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Lethal proximity: Victim–offender relationships and killing methods in femicides in Türkiye

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ABSTRACT

Victim–offender relationships and killing methods are central to homicide research, yet they are often examined separately. This study investigates their association in femicide and develops relational proximity as a framework for understanding how social ties shape practical access, gendered authority, and opportunities for lethal violence. A retrospective, incident-level quantitative content analysis examined 5,461 killings recorded as femicides by the civil society archive Anıt Sayaç in Türkiye between 2008 and 2025. Each case was corroborated through at least two publicly accessible news reports, deduplicated, and coded using standardized criteria. Frequencies, cross-tabulations, chi-square tests, Cramer's V, and adjusted standardized residuals were used. Current and former intimate partners accounted for 54.1% of cases, intrafamilial perpetrators for 12.8%, and firearms for 46.8%. Victim–offender relationship and killing method were significantly associated, $\chi^2(30, N = 4{,}468) = 114.55$, $p < .001$, although the effect size was small (Cramer's $V = .072$). Firearm killings occurred more often than expected in former-partner cases, whereas sharp-instrument killings were overrepresented in current-partner cases. The findings are interpreted through relational proximity, which treats relationship categories as positions from which different configurations of access, knowledge, authority, and continued contact may arise. Femicide prevention and institutional risk assessment should therefore consider post-separation contact, stalking, family authority, access to victims' routines and spaces, and firearm availability alongside relationship status.

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Introduction

Women's homicide victimization is disproportionately concentrated within relationships embedded in everyday life. Current and former intimate partners constitute the largest perpetrator group, while relatives, acquaintances, and other familiar men account for a substantial share of women's killings (Weil et al., 2018). These relational positions may provide knowledge of women's routines, access to homes and workplaces, continued contact through shared children or family networks, and opportunities for monitoring. Victim–offender relationship is therefore more than a background characteristic of homicide. It may shape the practical conditions under which lethal violence becomes possible. Building on this premise, the present study examines victim–offender relationship and killing method together, two dimensions that have more commonly been analyzed as separate characteristics of homicide events.

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The concept of femicide locates the gender-related killing of women and girls within patriarchal power and a continuum of intimidation, coercion, and control (Kelly, 1988; Radford & Russell, 1992). Definitions and inclusion criteria vary across legal institutions, official agencies, researchers, media organizations, and feminist monitoring initiatives, affecting estimated prevalence and public visibility (Di Marco et al., 2024; Walby et al., 2017). Drawing on feminist criminology and coercive control scholarship, this study makes three contributions: a longitudinal analysis of 5,461 media-corroborated femicides in Türkiye between 2008 and 2025; a test of the association between victim–offender relationship and killing method; and the development of relational proximity as a framework for interpreting relationship categories through access, knowledge, contact, authority, and opportunity. The framework does not assume that relational position determines killing method.

Relational positions differ in the contact, dependency, and opportunity they may sustain, particularly after separation, when shared responsibilities, digital communication, stalking, or knowledge of daily routines may preserve access (Dawson & Gartner, 1998; Johnson & Hotton, 2003; McFarlane et al., 1999; Stark, 2007). Relational proximity describes these practical capacities without assuming that close relationships are inherently dangerous or that proximity causes homicide.

Killing method captures another dimension of homicide context. Firearms, sharp instruments, strangulation, blunt force, falls from height, and multiple-method attacks differ in accessibility, bodily contact, distance, and lethal capacity. Weapon use varies with victim–offender relationship and other incident characteristics (Fox & Allen, 2014; Pelletier & Pizarro, 2019), while firearm access is an established risk factor in intimate partner homicide, particularly when combined with threats, stalking, prior violence, or separation (Campbell et al., 2007; Spencer & Stith, 2020). Yet victim–offender relationship and killing method are often reported separately. Research also tends to privilege intimate partner homicide, leaving killings by sons, fathers, brothers, in-laws, and other relatives less visible (Condry & Miles, 2023). Examining relationship and method together may therefore reveal patterns that remain concealed when each is treated as an independent descriptive variable.

These questions are particularly important in Türkiye, where forensic, criminological, feminist, and socio-legal research has documented the scale and relational characteristics of femicide across different periods and data sources (Koç, 2022; Toprak & Ersoy, 2017; Uluyol, 2026). Despite this growing literature, victim–offender relationship and killing method have not been examined together in a single, independently corroborated national dataset covering 2008–2025. Existing research on femicide, honor-related violence, and the Turkish legal context is examined in the theoretical framework.

In the absence of a unified, publicly accessible official femicide database, civil society records support visibility and accountability but require verification because media reports may contain duplicates, inconsistent names, and incomplete relationship or method information. Using Anıt Sayaç (n.d.) for initial case identification, this study reconstructed 5,461 killings recorded as femicides in Türkiye between 2008 and 2025. Each case was corroborated through at least two news reports, deduplicated, and coded using standardized criteria. The analysis examines relationship and method distributions, their variation across periods, and their association.

Theoretical framework

This study is situated within feminist criminology. Feminist criminology challenged the male-centered assumptions of conventional criminological theory and the treatment of

gender as an additional demographic variable rather than a relation of power shaping crime, victimization, law, and institutional response (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988; Smart, 1976). Within this tradition, violence against women cannot be understood only through individual motives or event characteristics. It must also be examined in relation to gendered authority, control, dependency, and the institutional practices through which violence is recognized and governed. The study therefore draws on feminist conceptualizations of femicide and the continuum of violence (Kelly, 1988; Radford & Russell, 1992), together with work on coercive control and intimate partner homicide (Dobash & Dobash, 2015; Stark, 2007).

The study connects victim–offender relationship with killing method through relational proximity. Relationship categories identify positions that may organize access, knowledge of routines, authority, and continued contact, rather than serving as neutral labels or substitutes for motive. Killing method captures the material means of lethal violence. The analysis extends beyond intimate partners to sons, fathers, brothers, in-laws, acquaintances, and other perpetrators without assuming shared pathways to violence. It also examines how media reporting, institutional disclosure, and civil society monitoring shape the public record of femicide.

Relational proximity

Victim–offender relationship is a central dimension of homicide research because it places lethal violence within a social context. Categories such as current partner, former partner, relative, acquaintance, and stranger identify the perpetrator's formal position in relation to the victim, but they do not fully capture the access, knowledge, authority, and repeated contact associated with that position. Intimate femicides differ across current, estranged, and former relationships, particularly in relation to separation, conflict, and opportunity (Dawson & Gartner, 1998; Johnson & Hotton, 2003). This study uses relational proximity to describe the practical capacities produced through intimate partnership, former partnership, kinship, co-residence, shared responsibilities, and repeated social contact. These ties may provide knowledge of a woman's routines, access to the spaces she occupies, opportunities for monitoring, and socially legitimate reasons for continued contact. Relational proximity therefore concerns practical access rather than emotional closeness.

