretical notions of power and control and gender inequality, the study reported also documents of a prior history of serious conflict, physical, verbal, and psychological abuse of the IPF victim by a jealous, possessive, controlling, and oppressive violent male partner or ex-partner. Evidence is provided of the tragic inability of the authorities to heed numerous warning signs and threats-to-kill by the offender and so avert such murders. Finally, attention turns to the policy and research implications of the findings with emphasis on lethal domestic violence prevention and better support of the orphans involved.

Keywords   Domestic Violence; Intimate Partner Femicide; Homicide; Orphans; Cyprus; Victims; Gender

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Introduction: Domestic Violence, Homicide, and Femicide in Cyprus

As Brookman and Robinson (2012:570) remind their readers, "it is impossible to understand the risk of victimization without considering gender." At the same time, it is established in criminology that the risk of being a victim of violent crime increases when one or more static (e.g., gender, age, social class, race, and ethnicity) and/or such dynamic factors as place and type of work, "lifestyle" factors (e.g., frequenting pubs, nightclubs), and mental health are present (Brookman and Robinson 2012). However, what sets "domestic violence" apart from other crime is the nature of the victim/offender relationship (Robinson 2010).

Women are more likely than men to experience domestic violence, but, compared to men, they do so differently and this includes being more likely to fear being killed or be afraid their children will get harmed (Robinson 2010). Female domestic violence

victimization is higher among the younger, living in households with lower incomes, with children in their households, and in rental accommodation. One possible explanation for the increased risk of such women is that they are more likely to want to keep their family together and so more reluctant to leave their violent partners (Walby and Allen 2004).

Concerning domestically violent versatile men, they are likely to have previous convictions, to be alcohol dependent, have "macho" attitudes, be characterized by narcissism, and psychopathology. The last attribute comprises superficial charm, need for stimulation, callousness, and antisocial history (Robinson 2010). Also, as Dobash and Dobash (1979) reported almost four decades ago, such offenders demonstrate jealousy, are possessive and try to control their partners, threaten to kill, increase the severity of violence against their partner over time, and/or threaten to commit suicide. Also, consistent with theoretical notions of power and control, the more jealous domestic violence perpetrators initiate conflict over child contact when the intimate relationship is over (Robinson 2006).

Concerning lethal domestic violence, across time and space, homicide (the killing of one human being by another whether in the form of murder or manslaughter) has been and is structured by sex and gender. The simple fact is that males are disproportionately represented among both offenders and victims (LaFree and Hunnicutt 2006; Office of National Statistics 2014). Concerning macro-level explanations for female and male victimization trends, patterns, and rates, according to Gartner and Jung (2014), the research shows that: (a) there is a close positive relationship between female and male victimization; (b) both have similar correlates; (c) since the middle of the twentieth century the two victimization rates remain divergent; and, finally, (d) various measures of gender inequality cannot adequately account for the consistent differences in victimization as a function of gender. The same authors conclude that, "the evidence points toward general theories of homicide victimization, although the validity of sex- or gender-specific theories cannot be ruled out" (Gartner and Jung 2014:435).

Considering micro-level homicide victimization studies, it is found that, irrespective of one's sex, the risk of homicide victimization is significantly higher for the young, members of marginalized racial and ethnic groups, the undereducated, the underemployed, and, predictably, also disadvantaged socio-economically and living in unsafe and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods (Kershaw, Nicholas, and Walker 2008; Pizzaro, DeJong, and McGarrell 2010). However, a close examination of the literature by Gartner and Jung (2014) leads them to state that there are some important risk and context differences in male and female homicide victimization; more specifically, females are more likely to be victimized by an intimate partner or family member, whereas males by an acquaintance or a stranger; and women who are separated from their intimate partners are more likely to be victimized than if living with them. Thus, the difference lies in the relationship with their killers. Gartner and Jung (2014:436) conclude that, as in the case of macro-research, the evidence from micro-research supports general theories of violence and homicide, but "sex- and gender-centered theories also help to contextualize or deepen the understanding of the factors suggested by general theories of crime." The inescapable conclusion is that the prevalence and nature of homicide is largely shaped by gender (Smith 2014).

Victims of Domestic Violence in Cyprus

According to the Cyprus Statistical Service, the estimated population of Cyprus living in the free areas of the Republic today (i.e., not in the areas in the northern part of Cyprus that is under the occupation of the Turkish army since 1974) is around 910,000. The Cyprus Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (n.d.), inter alia, offers face-to-face and over the phone advice and guidance concerning domestic incidents and, also, provides a shelter for victims of domestic violence. According to the Association's research report in 2012 (Kyriakidou 2012), during the period January 1997-June 2012 the Association handled 14,228 cases, yielding an average of 77 domestic incidents each month. In the same period, a total of 963 victims of domestic violence requested shelter, averaging 68.79 requests a year. Of the victims, 63% were married, 17% single, 18% separated, and 2% widowed/engaged; 77% were adults and of those 92% were female. The two genders were equally represented among child victims. There were 130 victims who were pregnant, 77% of the victims lived with their abuser, and 92% had children. Of the 12,312 victims whose nationality was known, Greek-Cypriots made up 86%, Greeks 3%, and the remaining 11% comprised different nationalities. Of the 8,009 victims for whom the information was available, 46% were unemployed.