This distinction is particularly important after separation. The formal termination of a relationship may reduce routine contact without eliminating shared children, financial obligations, digital communication, family networks, or knowledge of daily movements. Stalking and repeated unwanted contact often precede intimate partner femicide (McFarlane et al., 1999), while separation-related homicide has been associated with proprietariness, entitlement, and perceived loss of control (Wilson & Daly, 1993b; Dobash & Dobash, 2015). Coercive control may likewise persist through surveillance, intimidation, and restrictions on autonomy after a relationship has formally ended (Stark, 2007). Separation may therefore alter the form of access without necessarily removing the perpetrator's capacity to monitor, approach, or intervene in the woman's life.

Relational proximity also extends beyond intimate partnership. Family members and acquaintances may occupy positions involving authority, dependency, legitimacy, co-residence, or repeated access. Condry and Miles (2023), for example, show that mothers killed by sons remain marginal within dominant accounts of femicide. Such cases demonstrate why kinship cannot be treated as uniformly protective and why intrafamilial violence should not be reduced to the same explanatory model as intimate partner

homicide. The concept of relational proximity permits comparison across relational positions without assuming identical motives or pathways to lethal violence.

Relational proximity is an interpretive framework, not a directly measured variable, numerical scale, or independent measure of risk. It does not imply that close relationships are inherently dangerous. The analysis tests differences in killing methods across observed relationship categories but does not measure actual access, knowledge of routines, contact, surveillance, or authority. These categories identify positions from which such capacities may arise without establishing their presence in individual cases or providing causal explanations. The framework also asks whether institutional risk classifications adequately recognize continuing access and dependency. Qualitative research using case histories, judicial records, or survivor and family accounts would be needed to examine how these capacities operated in individual cases.

Killing methods and homicide context

Killing method is another important feature of homicide events. Firearms, sharp instruments, strangulation, blunt force, falls from height, and multiple-method attacks differ in lethality, accessibility, speed, distance, and the degree of bodily contact they require. These differences make killing method more than a descriptive characteristic. It captures part of the material organization of the homicide event and the means through which lethal violence becomes possible.

Weapon use is associated with victim, offender, relationship, and incident characteristics (Fox & Allen, 2014; Pelletier & Pizarro, 2019). A firearm may permit lethal violence from a distance and with limited physical contact, whereas strangulation, sharp instruments, and blunt force generally require greater bodily proximity. These distinctions do not reveal motive, but they may indicate differences in encounter setting, opportunity, weapon availability, and the nature of contact between victim and offender.

Firearms are particularly significant because their availability can sharply increase the lethality of an assault. Firearm access has repeatedly been identified as a major risk factor for intimate partner homicide, particularly when combined with threats, stalking, prior violence, or separation (Campbell, 2012; Campbell et al., 2007). Meta-analytic evidence likewise identifies firearm access and weapon-related threats as important indicators of lethal risk (Spencer & Stith, 2020). The availability of firearms is therefore not only an incident-level characteristic but also a matter of prevention policy and public regulation.

Relationship position does not determine killing method, and method cannot be used to infer motive or relational history. Examining the two together can nevertheless reveal whether the material form of lethal violence varies systematically across relational contexts. Any such association should be interpreted as probabilistic and contextual rather than as evidence of fixed offender types. The purpose is not to construct deterministic profiles, but to examine how practical access and available means may intersect in different homicide contexts.

Femicide research and the socio-legal context in Türkiye

Research in Türkiye has documented femicide across different periods and source systems. Toprak and Ersoy (2017) examined cases recorded between 2000 and 2010, while Koç (2022) analyzed 1,000 cases reported in 100 newspapers between 2010 and 2017. More recent work by Uluyol (2026) examined 2,305 media-reported femicides after corroborating each case through multiple news sources. Across this literature, current and former intimate partners

occupy a central place, while separation, conflict, jealousy, prior violence, and gendered control recur in reported accounts. These studies establish that femicide in Türkiye is relationally patterned and institutionally mediated. However, they primarily address prevalence, reported motives, socio-demographic characteristics, or risk factors. They do not test whether killing methods vary systematically across victim–offender relationship categories in a single corroborated dataset covering 2008–2025. This is the narrower empirical gap addressed by the present study.

Turkish criminal-law and socio-legal scholarship further shows that legal categories are not neutral descriptions of lethal violence. Göztepe (2005) examined how the revised Turkish Penal Code addressed honor-related killings. Müftüler-Baç and Müftüler (2021) demonstrated how provocation rulings can reproduce social expectations concerning women's conduct, while Ümit Atılgan (2024) identified the application of Article 29 in femicide cases as part of a masculine legal culture. Hamzaoğlu (2024) similarly situated honor-related violence within the interaction among patriarchal norms, legal inadequacies, and the broader political context. From a criminological and victimological perspective, these studies are important because an emphasis on the victim's conduct, relationship status, or conformity to gendered expectations can shift attention away from offender responsibility and institutional prevention (Walklate, 2018). The present study therefore treats victim–offender relationship neither as evidence of victim behavior nor as a proxy for motive. It is used to examine how access, knowledge, authority, and opportunity are organized across relational positions.

The Turkish Penal Code No. 5237 gives legal significance to both victim–offender relationship and certain circumstances of the lethal act. Article 81 regulates intentional homicide, while Article 82 provides for aggravated life imprisonment in specified circumstances. These include killings committed against an ascendant, descendant, spouse, former spouse, or sibling, as well as premeditated killings, killings involving torment, and killings carried out through such means as fire, flooding, destruction, sinking, or bombing. Customary motive is also listed as an aggravating circumstance. In 2022, Law No. 7406 amended Article 82 so that the intentional killing of a woman constitutes an aggravated form of homicide in its own right (Turkish Penal Code [TPC], 2004, arts. 81–82; Law No. 7406, 2022). The Code therefore recognizes relationship, victim status, motive, and manner of commission as legally distinct dimensions. Turkish criminal-law doctrine likewise treats intentional homicide and its aggravated forms through the elements and legally specified circumstances of the offence rather than through the weapon or relationship category alone (Koca & Üzülmez, 2025). These legal categories do not correspond directly to the analytical categories used in this study. A firearm, sharp instrument, blunt instrument, or bodily force does not alone determine the legal classification of a homicide, which depends on the circumstances of the individual case.

The same reform strengthened the legal response to forms of violence that may precede homicide. Article 86 establishes a higher minimum punishment for intentional injury committed against a woman and also treats injury against a spouse, former spouse, ascendant, descendant, or sibling as a qualified offence (Koca & Üzülmez, 2025; TPC, 2004, art. 86). Article 106 raises the minimum sentence for threats against a woman's life, bodily integrity, or sexual inviolability. Article 108 regulates coercion through its connection to the penalties prescribed for intentional injury. Article 123A, introduced by Law No. 7406, defines persistent stalking as a separate offence and prescribes a higher penalty when it is directed against a separated or former spouse, continues despite a protective measure, or

causes the victim to change or leave her home, workplace, or school (TPC, 2004, arts. 86, 106, 108, 123A; Law No. 7406, 2022).

From a socio-legal perspective, these amendments extend legal recognition beyond completed physical violence to threats, stalking, coercion, and injury that may precede a lethal incident. The references to former spouses and separation are particularly important because attempts to maintain or regain control may intensify after a relationship ends. At the same time, stronger penalties do not alone ensure prevention. Their protective value depends on early identification, effective investigation, enforcement of protective measures, and judicial interpretation. Because the present dataset does not contain complete judicial records and covers both the periods before and after the 2022 amendments, these provisions are used to contextualize the findings rather than to assess their deterrent or judicial effects.

Femicide classification and data visibility

Definitions and inclusion criteria differ across legal institutions, statistical agencies, researchers, media organizations, and feminist monitoring initiatives, shaping which killings become visible and comparable (Di Marco et al., 2024; Walby et al., 2017). Classification therefore affects both public knowledge and institutional recognition of gender-related violence.

Where official longitudinal data are fragmented, inaccessible, or insufficiently detailed, civil society archives preserve cases dispersed across news reports and support public memory, visibility, and accountability. Feminist monitoring responds to gaps in official knowledge by documenting patterns that might otherwise remain disconnected or institutionally obscured. Its records nevertheless depend on media coverage, institutional disclosure, and source preservation and are neither legally definitive nor analytically complete. Differences in journalistic reporting and police disclosure affect which incident details can be reconstructed.

Anıt Sayaç was therefore used for initial case identification. Entries were independently corroborated, deduplicated, and recoded; uncertain relationship or method information was retained rather than inferred. This approach recognizes the value of feminist monitoring while addressing the limits of publicly accessible records.

Within these limits, relational proximity interprets victim–offender positions through practical access, while killing method captures the material means of lethal violence. Examining their association connects incident-level patterns with gendered authority, institutional visibility, and prevention without proposing a single causal pathway or reducing femicide to relationship or weapon choice. The study addresses three research questions:

(1) How are victim–offender relationships and killing methods distributed among femicides recorded in Türkiye between 2008 and 2025?

(2) How do the distributions of victim–offender relationships and killing methods vary across the study periods?

(3) Is victim–offender relationship associated with killing method, and which relationship–method combinations occur more or less frequently than expected?

Data and methods

Research design

This study used a retrospective, incident-level quantitative content analysis of publicly accessible documentary sources to examine victim–offender relationships and killing methods in femicide cases recorded in Türkiye between 2008 and 2025. The individual killing incident constituted the unit of analysis. The research process involved case identification, independent source corroboration, deduplication, categorical coding, assessment of coding consistency, and statistical analysis.

The analysis was limited to characteristics that could be established from publicly accessible sources. It did not seek to determine the legal classification or gender-related motivation of individual killings, nor did it attempt to reconstruct histories of coercive control, prior violence, stalking, or institutional intervention. Such determinations would require access to police, judicial, health, or social service records that were not publicly available. The study therefore examines patterns visible in the public record rather than making case-level claims about motive, criminal responsibility, or institutional response.

Data source and eligibility

The initial case list was obtained from Anıt Sayaç (n.d.), a Turkish civil society archive that compiles women's killings reported in the press. Archive entries generally contain the victim's name, the date and location of death, a brief description of the incident, and links to related news reports. Anıt Sayaç was used as a case-identification source rather than as a ready-made analytical dataset or a legally authoritative classification of femicide.

The study covered killings that occurred between January 1, 2008, and December 31, 2025. A case was eligible when the archive entry could be linked to a distinct killing incident and corroborated through at least two publicly accessible news reports. Entries that could not be matched to a distinct incident or corroborated with sufficient confidence were excluded. Following verification, deduplication, and recoding, the final dataset comprised 5,461 unique killings recorded as femicides by Anıt Sayaç.

Case verification and deduplication

Cases were verified through systematic searches combining the victim's name with the incident date, location, reported perpetrator, and Turkish-language terms describing the killing or killing method. At least two news reports were reviewed for every included case. Additional reports were consulted when the initial sources disagreed or provided incomplete information concerning victim identity, incident date, victim–offender relationship, or killing method. In total, at least 10,922 news texts were examined.

Opinion pieces, retrospective lists, and secondary compilations without identifiable case-level reporting were not used as primary corroborating sources. News reports were treated as incomplete and institutionally situated accounts rather than as neutral or legally definitive records of homicide events (Altheide, 1996; Jewkes, 2015). This distinction was important because the availability and detail of public information may be shaped by journalistic practices, institutional disclosure, and the visibility assigned to particular cases.

Potential duplicates were assessed using victim identity, event date, location, perpetrator information, and reported incident circumstances. Records were merged only

when the available evidence indicated that they referred to the same killing. Cases were retained separately when a match could not be established with sufficient confidence.

Coding and variable construction

Coding was guided by a standardized codebook containing operational definitions, inclusion and exclusion criteria, category hierarchies, examples, and procedures for resolving conflicting reports (Büyükkağnıcı, 2026a). The two principal variables were victim–offender relationship and killing method. Both variables were reconstructed from the corroborating news reports rather than copied directly from the civil society archive.

Victim–offender relationship was initially coded as husband; boyfriend or current intimate partner; former husband; former boyfriend or former intimate partner; father; son; brother; other relative; in-law; acquaintance; stranger; other; multiple perpetrators; or unknown or unclear. For comparative analyses, these categories were aggregated into current intimate partner, former intimate partner, intrafamilial perpetrator, acquaintance, stranger, other or multiple perpetrators, and unknown or unclear.

Relationship categories were assigned only when the relationship was explicitly identified in the sources. Intimacy, kinship, co-residence, and previous contact were not inferred from contextual details. Cases involving multiple perpetrators from different relationship categories were coded as other or multiple perpetrators.

Killing method was initially coded as firearm; sharp instrument; strangulation or suffocation; beating or blunt-force trauma; falling or being pushed from height; burning; poisoning; hanging; vehicular killing; burial; electrocution; other; multiple methods; or unknown or unclear. A case was classified as involving multiple methods only when at least two distinct killing practices were explicitly reported and corroborated. Each incident was assigned to one mutually exclusive analytical category.

When victim–offender relationship or killing method could not be established with sufficient confidence, the relevant variable was coded as unknown or unclear. These cases were retained in descriptive analyses but excluded from inferential tests requiring valid information on the relevant variables. Retaining uncertainty rather than inferring missing information was intended to avoid creating artificial completeness from uneven media reporting (Walby et al., 2017).

Coding consistency

Coding was completed by one researcher in two stages. Pilot coding was first used to refine category definitions, hierarchy rules, and procedures for resolving ambiguous or conflicting information. After the full dataset had been coded, a simple random sample comprising 10% of all cases was recoded by the same researcher following an interval of at least four weeks and without access to the original coding decisions (n = 546).

Cohen's kappa was used to assess intra-coder consistency. The overall coefficient was .84, indicating strong agreement across the recoded cases. Discrepancies were reviewed against the codebook, and final classifications were determined according to the documented decision rules. Difficult, ambiguous, or revised decisions were recorded in analytic memos to support consistency and transparency throughout the coding process (Krippendorff, 2019; Neuendorf, 2017).