Regarding the relationship between victims and offenders, a 2012 study of 12,239 cases by the Cyprus Association for the Treatment and Handling of Violence in the Family reported that the victim was a spouse (68%), parent (14%), child (9%), ex-spouse (4%), or, finally, a sibling (1.5%). The most frequent type of abuse reported was psychological, followed by physical, sexual, as well as neglect and combinations of different types.

Homicide and Gender in Cyprus

Examination of Cyprus Police homicide statistics for the period 01/2010-31/7/2014 (N=186), of which 51 (27%) were attempts, reveals that 70% of the cases involving 184 accused had been detected by the time of the analysis. Of the accused, 9% were females, while of the 217 victims, 22% were females. Thus, in support of the established finding internationally (LaFree and Hunnicutt 2006; Gartner and Jung 2014; Office of National Statistics 2014), females are much more likely to become victims of homicide than offenders.

Bearing in mind that some were multiple-offender homicides, when one takes a closer look at the 66 female victims of homicide in Cyprus during the period in question, it was found that they were killed: 22 by unknown (33%) and 3 by a male stranger (4.5%), 16 by a husband, 1 by ex-husband (26%), 8 by a lover (12%), 7 by a friend/somebody they knew (11%), 3 by the co/ex-cohabitee (4.5%), 2 by a brother (3%), and 4 (6%) by a member of their immediate family (daughter [1], son [1], sister [1], mother [1]). Thus, without ignoring the proportion of "unknown" homicide offenders, 63% of female

homicide victims are killed by someone they know well and trust.

Intimate Partner Femicide (IPF) Orphans

It is noteworthy to mention that children bereaved by the death of one parent at the hands of the other, who is most likely to be imprisoned, in effect lose both parents, but are often forgotten in the midst of such a dramatic situation. Bereavement is only a part of the process: there is the grief associated with the loss of both parents simultaneously because one deliberately killed the other; dislocation and insecurity regarding where and with whom they will live; stigma; secrecy; and, often, serious conflicts of loyalty—all devastating problems. IPF is a crime against humanity and the surviving orphans are the living voices of the killed ones. Who are they? When it happened? What happened to them from the point of view of custody issues, psychological, and psychiatric consequences, social and individual stigma? Many consider them the forgotten party who paid the highest price of the killing.

Children whose mother has been killed by their father suffer psychological, psychiatric, and social long-term problems. In a moment, their lives have been "switched off" in the worst and most tragic way. They are orphans of both parents because the mother has been killed, the father has either committed suicide or is in prison or in a mental forensic hospital. Other "parents" are not always available, while the best solution, or the only solution decided by the Courts in terms of custody, is not always in the best interest of the under-aged child.

Little is known about children orphans who witness their mother murdered by their father because, as far as it has been possible to ascertain, there have been very few such in-depth studies available internationally. Documented consequences of IPF on the orphans include PTSD (Black, Harris-Hendricks, and Kaplan 1992), especially if they witnessed the murder, enuresis, sleep disturbances, flashbacks, anxiety, psychosomatic disorders, aggression, and dissociation (Black and Kaplan 1988; Egeland, Jacobvitz, and Stroufe 1988; Burman and Allen-Meares 1994). As Ferrara and his colleagues (2015) remind their readers, the decision whom to place IPF orphans with is indeed problematic.

Children orphans who witness their mother murder are largely forgotten by society and live with the scars of witnessing one parent murdering the other. This article is an attempt to address a number of basic but vital questions: Who are these children? Where do they live? What happened to them after the incident? How do they, themselves, reflect on the experience of becoming an IPF victim?

Femicide: Maternal Death through Paternal Homicide

Children all over the world experience a range of traumatic events, but none can be more horrific than witnessing one parent murdering the other parent. Femicide is an example of Intimate Partner Homicide (IPF) and its incidence varies across countries (Stockl, Devries, and Rostein 2013). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2013), the murder of women is less common in Europe than in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Femicide is very

often preceded by physical violence against the victim. Furthermore, correlates of femicide include: the end of a relationship (i.e., actual or imminent separation), access to a firearm, prior threats to kill the victim, the offender having serious psychological problems, and, finally, being unemployed (Campbell et al. 2003; Moracco, Runyan, and Butts 2003; Koziol-McLain et al. 2006; Campbell et al. 2007).

It is undoubtedly true that this very traumatic social problem changes children's life drastically. Straight after the femicide, they are interviewed by police and social services personnel and are the subject of court interventions and child welfare decisions (van Nijnatten and van Huizen 2004). They are somehow expected to pick up the broken pieces of their tragic life and soldier on.

New Guardians for Orphan Children

When one parent kills the other, the child loses both parents. Most of the times, new surrogate parents undertake the guardianship of the child. The disorganization through the violence and the sudden loss and disruption of children's caring environment and relationships may lead to their assumptions about the availability and reliability of a "new family" (Kaplan 1998).

When children lose their parents, maternal and paternal grandparents usually offer to raise the children. In some occasions, feelings like guilt and shame lead maternal and paternal sides to have a say in what procedures should be followed for children's upbringing (Lev-Wiesel and Samson 2001). The extended family from both sides often in-

tervene to offer a home for the children, or at least they have a say in what arrangements are made for the children and how they are to be brought up (Kaplan 1998).