Statistical analysis

Analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 29. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for annual case counts, victim–offender relationship categories, and killing methods. Temporal variation was examined across four consecutive periods: 2008–2012, 2013–2017, 2018–2021, and 2022–2025. These were not four equal four-year intervals: the first two covered five years and the final two covered four. The periods were created primarily to reduce instability in low-frequency annual categories and to permit comparison of broader compositional patterns, not to represent discrete political eras or to estimate the effects of particular legal reforms. Because the periods differed in length, their raw totals were not interpreted as directly comparable incidence rates; comparisons of relationship and method distributions were based on within-period percentages. The 2022 boundary also separates the first complete calendar years following Türkiye's 2021 withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and coincides with the amendments introduced by Law No. 7406. Other important developments, however, occurred within rather than between the periods, including the adoption of Law No. 6284 in 2012 and the subsequent implementation of the Istanbul Convention. The period categories therefore do not provide a quasi-experimental design for evaluating policy effects.

Cross-tabulations and Pearson's chi-square tests of independence were used to assess associations between study period and killing method, study period and victim–offender relationship, and victim–offender relationship and killing method. Expected cell frequencies were examined before the tests were interpreted. Low-frequency killing-method categories were combined under other methods for inferential analysis to maintain adequate expected frequencies. The resulting analytical categories were firearm, sharp instrument, strangulation or suffocation, beating or blunt-force trauma, falling or being pushed from height, multiple methods, and other methods.

Cramer's V was reported to indicate the strength of each association. Adjusted standardized residuals were examined following the omnibus victim–offender relationship × killing method chi-square test to identify the cells contributing to the association. Because the table contained 42 cells, a Bonferroni-adjusted two-sided critical value of $|3.24|$ was used for cell-level interpretation. Positive residuals indicated frequencies higher than expected under independence, whereas negative residuals indicated frequencies lower than expected.

Changes in firearm use across the four study periods were assessed separately using Pearson's chi-square test. Cases coded as unknown or unclear were excluded on an analysis-by-analysis basis rather than removed from the dataset entirely. The valid sample was 5,018 for the period × killing method analysis, 4,553 for the period × victim–offender relationship analysis, and 4,468 for the victim–offender relationship × killing method analysis. Statistical significance for omnibus tests was set at $p < .05$, and all tests were two-sided. The full codebook and reproducibility analysis log are openly available in a Zenodo record, while the de-identified case-level analytic dataset has been deposited separately under restricted access (Büyükkağnıcı, 2026a, 2026b).

Ethical considerations

The study relied exclusively on publicly accessible civil society records and published news reports. It involved no participant recruitment, direct interaction with victims' relatives or alleged perpetrators, intervention, access to private accounts, or collection of non-public personal information. Because the research was based solely on publicly available

documentary materials and did not involve human participation or access to confidential records, formal institutional ethical review was not required.

Public accessibility was not treated as equivalent to unrestricted ethical use. Information that is publicly obtainable may still create privacy and re-identification concerns when it is aggregated, reorganized, or redistributed for research purposes (Zimmer, 2010). This consideration is particularly important in research concerning violence against women, where confidentiality, harm minimization, and the protection of those represented in the data remain central ethical obligations (World Health Organization, 2001; Ellsberg et al., 2001). The study therefore applied a data-minimization approach throughout verification, analysis, reporting, and repository preparation.

Victims' names were used only where necessary for case verification, source comparison, and deduplication. Names, direct news links, fine-grained location information, graphic descriptions, victim-blaming language, and unverified allegations were excluded from the reported analysis and from the deposited analytic dataset. The case-level analytic dataset was de-identified and deposited under restricted access rather than released openly. Findings in the manuscript are reported in aggregate form.

The research also followed context-sensitive guidance for research using publicly accessible online materials (Franzke et al., 2020). Information that could not be established with sufficient confidence was retained as unknown or unclear rather than resolved through inference. Media reports and civil society records were treated as public secondary sources for case identification and coding, not as legally definitive evidence of femicide motivation, criminal responsibility, or judicial classification.

Findings

Temporal distribution of cases

The dataset comprised 5,461 unique, media-corroborated killings recorded as femicides between 2008 and 2025. Annual case counts increased substantially across the study period, although the pattern was not linear. The number of cases rose from 68 in 2008 to 204 in 2010, declined to 131 in 2011, and increased again from 231 in 2013 to 344 in 2017. Annual totals exceeded 400 for the first time in 2018 and remained above that level through 2025. The highest count was recorded in 2024 (n = 447), followed by 2025 (n = 444). Within the publicly traceable dataset, the later years show a sustained concentration of recorded cases at a high level rather than a single isolated peak. These changes should be interpreted alongside possible variation in media coverage, civil society monitoring, and the availability of case-level information. Annual case counts are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Annual number of media-corroborated killings recorded as femicides, 2008–2025

Year	n	Year	n
2008	68	2017	344
2009	127	2018	402
2010	204	2019	419
2011	131	2020	413
2012	144	2021	422
2013	231	2022	408
2014	286	2023	406
2015	285	2024	447
2016	280	2025	444

Note. Total N = 5,461.

Killing methods and changes over time

Firearms were the most frequently reported killing method, accounting for 2,554 cases (46.8%). Sharp instruments were the second most common method, with 1,343 cases (24.6%). Together, these two categories accounted for 71.4% of the dataset. Strangulation or suffocation was reported in 358 cases (6.6%), followed by beating or blunt-force trauma in 328 cases (6.0%), falling or being pushed from height in 151 cases (2.8%), and multiple methods in 107 cases (2.0%). The killing method was unknown or unclear in 443 cases (8.1%). The distribution of killing methods across the four study periods is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Killing methods by period, 2008–2025

Killing method	2008–2012 *n* (%)	2013–2017 *n* (%)	2018–2021 *n* (%)	2022–2025 *n* (%)	Total *n* (%)
Firearm	288 (42.7)	698 (48.9)	718 (43.4)	850 (49.9)	2,554 (46.8)
Sharp instrument	203 (30.1)	398 (27.9)	368 (22.2)	374 (21.9)	1,343 (24.6)
Strangulation or suffocation	52 (7.7)	97 (6.8)	119 (7.2)	90 (5.3)	358 (6.6)
Beating or blunt-force trauma	86 (12.8)	83 (5.8)	90 (5.4)	69 (4.0)	328 (6.0)
Falling or being pushed from height	9 (1.3)	16 (1.1)	59 (3.6)	67 (3.9)	151 (2.8)
Multiple methods	5 (0.7)	42 (2.9)	39 (2.4)	21 (1.2)	107 (2.0)
Hanging	5 (0.7)	6 (0.4)	26 (1.6)	28 (1.6)	65 (1.2)
Burning	1 (0.1)	21 (1.5)	14 (0.8)	15 (0.9)	51 (0.9)
Vehicular killing	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	6 (0.4)	6 (0.4)	12 (0.2)
Poisoning	0 (0.0)	2 (0.1)	6 (0.4)	4 (0.2)	12 (0.2)
Burial	6 (0.9)	1 (0.1)	1 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	8 (0.1)
Electrocution	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (<0.1)
Other	1 (0.1)	8 (0.6)	9 (0.5)	10 (0.6)	28 (0.5)
Unknown or unclear	18 (2.7)	53 (3.7)	201 (12.1)	171 (10.0)	443 (8.1)
Total	674 (100.0)	1,426 (100.0)	1,656 (100.0)	1,705 (100.0)	5,461 (100.0)

Note. Percentages are calculated within each period. Cases with unknown or unclear killing methods were retained in the descriptive results. The distribution of valid killing methods differed significantly across periods, $\chi^2(18, N = 5{,}018) = 148.11$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .099$. Firearm use also differed significantly across periods, $\chi^2(3, N = 5{,}018) = 26.75$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .073$.