According to Lev-Wiesel and Samson (2001), most of the times relatives of the offender take care of the children because they see their role as temporary caretakers until their father's release from prison. Children living with relatives of the perpetrator are more likely to return to their surviving parent's care.

Motivational factors for the father's family will necessarily be different from those for the mother's family. The father's family will often have a need to manage shame and guilt, while for the mother's family a need to deal with grief and mourning. According to Kaplan (1998), mother's parents are more likely to forgive if: (1) the father accepted responsibility for the killing and presented regretfulness with remorse; (2) the father's parents acknowledged their shame and if they shared a true grief for their daughter-in-law; (3) during the criminal trial, if there were any provocations; and (4) the sentence of the father was the proper one.

When the children grow up with relatives of the one or the other family, an additional weight is added in their emotional world, since relatives have a continued war of who caused the result. The mother's relatives usually talk with hate about the "murderer father." In contrast, the father's relatives tend to blame the mother's behavior for provoking the homicide. When children are with their mother's relatives, they may avoid expressing love and longing

towards their father and/or anger and resentment towards their mother. On the other hand, when children are with the father's relatives, they may avoid expressing anger and hostility towards their father and love towards their mother (Lev-Wiesel and Samson 2001:239, 243). As Kaplan (1993:95) put it: "The children are embroiled in conflicts of loyalty, and have to placate relatives on both sides to prevent what they fear will be another catastrophic resolution to a dispute over them."

Some relatives may well-pressurize an orphan not to speak about the femicide in the hope that with time he/she "will forget it." In this way, however, well-intentioned relatives in effect prevent femicide orphans from mourning the loss of one or both of their parents. But, as mental health workers know only too well, the suppressed memory will not be forgotten.

IPF Orphans as Vulnerable Individuals

Little is known about how many children witness their parents murder, since no specific records are kept nationally that would verify this number (Burman and Allen-Meares 1994), or about what happens to these children after the incident, and to what extent social services psychologically help these children and for how long. Moreover, children who lose their parent/s are at higher risk for psychiatric difficulties in later childhood. Those who lose their parent between the ages of 3-5 years seem to be at higher risk. Those who lose their parent before the age of 10 are at greater risk for the development of depression and suicidal attempts. However, when the survived parent provides a helpful role model for the child, the difficulties are less (Lev-Wiesel and Samson 2001).

Drawing on Liamputtong's 2007 book, *Researching the Vulnerable: A Guide to Sensitive Research Methods*, despite the fact that there is no consensus on what exactly is meant by the term "vulnerable" and it is socially constructed, femicide orphans can justifiably be considered "vulnerable persons" because the term is often used interchangeably with such terms as "sensitive," the "hard-to-reach," and "hidden populations." As the study reported below documents the very tragic and very violent circumstances under which children and adolescents lose their mother, while the killer who is often their own father or their mother's partner or ex-partner is arrested, tried, and imprisoned, mean that themselves are taken into care, if under-aged. Thus, in effect, they become hard-to-reach and remain "hidden" from the rest of society. As the study also reports, the majority of them qualify as "sensitive" individuals.

As Liamputtong (2007:1-2) reminds us, one reason why sensitive researchers need to engage with the "vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalised groups as it is likely that these population groups will be confronted with more and more problems to their health and well-being." Lest it be thought that such a task is not without challenges, Liamputtong (2007:2) goes on to remind her readers that such research presents researchers with "unique opportunities, but also dilemmas." Also, as Liamputtong (2007) points out, for many of them, having been marginalized, invisible, not shared their experience and feelings of the killing with strangers at all before, coupled with feeling stigmatized and being skeptical, generally about the utility of research, means that a number of them, at least, would be reluctant to participate in research.

A Qualitative Study of Femicide Orphans in Cyprus

In the light of the noticeable lack of research into femicide orphans worldwide and having determined that no such study had been undertaken in Cyprus and wishing to give femicide orphans a voice by directly coming into contact with them face-to-face, it was decided to carry out the sensitive research reported below in full knowledge that as vulnerable individuals, femicide orphans, irrespective of age, require special care from the researchers. A basic reason why femicide orphan research is sensitive is because the orphans would be asked to disclose very personal information and feelings they normally would prefer to keep to themselves. The present authors share the view (Liamputtong 2007:7) that qualitative research methods are especially appropriate to the study of families by virtue of their being open-ended and flexible, thus enabling the researcher to hear survivors' stories and to understand "the meanings, interpretations and subjective experiences of vulnerable groups." It needs to be emphasized in this context that a qualitative researcher is committed to hearing research participants on their own terms and seeing the world through their perspectives in order to elicit very sensitive information from them and, thus, having an insight, open a window into their lives. Therefore, the format of the questions used is along the lines of "explain it to me—how, why, what's the process, what's the significance" (Hesse-Biber and Yaiser 2004:28). In addition, a qualitative researcher aims not only to learn from the research participants but also to utilize such knowledge in order to have an empirical basis for proposing particular policy reforms in order to

support vulnerable individuals and improve their lives. Finally, such a qualitative researcher needs to be aware and remember that the research may very well not only present difficulties for both the researcher and the researched but also impacts both on the research participants, as well as him/herself emotionally and not only.