Changes in killing methods were statistically significant but modest. Firearm use fluctuated across the four periods and reached its highest proportional level in 2022–2025 (49.9%). The share of sharp-instrument killings declined from 30.1% in 2008–2012 to 21.9% in 2022–2025. Falling or being pushed from height increased from 1.3% to 3.9%. Unknown or unclear method information also became more common in the later periods, reaching 12.1% in 2018–2021 and 10.0% in 2022–2025. This increase may reflect changes in reporting detail, source availability, or public disclosure rather than changes in killing practices alone.

Victim–offender relationships

Current intimate partners constituted the largest relationship category, accounting for 2,453 cases (44.9%). Former intimate partners accounted for a further 503 cases (9.2%). Taken together, current and former intimate partners were identified in 2,956 cases, representing 54.1% of the complete dataset.

Intrafamilial perpetrators accounted for 700 cases (12.8%). Sons were identified in 229 cases (4.2%), fathers in 197 cases (3.6%), and in-laws in 179 cases (3.3%). Acquaintances accounted for 486 cases (8.9%), strangers for 159 cases (2.9%), and other or multiple-perpetrator configurations for 252 cases (4.6%). Victim–offender relationship was unknown or unclear in 908 cases (16.6%). The distribution of victim–offender relationships across the study periods is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Victim–offender relationships by period, 2008–2025

Victim–offender relationship	2008–2012 *n* (%)	2013–2017 *n* (%)	2018–2021 *n* (%)	2022–2025 *n* (%)	Total *n* (%)
Current intimate partner	353 (52.4)	695 (48.7)	683 (41.2)	722 (42.3)	2,453 (44.9)
Former intimate partner	81 (12.0)	132 (9.3)	115 (6.9)	175 (10.3)	503 (9.2)
Intrafamilial perpetrator	66 (9.8)	180 (12.6)	206 (12.4)	248 (14.5)	700 (12.8)
Acquaintance	67 (9.9)	120 (8.4)	170 (10.3)	129 (7.6)	486 (8.9)
Stranger	25 (3.7)	46 (3.2)	46 (2.8)	42 (2.5)	159 (2.9)
Other or multiple perpetrators	54 (8.0)	73 (5.1)	70 (4.2)	55 (3.2)	252 (4.6)
Unknown or unclear	28 (4.2)	180 (12.6)	366 (22.1)	334 (19.6)	908 (16.6)
Total	674 (100.0)	1,426 (100.0)	1,656 (100.0)	1,705 (100.0)	5,461 (100.0)

Note. Percentages are calculated within each period. Current intimate partners include spouses, religiously married spouses, boyfriends or partners, and fiancés. Former intimate partners include former spouses, former boyfriends or partners, and former fiancés. The distribution of valid victim–offender relationship categories differed significantly across periods, $\chi^2(15, N = 4{,}553) = 58.16$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .065$.

Spouses constituted the largest detailed relationship category (n = 1,914, 35.0%), followed by acquaintances (n = 486, 8.9%), current boyfriends or partners (n = 467, 8.6%), and former spouses (n = 324, 5.9%). The distribution changed modestly across periods. Current intimate partners declined from 52.4% in 2008–2012 to 42.3% in 2022–2025, while intrafamilial perpetrators increased from 9.8% to 14.5%. Former intimate partners accounted for 10.3% of cases in the final period, compared with 6.9% in 2018–2021.

The proportion of cases with an unknown or unclear relationship increased from 4.2% in 2008–2012 to 22.1% in 2018–2021 and remained high in 2022–2025 (19.6%). This uneven pattern limits direct temporal comparison and indicates that some apparent changes may reflect differences in information completeness.

Association between victim–offender relationship and killing method

After cases with unknown or unclear information on either variable were excluded, victim–offender relationship and killing method were significantly associated, $\chi^2(30, N = 4{,}468) = 114.55$, $p < .001$. The effect size was small, Cramer's $V = .072$, indicating modest variation in method distributions across relationship categories. The cross-tabulation of killing method by victim–offender relationship is reported in Table 4, while the corresponding adjusted standardized residuals are presented in Table 5.

Table 4. Killing method by victim–offender relationship

Victim–offender relationship	Firearm *n* (%)	Sharp instrument *n* (%)	Strangulation or suffocation *n* (%)	Beating or blunt force *n* (%)	Falling or being pushed from height *n* (%)	Multiple methods *n* (%)	Other methods *n* (%)	Total
Current intimate partner	1,259 (52.0)	724 (29.9)	156 (6.4)	162 (6.7)	30 (1.2)	44 (1.8)	45 (1.9)	2,420
Former intimate partner	306 (61.4)	143 (28.7)	26 (5.2)	7 (1.4)	2 (0.4)	7 (1.4)	7 (1.4)	498
Intrafamilial perpetrator	376 (54.3)	182 (26.3)	45 (6.5)	57 (8.2)	3 (0.4)	12 (1.7)	17 (2.5)	692
Acquaintance	239 (51.7)	106 (22.9)	43 (9.3)	33 (7.1)	11 (2.4)	21 (4.5)	9 (1.9)	462
Stranger	71 (46.4)	34 (22.2)	11 (7.2)	18 (11.8)	2 (1.3)	7 (4.6)	10 (6.5)	153
Other or multiple perpetrators	132 (54.3)	53 (21.8)	17 (7.0)	27 (11.1)	1 (0.4)	6 (2.5)	7 (2.9)	243

Note. Percentages are calculated within victim–offender relationship categories. Cases with unknown or unclear information on victim–offender relationship or killing method were excluded. Rare killing methods were combined under "Other methods" to maintain adequate expected cell frequencies. The association between victim–offender relationship and killing method was statistically significant, $\chi^2(30, N = 4{,}468) = 114.55$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .072$.

Table 5. Adjusted standardized residuals for the association between victim–offender relationship and killing method

Victim–offender relationship	Firearm	Sharp instrument	Strangulation or suffocation	Beating or blunt force	Falling or pushed from height	Multiple methods	Other methods
Current intimate partner	−1.91	3.44	−0.65	−0.32	1.00	−1.76	−1.34
Former intimate partner	3.85	0.48	−1.37	−5.08	−1.58	−1.24	−1.18
Intrafamilial perpetrator	0.57	−0.96	−0.19	1.63	−1.82	−0.86	0.66
Acquaintance	−0.73	−2.46	2.40	0.31	2.80	3.70	−0.28
Stranger	−1.75	−1.57	0.26	2.48	0.25	2.08	3.85
Other or multiple perpetrators	0.32	−2.14	0.21	2.74	−1.05	0.33	0.84

Note. Adjusted standardized residuals were interpreted using a Bonferroni-adjusted two-sided critical value of |3.24| to account for the 42 cell-level comparisons. Values greater than 3.24 indicate frequencies higher than expected under independence, whereas values below −3.24 indicate frequencies lower than expected.

Sharp-instrument killings occurred more often than expected in current-partner cases, adjusted standardized residual = 3.44. Former-partner cases showed a higher-than-expected concentration of firearm killings, residual = 3.85, and a lower-than-expected concentration of beating or blunt-force killings, residual = −5.08.

Multiple-method killings occurred more often than expected in acquaintance cases, residual = 3.70. Among stranger cases, methods grouped as other occurred more often than expected, residual = 3.85. No other cell exceeded the Bonferroni-adjusted critical value.

These residual patterns identify a small number of specific relationship–method combinations contributing to the overall association. Consistent with the small Cramer's V, most differences across victim–offender relationship categories were modest.

Discussion

Across 5,461 media-corroborated femicides recorded in Türkiye between 2008 and 2025, current and former intimate partners accounted for more than half of cases, intrafamilial perpetrators formed a substantial group, and firearms predominated. Relationship and method distributions varied across periods, and the two variables were associated, but all effect sizes were small. Only a limited number of relationship–method combinations remained significant after adjustment for multiple comparisons, indicating patterned but non-deterministic differences across relational positions.

The predominance of current and former intimate partners and the frequent use of firearms are broadly consistent with longitudinal research on femicide in Türkiye (Koç, 2022; Toprak & Ersoy, 2017; Uluyol, 2026). The present study confirms the persistence of these broad patterns across a larger, independently corroborated dataset covering 2008–2025, but extends earlier work by testing victim–offender relationship and killing method together and identifying the specific combinations that depart from expected frequencies. It also shows that these differences, although statistically significant, are small. The 12.8% intrafamilial share further indicates that femicide cannot be understood through intimate partnership alone. Read alongside international research and feminist accounts of the continuum of violence, these findings locate women's killings within gendered relations of power without reducing them to a single relational pathway (Kelly, 1988; Radford & Russell, 1992; Weil et al., 2018).

Relational proximity helps clarify why these positions matter. Current, estranged, and former relationships involve different configurations of contact, conflict, dependency, and opportunity (Dawson & Gartner, 1998; Johnson & Hotton, 2003). A current partner may have routine access to domestic spaces and daily activities, while a former partner may retain knowledge of routines and continued contact through children, financial obligations, digital communication, or shared social networks. Relatives may combine access with authority, dependency, caregiving, or co-residence. Relationship categories are therefore not merely descriptive labels. They indicate different practical capacities to reach, monitor, approach, or intervene in women's lives.

The prominence of current partners is also compatible with accounts of intimate partner homicide as the possible culmination of longer histories of domination. Stark's (2007) concept of coercive control describes how surveillance, intimidation, isolation, and restrictions on autonomy may accumulate over time, while Johnson's (2008) intimate terrorism model places repeated violence within a broader structure of control. The available data cannot determine whether such histories preceded individual killings. Nevertheless, the concentration of cases within intimate relationships is consistent with the view that lethal violence may emerge from continuing patterns of entitlement and control rather than from a single, disconnected incident. Former-partner cases require particular attention because the end of a formal relationship does not necessarily eliminate practical access. Stalking and repeated unwanted contact have frequently been documented before intimate partner femicide (McFarlane et al., 1999). Separation-related homicide has also been associated with proprietariness, entitlement, and perceived loss of control (Wilson & Daly, 1993a, 1993b; Dobash & Dobash, 2015). Shared children, financial obligations, family networks, digital communication, and knowledge accumulated during the relationship may preserve opportunities for surveillance and contact after separation. Relational proximity therefore distinguishes formal relationship termination from the continuing capacity to reach or monitor a former partner.

This distinction also has institutional significance. Risk assessment systems that rely mainly on formal relationship status may underestimate danger when continued access, stalking, threats, shared responsibilities, or knowledge of routines remain present. Campbell et al. (2007) identify separation, stalking, prior violence, and weapon access as important features of intimate partner homicide risk, while Spencer and Stith's (2020) meta-analysis similarly emphasizes the importance of weapon-related threats and other indicators of lethal escalation. The present findings suggest that relational status should be interpreted together with the practical conditions that allow contact to continue.

Firearms formed the most prominent material dimension of the killings examined. They accounted for almost half of the recorded cases, substantially exceeding all other killing methods. This finding is important because firearm availability can transform an episode of violence into a lethal event with speed and limited possibility of intervention. Campbell (2012) and Campbell et al. (2007) identify direct firearm access as one of the strongest risk factors for intimate partner homicide, while Spencer and Stith (2020) show that weapon access and weapon-related threats are consistently associated with lethal risk. The prominence of firearms in the present dataset therefore points beyond individual weapon choice to questions of regulation, prevention, and institutional capacity to identify access to lethal means. The concentration of firearms among former-partner cases is particularly notable. A former partner may have less routine access to the victim's home than a current partner but may retain knowledge of her movements and opportunities to approach her. A firearm can enable rapid lethal violence without prolonged physical contact. By contrast,

the overrepresentation of sharp instruments in current-partner cases may reflect encounters occurring in domestic or routine settings where direct physical access and commonly available objects are present. These interpretations are consistent with studies showing that weapon use varies according to victim–offender relationship and incident context (Fox & Allen, 2014; Pelletier & Pizarro, 2019; Reynolds & Bürkner, 2021).

These patterns should nevertheless be interpreted cautiously. The association between relationship and killing method was statistically significant, but the effect size was small. Most relationship–method combinations did not differ substantially from expected frequencies after adjustment for multiple comparisons. As Fox and Allen (2014), Pelletier and Pizarro (2019), and Reynolds and Bürkner (2021) demonstrate, weapon choice is shaped by multiple relational, situational, and material factors. The present findings therefore do not support fixed offender profiles or deterministic assumptions that a particular relationship position will produce a particular killing method.

Cramer's V and adjusted residuals describe aggregate association and departures from expected frequencies; they do not measure intent, culpability, planning, motive, suffering, or legal seriousness. The association was weak (Cramer's $V = .072$), and only five of 42 relationship–method combinations remained significant after Bonferroni adjustment (Tables 4 and 5). These statistics cannot establish whether relational proximity or weapon use aggravates or diminishes the wrongfulness of an individual killing. In Turkish criminal-law doctrine, criminal responsibility and the application of aggravated homicide provisions turn on the legally relevant elements and circumstances established in the individual case, rather than on an aggregate statistical association between relationship and method (Koca & Üzülmez, 2025).