Methodology

As the Cyprus partner in the Daphne European Project www.switch-off.eu: *Who, Where, What. Supporting WITness CHildren Orphans from Femicide in Europe*, entitled "Women as Victims of Lethal Domestic Violence during 2001-2014," the authors undertook to carry out face-to-face semi-structured interviews of femicide orphans. Both the Cyprus Police and the Department of Social Services were used as "gatekeeping agencies" (Liamputtong 2007). With the cooperation of a trusted "insider" in the Cyprus Police and another in the Department of Social Services and utilizing both electronic searches of print media, as well as door-knock enquiries where the homicide victim lived prior to the killing and by contacting the priest where the victim's funeral had taken place, it became possible to identify all 40 orphans from the 18 femicide cases during the period in question. All 40 orphans or, where appropriate through their legal guardian or a social worker "gatekeeper," were contacted by phone and, where required, with the assistance of the Social Services Department, were asked if they wished to participate in a university study of the experience of losing one's parent/s. 14 orphans themselves or their legal guardian, having also been assured of confidentiality, freely consented to participate and were interviewed using the semi-structured questionnaire during June-July

2014 period. No compensation or payment was provided for participating in the research, but one obvious incentive for taking part in the research was to improve the quality of services and support provided to femicide orphans in Cyprus by sharing their experience with the interviewer.

A precondition for the interview was that the interviewer had succeeded in putting an orphan at ease, establishing rapport, and gaining his/her trust. It was, therefore, important that the interview took place at a site of the orphan's choice under conditions an orphan felt comfortable. Both a reference letter from the University of Cyprus was provided at the meetings to verify the interviewer's identity, as well as an information sheet and an informed consent form for data confidentiality and protection, and description of the content of study were provided. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and none of the orphans withdrew from the interview process. Ethical approval for the research had been obtained at a European level by the project coordinator.

The 14 orphans—5 children (5 boys), 3 teenagers (1 boy and 2 girls), and 6 adults (4 men and 2 women)—came from eight cases of femicide: 1 & 3; 2; 4; 5-7; 8; 9 & 10; 11-13; and 14.

Regarding the interview site, sibling orphans 5, 6, and 7 being under-aged were interviewed individually in an office of the Social Services in the presence of the social worker who had the legal responsibility to care for the three of them. Under the same conditions were interviewed sibling orphans 9 and 10, but in a conjoint interview. Orphan 8 was interviewed in a cafeteria in the presence of her aunt, sibling orphans 11, 12, and

13 at the home of their foster family. Orphans 1, 2, 3, 4, and 14 were interviewed alone in their houses.

The content of the semi-structured questionnaire was formulated by the European project coordinating team at the University of Naples II, Psychology Department and was based on the following tools: (a) "Child Behavior Checklist for Ages until 11 Years Old" (see: Achenbach 2001), (b) "Youth Self-Report for Ages 12-17 Years Old" (see: Achenbach 2001), (c) the "Cognitive Behavioral Assessment for Females and Males for Ages above 18 Years Old," and (d) the "Fatality—Child Review (Data Capture Form)." It should be noted at this point that (c) and (d) were constructed by the Department of Psychology of the Second University of Naples. The content of the interviews was analyzed thematically. The qualitative method was chosen in order to get deep and rich data primarily on IPF orphans' own experience. In view of the very sensitive nature of the femicide, the interviews were not recorded, but detailed notes were made straight after the interview.

In carrying out the in-depth interviews face-to-face with the orphans, it was essential to treat the research participants with the utmost respect and sensitivity to their lives and needs throughout the process, establishing first trust and rapport. In effect, the interviewer obtained an oral history from each orphan concerning the femicide event. In the case of the five orphans who were adult at the time of the killing, the orphan's entire life became a focus and, thus, a life story or life history was obtained from those orphans' perspective. Overall, the research was aimed at identifying significant themes that emerged in the course of the in-depth interviews.

The young female co-researcher who conducted the interviews possessed sufficient expertise in psychology and criminology, was experienced in carrying out personal interviews, and had good interpersonal skills. Finally, in order to deal with the psychological impact of interviewing femicide orphans on herself, the interviewer was debriefed after each interview by the senior researcher in the project who was also experienced in psychological counseling.

Findings

The Orphans

Of the 40 orphans (children and adults), two were themselves injured in the course of the homicide and two others were themselves killed by the killer after witnessing the murder of their mother. Of the fourteen orphans interviewed (see: Table 1), 10 were male and 4 female, their age at the time of the killing ranged from 3 to 38, yielding an average age of 14.7 years. Thus, an IPF orphan does not necessarily conform to the expectation that it is a child. The orphans were interviewed on average 4.4 years after the killing. More than half (N=8) of the children were aged 3-11 at the time of the killing and at the time of the interview 5 were living with their grandparents and 3 were under the care of the Department of Social Services and living with a foster family. Of the older ones, 2 were living with their siblings, one was living with her partner, and 3 with their spouse and children.

Table 1. Children's and Femicide Characteristics.

Case	M/F	Age at killing	Age at study	Where residing	How killed	Child witnessed
1	M	37	42	With wife and children	Shotgun	Yes
2	M	19	29	With his partner	Shotgun	No
3	M	38	43	With wife and children	Shotgun	Yes
4	M	20	25	With grandparents	Kitchen knife	No
5	M	5	7	With grandparents	Strangle & burn	No
6	M	6	9	With grandparents	Strangle & burn	No
7	M	11	13	With grandparents	Strangle & burn	No
8	F	10	11	With grandparents	Military rifle	Yes
9	M	6	9	With siblings	Asphyxiation	Yes
10	F	20	23	With siblings	Asphyxiation	No
11	F	10	15	Social services care	Asphyxiation	No
12	M	5	10	Social services care	Asphyxiation	No
13	M	3	8	Social services care	Asphyxiation	No
14	F	17	25	With husband and children	Shotgun	No

Source: self-elaboration.