Relational access and killing method may become legally relevant when supported by case-level evidence of premeditation, stalking, threats, coercion, exploitation of trust, or torment (Turkish Penal Code [TPC], 2004, arts. 82, 106, 108, 123A). The present statistics cannot establish these circumstances or differences in culpability. Their relevance lies primarily in identifying contexts for risk assessment and prevention.

The findings concerning acquaintances and strangers reinforce this caution. Multiple-method killings were overrepresented among acquaintances, while methods grouped as other were overrepresented among strangers. These categories include diverse events and comparatively small numbers of cases. They should not be interpreted as stable homicide types. Instead, they show that relational distance does not produce a single material pattern and that less intimate relationships also differ in access, encounter setting, opportunity, and available means.

The temporal analyses identified statistically significant but modest compositional changes. Firearm use reached its highest proportional level in 2022–2025, sharp-instrument killings declined, falling or being pushed from height became more frequently recorded, and intrafamilial perpetrators constituted a larger share in the later periods. These patterns may reflect changes in lethal violence, but they may also be influenced by the changing completeness of public information. Media accounts are shaped by police disclosure, journalistic routines, editorial priorities, digital preservation, and the availability of follow-up reporting (Altheide, 1996; Jewkes, 2015). The increasing proportion of cases with unknown relationship or method information indicates that temporal differences cannot be interpreted solely as changes in underlying incidence. This problem concerns more than methodological uncertainty. Walby et al. (2017) show that definitions and measurement practices determine which forms of violence become visible and comparable. Di Marco et al. (2024) similarly emphasize that terminology, inclusion criteria, and methodological

choices shape the boundaries of femicide research. In the present study, uneven reporting affected whether victim–offender relationships and killing methods could be established with confidence. The public record of femicide is therefore produced through institutional disclosure, media selection, and civil society monitoring rather than simply discovered as a complete and neutral body of information.

The four analytical periods should not be read as discrete legal or political eras. Law No. 6284 was adopted in 2012, at the end of the first period; the Istanbul Convention formed part of the national policy context during the second period; Türkiye's withdrawal from the Convention occurred in 2021, at the end of the third period; and Law No. 7406 entered into force at the beginning of the final period (Hamzaoğlu, 2024; Law No. 6284, 2012; Law No. 7406, 2022). These developments overlap only partially with the period boundaries. Although the distributions of killing method and victim–offender relationship varied significantly over time, the effect sizes were small (Cramer's V = .099 and .065, respectively), as was the variation in firearm use (Cramer's V = .073). The dataset does not measure policy implementation, changes in political discourse, institutional enforcement, or women's exposure to protection measures. The temporal analysis therefore cannot establish that these legal and political developments caused the observed changes in case numbers, relational distributions, or killing methods. Assessing such effects would require annual or interrupted time-series data linked to protection orders, police responses, firearm access, prosecutions, and judicial outcomes.

Intrafamilial perpetrators accounted for 12.8% of cases, with a larger proportional share in later periods. Fathers, sons, brothers, in-laws, and other relatives differ in co-residence, caregiving, financial dependency, authority, and domestic access. Truong et al. (2023) call for differentiation among family homicide subtypes, while Condry and Miles (2023) highlight the marginalization of mothers killed by sons.

Care and dependency can coexist with surveillance and unequal control, challenging assumptions of uniform family protection. The substantial intrafamilial share in Türkiye supports closer attention to the familial victims and configurations identified by Condry and Miles (2023) and Truong et al. (2023).

The Turkish context requires particular care in interpreting the concept of honor. Honor should not be inferred solely from the perpetrator's relationship to the victim or from the method of killing. Koğacıoğlu (2004) shows how treating honor violence as an expression of an unchanging tradition can obscure the role of contemporary institutions, while Sev'er and Yurdakul (2001) locate such killings within changing gender relations and conflicts over women's autonomy. Empirical research in Türkiye has further documented the relational and social dynamics of honor-related killing through interviews with convicted perpetrators and analyses of homicide case files (Doğan, 2016; Yılmaz et al., 2015). Göztepe (2005) examines the legal difficulties involved in distinguishing honor from customary motive, and Hamzaoğlu (2024) situates honor-related killings within a wider interaction among patriarchal norms, legal responses, and political conditions. Although customary motive is recognized as an aggravating circumstance under Article 82 of the Turkish Penal Code, establishing this motive requires evidence concerning the circumstances and purpose of the individual offence rather than assumptions based on kinship or intimacy.

The relationship proportions in Table 3 describe positions, not motives. Honor or customary motive was not coded because public reports lacked consistent case-level evidence; an honor-specific relationship–method analysis was therefore not possible. Nor does the weak overall association, with only five significant combinations after adjustment, establish patterns specific to honor-related killings (Tables 4 and 5). Using intimate or

familial proximity as a proxy for honor would conflate relationship and motive and reproduce the cultural assumptions criticized in the Turkish literature. Direct analysis would require indictments, reasoned judgments, prior violence records, and other evidence distinguishing allegations from supported motives.

The findings also demonstrate the importance of feminist civil society monitoring. Anıt Sayaç preserves victims' names and brings together reports that would otherwise remain dispersed, making longitudinal analysis possible in the absence of a unified and publicly accessible official femicide database. Such archives contribute to public memory and accountability by documenting patterns that fragmented institutional records may fail to reveal. Their role is therefore both evidentiary and political: they make lethal violence visible as a recurring social problem rather than a series of isolated deaths.

Civil society records cannot replace official data because they remain shaped by media reporting, institutional disclosure, and source availability. As Di Marco et al. (2024) and Walby et al. (2017) emphasize, classification and measurement decisions shape knowledge of violence against women. Independent corroboration, transparent coding, deduplication, and retained uncertainty are therefore essential. These constraints highlight the need for consistent institutional recording while preserving the value of feminist monitoring. Overall, relational proximity interprets the limited relationship–method association through possible configurations of access, knowledge, authority, and opportunity. It connects these patterns to risk recognition, firearm regulation, documentation, and public responsibility without proposing fixed offender types or a single causal pathway.

Legal, policy, and institutional implications

The findings are more relevant to prevention and risk assessment than to new penalty enhancements. Article 82 already recognizes the victim's status as a woman, specified family and marital relationships, and particular circumstances or methods of commission (Turkish Penal Code [TPC], 2004; Law No. 7406, 2022). The small effects cannot predict individual offences or justify new broad relationship- or weapon-based aggravating categories. They nevertheless identify four prevention priorities: continued access after separation, firearm access where threats or stalking are present, family violence beyond intimate partnerships, and consistent institutional recording and information sharing.