Findings will next be reported pertaining to a number of themes that emerged in the course of the semi-structured interviews with the orphans.

Characteristics of the IPF

In five of the eight IPF cases, the victim was strangled and in three of those, the killer subsequently burned the body, in four a shotgun was used, a military rifle was used in one, and, finally, one victim was stabbed to death with a kitchen knife. In some cases, the police had confiscated the firearm, but, due to gaps in the legislation, it was returned to the violent male partner after a few hours or days, who subsequently used it to perpetrate the femicide. The majority of the couples were still living under the same roof, but were in the process of separating or had been living apart. Also, in support of other studies (Dobash and Dobash 1979), pathological jealousy and possessiveness by the male husband/cohabitee or ex-husband/cohabitee was very common. Four of the orphans were present at the killing and witnessed their mother getting killed, while two were injured trying to save her. Some of the killers had been under psychiatric care and/or had been on medication. In a number of cases, the killing was premeditated and was carried out in open areas and especially in the fields/countryside. To illustrate, the femicide took place: in the case involving orphans 1-3, 6, and 8 in a field, but in 1-3 the victim's body was thrown into a well by the offender, while in 9-10 it occurred in a coffee shop, while in the case involving orphan 11 the location was the yard outside the house where the victim was residing.

Femicide followed by suicide: Almost half the killers (3 out of 8) committed suicide after the killing of their partners, while four were serving prison sentences in the Central Prison in Nicosia at the time of the study and one had been released from prison.

Antecedents of IPF

Domestic violence prior to the femicide was a recurring theme in the interviews reported by all the orphans, except in one case. Similarly, all orphans reported physical and psychological violence by the killer against their mother and, with the exception of one femicide involving orphans 1-3, also against the orphans themselves as children or adolescents. In three of the eight femicides (orphans 5, 8, 11-13), the killer had been living apart from the victim before he committed the homicide; in fact, in the femicide with orphans 12-14, the offender and the victim had been divorced. Another recurring theme was pathological jealousy of the victim by the killer. Tragically, the IPF could have been averted because warnings had been repeatedly given—the killer himself had threatened through the children he would kill their mother if she did not return to him, while in two cases (orphans 2, 1 & 3, and 4-5), the killer had tried unsuccessfully once before to perpetrate the homicide (by attempted strangulation) and has also threatened to kill his spouse's mother (orphans 4-5). The father of orphans 4-5, who had tried once before to kill his wife, was subsequently convicted of murder in order to collect her life insurance, while the father of orphans 1 and 3, who had also tried once before to kill his spouse, was pathologically jealous of her. As has also been documented by researchers in other countries, in case 14, a father threatened through his children that he was going to kill their mother if she did not return to him. Finally, the police had been informed of the killer's death threats, but failed abysmally to intervene and protect the victim and, in the one case, where they had confiscated his shotgun, it was returned to him soon afterwards.

The Orphans' Childhood

All orphans reported having lived in an oppressive and violent environment characterized by too frequent shouting and fights and, thus, experienced psychological violence and not only. Their father or step-father was a nasty, violent tyrant who would frequently beat up their mother badly, while in three femicide cases, the father/step-father/cohabitee of six of them (orphans 1-3, 6, 9-10) did likewise to the children themselves. In effect, there was neither real, meaningful communication in their family, nor meaningful discussion and, consequently, the orphans preferred to discuss any issues that worried them with their friends.

Feelings/Emotions Expressed by the Orphans during the Interviews

As perhaps should have been expected, the feelings and the emotions expressed during the interviews were rather mixed. Some orphans expressed relief and pleasure because someone was interested to hear them. Some others expressed sadness and cried when they remembered the incident and felt grief when event-related images came to their mind and had difficulty coming to terms with the knowledge that one day, sooner or later, their father would be released from prison and would want to see them. Others initially refused to articulate their thoughts and felt embarrassed about being asked to think back and share their experience of such a tragic event. Finally, orphans 1-3 were very keen on seeing their father when he would come out of prison and blamed their mother for beating them and provoking their father (a Muslim) by being unfaithful to him.

Others expressed frustration from the way the system works in Cyprus as far as the courts and social services are concerned, but expected that things would improve, especially now that a study was being done and someone was taking an interest in them as individuals. Interestingly, some of the orphans expressed anticipation that life in general would improve for them.

Feelings of anger and sadness permeated the interviews because they had lost their mother and been through a very traumatic experience, especially for those who were children at the time. A willingness to cooperate with the researchers in order to help and support other femicide orphans in a practical way through the study was evident in most of the interviews.

How Children Described Their Mother and Their Father or Step-Father

Their mother: Only three orphans (siblings 11-13) described their mother as cold and insensitive, who neglected them severely. These three orphans would go out until late, their mother did not know where they were, who they were with, or what they were doing, they came back home late at night, they

would get drunk and did not wake up in the morning to go to school. However, the remaining eleven orphans described their mother as having a good personality, being a caring, hard-working person, resilient in many situations, though not very sociable, perhaps due to the serious and prolonged domestic violence at home.