Risk assessment should consider practical access as well as formal relationship status. Separation may leave opportunities for stalking, surveillance, unwanted contact, or access through shared children, family networks, digital communication, and knowledge of daily routines (McFarlane et al., 1999). The overrepresentation of firearms in former-partner cases supports systematic checks of weapon access when women report separation-related threats, prior violence, stalking, or coercion, particularly given the established association between firearm availability and intimate partner homicide risk (Campbell, 2012; Campbell et al., 2007; Spencer & Stith, 2020). Where statutory conditions are met, firearm-related threats and access should be considered promptly in decisions concerning protective measures and weapon possession. Reports concerning injury, threats, coercion, and persistent stalking under Articles 86, 106, 108, and 123A should also be assessed together as possible evidence of escalating violence. By contrast, the higher occurrence of sharp-instrument killings among current partners does not support restrictions on ordinary household objects. It points to the need for rapid protection, safe accommodation, and individualized safety planning in domestic settings.

Prevention should also address violence by sons, fathers, brothers, in-laws, and other relatives. Co-residence, caregiving, disability, age, financial dependency, and family

authority may produce risks that partner-centered models do not capture adequately (Truong et al., 2023). Police, prosecutors, courts, health institutions, and social services should use compatible records covering relationship status, separation, prior violence, stalking, protection measures and their breaches, firearm access, and judicial outcomes (Di Marco et al., 2024; Walby et al., 2017; World Health Organization, 2013). Such coordination would improve risk recognition and permit evaluation of the 2022 amendments and other preventive measures. Official recording should complement independent feminist monitoring, which remains essential for documenting deaths and identifying patterns obscured by fragmented institutional data.

Victim–offender mediation is not an appropriate response to femicide or to situations involving a high risk of lethal violence. Intentional homicide is not subject to reconciliation under Article 253 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, and persistent stalking is expressly excluded (Code of Criminal Procedure [CCP], 2004; Law No. 7406, 2022). In cases involving coercive control or alleged honor-related violence, mediation may reproduce existing power inequalities and expose women to further pressure from perpetrators, families, or communities (Drost et al., 2015). Such cases require protection, effective investigation, institutional coordination, and offender accountability rather than negotiated settlement. The present study therefore does not recommend mediation as either a preventive or post-offence response.

Limitations

This study is based on killings initially identified through Anıt Sayaç and corroborated using publicly accessible news reports. The dataset therefore represents publicly traceable cases rather than the complete incidence of femicide in Türkiye. Annual counts and period-based distributions may have been affected by changes in media attention, police and institutional disclosure, digital availability, source preservation, journalistic follow-up, and the scope of civil society monitoring. Media reports are not neutral or complete records of homicide events, and the information made publicly available may vary considerably across cases and periods (Altheide, 1996; Jewkes, 2015). Recorded changes over time should therefore not be interpreted solely as changes in the underlying occurrence of femicide.

Victim–offender relationship and killing method were not reported consistently across all cases. Unknown or unclear categories were retained to avoid false precision, but their uneven distribution across the study periods limits direct temporal comparison. This problem reflects a wider difficulty in femicide research, where differences in terminology, classification, institutional recording, and source availability shape which deaths and characteristics become visible in the data (Di Marco et al., 2024; Walby et al., 2017).

The publicly accessible sources could not reliably establish the legal classification or gender-related motivation of individual killings. Honor or customary motive was therefore not coded as a case-level variable, and victim–offender relationship categories were not used as proxies for such motives. Consequently, the study could not conduct a separate relationship-by-method analysis for honor-related killings. Nor could the publicly accessible sources provide consistent information about histories of coercive control, stalking, prior violence, the timing and circumstances of separation, protection orders, firearm ownership or access, incident location, institutional intervention, or judicial outcomes.

The study also relied on intra-coder consistency rather than independent coding by a second coder. Although the codebook, recoding procedure, and strong kappa coefficient

supported coding consistency, independent coding could have provided an additional assessment of the interpretation of ambiguous cases. Furthermore, the statistical analyses identify aggregate associations rather than causal pathways. Victim–offender relationship categories cannot capture the complete history of individual relationships, and killing method cannot establish motive, planning, or the sequence of events. The findings should consequently be interpreted as patterns within a large media-corroborated dataset rather than as explanations of individual homicide incidents.

Future research should examine whether civil society archives can be linked, under appropriate ethical and legal safeguards, with police, judicial, health, and social service records. Such integration would permit more direct analysis of prior violence, separation, stalking, firearm access, protection measures, institutional responses, and legal outcomes. It would also help assess how fragmented recording practices affect the public and institutional recognition of femicide.

Conclusion

This study examined victim–offender relationships and killing methods across 5,461 media-corroborated femicides recorded in Türkiye between 2008 and 2025. Current and former intimate partners accounted for 54.1% of cases and intrafamilial perpetrators for 12.8%, locating much of the recorded violence within relationships connected to women's everyday lives. Firearms predominated and were overrepresented in former-partner cases, while sharp instruments were overrepresented in current-partner cases. The relationship–method association was modest and does not support deterministic offender or weapon typologies. These statistics cannot measure the degree of legal or moral wrongfulness of individual killings, which requires case-level evidence of intent, planning, motive, and legally relevant circumstances.

Relational proximity distinguishes formal relationship status from the practical capacity to reach or monitor women. Shared responsibilities, family networks, digital communication, and knowledge of routines may preserve access after separation. Fathers, sons, brothers, in-laws, and other relatives may likewise combine caregiving and dependency with authority and co-residence. These differences require attention to family relationships beyond intimate partnerships rather than assumptions of uniform family protection. The framework interprets possible configurations of access and opportunity; the dataset does not directly measure these capacities.

Feminist civil society monitoring makes longitudinal analysis and accountability possible, but uneven public reporting requires corroboration, transparent coding, and retained uncertainty. Prevention should combine attention to continuing access and firearm availability with better institutional documentation and information sharing. Examining relationship and killing method together provides a basis for more responsive risk recognition while acknowledging the heterogeneous circumstances of femicide and the limits of the public record.

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Data availability statement

A de-identified case-level analytic dataset supporting the findings of this study has been deposited under restricted access in the Lectio Socialis community on Zenodo at https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21853433 (Büyükkağnıcı, 2026b). The deposited dataset contains only a sequential case identifier, incident year, study period, victim–offender relationship category, and killing method category. Victim names, direct news links, fine-grained location information, graphic descriptions, and other potentially identifying or harmful case-level details are excluded. Access to the restricted dataset may be requested through the repository and will be considered in accordance with applicable ethical and legal safeguards. The full codebook and reproducibility analysis log are openly available through a separate Zenodo record at https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21853924 (Büyükkağnıcı, 2026a). The analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 29.

No reusable programming code or saved SPSS syntax is available because syntax was not retained during the original analysis. The analysis log documents variable derivation, recoding and category aggregation, analysis-specific exclusions, statistical procedures, valid sample sizes, expected totals, and the outputs reported in the manuscript.

Ethics approval statement

This study relied exclusively on publicly accessible secondary materials, including civil society records and published news reports. It involved no participant recruitment, direct interaction with individuals, intervention, access to private accounts, or collection of non-public personal information. Under the applicable institutional framework, research based solely on publicly accessible secondary documentary materials without human participation or access to confidential records did not require institutional ethics committee review or approval. Ethical safeguards included data minimization, exclusion of identifying and potentially harmful case-level details from reporting and repository materials, and restricted access to the de-identified case-level analytic dataset.