Their father or step-father: They described him as a very strict man who imposed his will on the family, beat their mother badly in all cases, and in two cases, involving orphans 1-3 and 9-10, he did the same on the children; he was psychologically and physically violent and for two of them (orphans 2 and 8) he used to buy them things to gain their support. Four orphans (5-7, 8) described their father being a compulsive gambler who forcefully would take their mother's money. Moreover, two orphans (9 & 10 with one of them being a step-child of the killer) said he was not only shouting all the time but had serious psychological problems and did not have time to play with his children, let alone advise them. However, three sibling orphans (11-13) described their father as loving and caring. It is worth mentioning that the orphans whose father was described as having serious psycho-social problems worried that they themselves would also develop such problems later in their life.

Acting as a Parent at an Early Age

Two under-aged girls (orphans 4, 8) and a woman (orphan 10), who were interviewed, said that they found themselves having to perform a parent's role at a very early age and they fed, changed, cared, and looked after their younger siblings because their mother worked or did not care about her children.

Taking Initiatives

When adult orphans were younger, they did not take initiatives as the environment where they were growing up was not conducive for doing so. The same was mentioned by those orphans who are under-aged today. Orphans 2 & 3 who were adults at the time of the interview reported they gained their freedom after leaving their family home and started taking initiatives in all sectors in their life (studies, who to live with, employment, hobbies) and doing things they had been deprived of when they were under-aged.

School

As far as their scholastic achievement is concerned, the orphans are average to excellent students. Those in the last year of school at the time of their mother's death (10, 14) did very well at school as they wanted to achieve their goal of going on to University. Two women (10, 11) did not manage to study at University. The first got married after finishing school and she gave birth to her first child. The other one left school when finishing the first year of High School at the age of sixteen because she wanted to find a job to make ends meet. Another orphan (8), a teenage girl, is a perfectionist and always wants to be the best pupil at school. Some children and teenagers have cooperated with Educational Psychologists (5, 7, 8, 11-12), while others (13) have not. Some of the orphans still at school were being bullied and other pupils teased them by asking them how their father had killed their mother.

Employment and Dealing with Conflict

With one exception, the orphans who were adult at the time of the interview had jobs and described themselves as hard-working who enjoyed their jobs. However, one of the two female orphans (14) was not working due to serious psycho-social problems. At the workplace, one adult male orphan (1) said that if he is confronted with conflict, he prefers to leave the place, while others prefer to discuss it (2 & 3).

Friends

Generally speaking, the orphans had many friends, but would only discuss issues that worried them with a few of their friends. The adult orphans (1, 2) said they had childhood friends, while the children and teenagers reported that they mostly used to play football and go swimming with their friends. Interestingly, the same two of the orphans who were adult men when interviewed said they had friends who had themselves experienced difficult situations and, thus, were in a position to receive support and advice from them. Generally, the adult orphans were eager to help and advise others facing difficulties, and one of the men expressed his readiness to be standing by and ready to help if called upon when another IPF occurs and orphans needed support.

Ease with which They Could Get to Know Strangers

Responses varied regarding how easily orphans got to know people they met for the first time, and included: a defensive attitude (1), a positive atti-

tude (2 and 3), an attitude that depended on the expressed attitude of the other person (10), and, finally, the stranger themself and venue where such a meeting occurred (4). Likewise, the response to the same question by children orphans also varied with one needing time to get to know somebody (5), getting to know somebody easily (6 and 7), while, finally, others were reserved and needed time to become familiar with someone (9 and 12).

Interests

Spending their free time on a Smartphone, tablet, playstation (see below), or laptop was a way to relax themselves from the everyday routine or when someone made them angry (1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11). It is quite interesting that when the incident occurred, orphans 4 and 10 started martial arts and specifically kickboxing training. All of the orphans said they loved animals and most enjoyed activities like dancing, swimming, and reading.

It was reported by boys that they liked playing football with their friends in their neighborhood or at school (5, 6, 7, 9). It is worth mentioning that three of them (5, 6, 7) also liked playing playstation games that include scenes of extreme violence and, also, listen to songs with insulting content.

Victims Reflecting on the Aftermath of the IPF

Some of the orphans felt the police officers who dealt with them generally did their job reasonably well, taking care to meet with the orphans in places where they felt comfortable. However, they simply did their

job and did not have the specialist knowledge and the training to deal with orphans from femicide. For all the orphans, a moment that stuck in their mind was when the police arrested their father/step-father for their mother's murder in their presence.

Looking back, those victims who were adults at the time (1 and 3) felt very strongly about the lack of psychological support by the relevant agencies of the state which are understaffed with non-specialists, did not show sufficient interest, and ceased to be interested completely when the trial finished and their father/step-father, et cetera, was convicted, but the victims' life had to go on as best they could, largely on their own.

In the case of under-aged victims at the time of the killing, they were either (a) taken into the care of the Department of Social Services and were fostered out (11, 12, 13), or (b) were cared for by one or both grandparents (4, 5, 6, 7, 8). In the latter case, persistent serious financial difficulties were and continue to be a major problem as is adequate supervision and guidance of orphans by the grandparent/s when they reach adolescence and later.

Adults and especially those grandparents who cared about the orphans (4, 5-7, 8) experienced serious financial difficulties. Minors who were in foster families received the government's financial support and some psychological support from Social Services. However, minors who lived with their grandparents, apart from an orphan's allowance, did not receive any other support from the government. Most of the grandparents became unemployed because they left their jobs to raise their orphaned grandchildren.

Adult orphans who had their grandparents, other relatives, friends, and school's support when they were minors had managed better to get on with their life (e.g., study at University, find a job, get married and have their own family) (1, 2, 3, 4). Those orphans were more sociable, seemed to have come to terms with the killing of their mother (1, 2, 3, 4), and two (2 and 4) were willing to help other femicide orphans. However, orphans who did not receive any support (4, 14) presented psycho-social disorders, lack of self-esteem, and depression. It is evident they had not yet come to terms with what happened.

It is also interesting to note how orphans got used to their new environment after IPF. Minors who subsequently lived with their grandparents (cases 5, 6, 7, 8) soon became accustomed to their changed environment and they often did not react negatively. Grandparents satisfied all the orphans' favors because they feared otherwise the children would react negatively. Children benefited from the situation and they sought more and more favors. In general, grandparents were unable to set limits and many of them did not receive any advice from professionals on how to handle their orphaned grandchildren. In a case where an orphan was under the care of her grandparents, the Welfare Services' support was weak (case 8). However, there were cases where there was adequate psychological support by the Services (5, 6, 7).

Additionally, minors (cases 10, 11, 12, 13) who were in foster families reacted variously. The foster mother was the half-sister of orphan 9 and he was happy in the family; case 11 was a reactive child when placed in a foster family. Finally, one of the

orphans (12) complied with the situation, but did not react negatively; and orphan 13 faced difficulties settling into his new environment.

The Impact of IPF on the Victims, Both Children and Adults at the Time

The following symptoms were reported by the orphans themselves, social services officers, and grandparents as having been caused by the experience of the homicide: sleeping disorders; waking up during sleep; bedwetting; somnambulism; "imagined patient"; feelings of dizziness and visiting the hospital for tests; believing there is no life, they have no energy; negative thoughts constantly on their mind; reactivity; screaming a lot; constipation; avoiding people who remind them of the incident; telling lies; suicide attempts; missing their parents; daydreaming; creating an image for themselves that does not exist, such as believing that they are singers or prostitutes; being prone to accidents such as car accidents; hyperactivity; and constantly trying to be the center of attention.

In addition, as a result of the femicide experience, the orphans had an increased risk of low scholastic achievement, antisocial behavior, substance abuse, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, and risk of suicide. To minimize such risks it is vital that the orphans enjoy steady and long-term meaningful support, including professional support, from their immediate social environment.

The femicide also impacted some orphans leaving them with a strong sense of guilt that they had not

prevented the killing of their mother. A child stated that he should not have left his house the morning of the murder and gone to school (5). In the same case, the father influenced his child what to report to the police. In another case, a child (8) tried to defend her mother when her grandparents (father's parents) would blame her for provoking her killing. That child broke out crying several times when the incident was being discussed. In addition, a child (11) had a conversation with her father, when he killed her mother after a fight, whether he should surrender to the police or not, placing her at a tender age in a terrible dilemma.

Alcohol and Drugs

Regarding alcohol abuse, orphan 1 said he liked consuming alcohol when going out with friends, whereas case 4 used to drink a lot, staying out of his house until late and driving to go back home. As a result, he caused many serious car accidents, but no longer drinks to get drunk. Orphan 11, an under-aged girl, would leave home secretly, get drunk, stay out until late, and exhibited extreme views on a range of issues. Once, her foster father found her unconscious and drunk outside her school.

As far as *illicit drug use* is concerned, orphan 4 indicated he had been convinced by his friends to smoke cannabis and along the way he occasionally used hard drugs. He said he was free from addictive substances and had changed his everyday routine: he started working early in the morning and finishing late in the afternoon. Then he would attend martial arts training. He said that he might use cannabis once during the weekend when he meets his

friends. This person did not have the attention, support, and control of his parents when he was younger. He relied on his friends' support and advice.

Suicide Attempts

There were two cases of attempted suicide by two females. One case concerns orphan 11, a female juvenile who experienced a traumatic childhood. She undertook to bring up her two brothers from a very early age. Moreover, she had low self-esteem and had no relatives to support her and she knew it. The only support she had was from the Social Services. She had been living with a foster family, but most of the time she would secretly leave her foster family's home. The same teenage girl presented a bad image of herself, she wanted to be like her mother who had worked at a bar and had a bad reputation. She scarred her hands and abdomen with a blade and had also been admitted to the Inpatient Care Unit for children and adolescents with severe psycho-social disorders.

The other case concerns orphan 14, aged 17 at the time of her mother's killing, an adult woman aged 25 years at the time of the interview, who also experienced a traumatic childhood. As a teenager, she would secretly leave her home. Her father used to beat her severely. From a very early age she took on the role of bringing up her three siblings. When she finished school, she became pregnant and she immediately got married. Three weeks after the marriage, her father killed her mother with a shotgun. She did not have her relatives' support because they gave all their attention to the three minor siblings. She was monitored by a psychiatrist, but she

stopped seeing him because she felt it was not making her better. One day she took an overdose of anti-anxiety pills and attempted suicide. At the time of the interview she admitted to constantly feeling tired and anxious.

Orphans' Own Families and Relations with Relatives

Orphans' own families: Orphan 1 felt happy with his family and, likewise, orphan 2 was engaged to get married and felt happy. However, case 4 was afraid of entering into relationships, fearing he would be hurt and was not in any relationship. Case 10 planned to have his own family when his younger brother would be older, while, finally, orphan 14 was married with children, but felt unhappy.

Relations with relatives: The fourteen orphans present a mixed picture regarding their relationship with their father in prison (where applicable), siblings, and relatives. Orphans 1 and 3 had a good relationship with their siblings, but no contact with their father who had been released from prison. Orphan 2 had a good relation with his sister, while his step-father had committed suicide after the femicide. Orphan 4, whose father committed suicide, had a very good relationship with his grandparents, but not with his brother. Orphans 5-7 had very good relations with maternal grandparents and siblings and a good relationship with their father who was in prison. Orphan 8, whose father committed suicide, had very good relations with siblings and maternal grandparents. Orphans 9 and 10 had very good relations with half-sisters

and step-father, but no relationship with their father who was in prison and his relatives. Orphan 11 was jealous of and kept annoying her siblings and, also, was on bad terms with her foster-family, as well as her father in prison. Orphans 12 and 13 had good relations both with their respective brothers, as well as with their father in prison and foster parents. Orphan 14, whose father committed suicide, did not get on with siblings and relatives, and described her partner as uncaring.

Three out of the six adult orphans (1, 2, 3) had formed their own family and they expressed their happiness with their partners and with their children, where applicable. One of the adult orphans (4) said that he is not in a relationship and is afraid to create his own family because he believes he would be hurt. Orphan 10 wants to create her own family when her step-brother grows up. Finally, orphan 14 was married and had children, but did not feel happy.

Brief Excerpts from the Orphans' Interviews

The following are some of the noteworthy expressions some of the orphans used in the course of the interview: "I think five times before speaking and acting because I do not want to hurt anyone" (case 4); "I do not easily trust anyone" (case 4); "I like freedom, but not if it means hurting others" (case 4); "I do not like to always win—sometimes we must lose" (case 9); "I do not like being better than other children" (case 9); "It [the foster family] was a really nice family, I do not deserve to live with them" (case 11); "If I do something wrong, it is not my fault" (case 11); and "I have only bad experiences. I cannot

remember any positive incident that happened in my life until now" (case 14).

Conclusions

The fourteen orphans interviewed were largely heterogeneous in terms of: their age at the time of their mother's killing, whether they were physically present and witnessed the killing, whether their father/step-father or their mother's partner or ex-partner committed suicide after the murder, how much time had elapsed between the killing and time of the interview, and, finally, differences in the kind and quality of support they have had. It came as no surprise, therefore, to find that the interviews gave rise to a mixture of different feelings and emotions, including contradictory ones, when the orphans were asked to recall the most tragic event in their life.

In support of other studies, a prior history of serious conflict, physical, verbal, and psychological abuse of the IPF victim by the male killer was a common feature of the eight homicides as was premeditation. All orphans reported having lived in an oppressive and violent environment characterized by too frequent shouting and fights and, thus, had experienced prolonged psychological and (three of them) physical violence. With one exception, the orphans described their father or step-father as a nasty, violent tyrant who would frequently beat up their mother badly. With the exception of three siblings, eleven orphans described their mother as having a good personality, being a caring, hard-working person, resilient in many situations, though not very sociable, perhaps due to the serious and prolonged domestic violence at home. Even though a variety of methods was

used to perpetrate the killing (strangulation, a firearm [almost always a shotgun], and a kitchen knife), the police had been given more than sufficient warnings of the impending femicide. Sadly, the authorities failed abysmally to protect the victim and prevent the femicide, despite being informed about the killer's threats.

With the violent domestic conflict coming to an abrupt and tragic end, for two of the orphans, it signaled their "liberation" because without the violent tyrant father/step-father controlling and oppressing them, they were now free to use their own initiative and did so by taking control of their own lives. Concerning the impact of the killing itself on the orphans' education, the in-depth interviews revealed that it depended on the age of the orphan at the time and whether they enjoyed the benefit of good professional support long enough.

Regarding research and policy implications arising from the study findings, there is an urgent need in Cyprus for research at the micro- and macro-level into sex, gender, and violence in both urban and rural areas. The government must address the structural inequalities at the root of neighborhood and family (broadly defined) disadvantage. Meanwhile,

there is an urgent need for therapeutic help for femicide orphans by professionals, especially for those children and adolescent orphans who witnessed the killing.

Since women are frequently on their own in protecting themselves and often their children from violent men they have trusted, it is vital that doctors notify the police immediately about women's victimization by the partners or ex-partners and alert the police to the increased risk of IPF if the violent male has threatened to kill. There is also a need to increase the accountability of those services/institutions charged with these responsibilities.

Moreover, there is a need to provide stable programming and relationships with caring professionals vis-à-vis disadvantaged families with a history of serious domestic violence, and also change gender ideologies and challenge gender inequality, especially through education and prevention. Finally, the government in Cyprus as elsewhere ought to enhance the provision of interpersonal skills education and domestic abuse prevention in schools (Gadd, Fox, and Hale 2014) and teach conflict resolution skills to all and from very early on.

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