Models for violence by Turkish police officers toward romantic partners and police partners

Turgay Karagoz
Turkish National Police, Criminal Justice Program, Penn State University, USA

S Hakan Can
Administration of Justice, Penn State University, USA

Helen M Hendy
Psychology Program, Penn State University, USA

Abstract
Social learning theory suggests that displays of violence in close relationships would be increased for individuals exposed to family models of violence, especially from parents. Because police officers may regard their departments as a second 'family,' violence shown by the 'father figure' police supervisor may be a significant model for violence, as recent research has found for American police officers. The police supervisor might also be expected to be a powerful model for violence because Turkish police officers serve in a male-dominated workplace in a largely male-dominated society. This study examined how violence reported by Turkish police officers in their close relationships (toward romantic partners, toward police partners) was explained by parental models from the 'home family' (father-to-mother, mother-to-father, father-to-participant, mother-to-participant) and from the 'police family' (supervisor-to-participant). Study participants included 233 Turkish police officers (96% male; 66% under 30 years of age; 6.9 mean years of service) who completed anonymous questionnaires to report violence in each relationship using the six-item subscale of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale. Multiple regression analyses revealed that the set of 'home family' and 'police family' parental models explained 42% of variance in romantic partner violence and 74% of variance in police partner aggression. Violence from the police supervisor was the most consistent and significant model, perhaps because the police supervisor was a new and powerful 'father figure' for the relatively young officers of the present study. Violence received from the mother was also associated with increased risk of police partner violence, perhaps because mothers were the officers' primary caretakers during childhood, making their style of conflict resolution the most prevalent parental model. Employee assistance programs to encourage 'Peace in the Family' for Turkish police officers may require participation by police supervisors, who must model non-violent conflict resolution in their departments.

Keywords
Turkish police, police violence, police supervisors, employee assistance programs

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Introduction
Because of past research showing that American police officers exposed to high levels of occupational stressors were at increased risk for displaying aggression to romantic partners...
Table 1. Descriptive statistics for violence scores for seven close relationships of 233 Turkish police officers, and bivariate correlations between violence scores for each pair of relationships. Violence was measured with the six-item Revised Conflict Tactics scale using the sum of five-point ratings (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always). All correlations are significant ($p < .001$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Father to mother</th>
<th>Mother to father</th>
<th>Father to you</th>
<th>Mother to you</th>
<th>Police supervisor to you</th>
<th>You to romantic partner</th>
<th>You to police partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father to mother</td>
<td>7.53 (3.55)</td>
<td>.675</td>
<td>.867</td>
<td>.687</td>
<td>.525</td>
<td>.502</td>
<td>.499</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother to father</td>
<td>6.79 (2.84)</td>
<td>.722</td>
<td>.831</td>
<td>.647</td>
<td>.588</td>
<td>.559</td>
<td>.625</td>
<td>.612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father to you</td>
<td>7.20 (3.31)</td>
<td>.744</td>
<td>.538</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td>.588</td>
<td>.554</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td>.662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother to you</td>
<td>6.82 (2.60)</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td>.588</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police supervisor to you</td>
<td>7.04 (3.17)</td>
<td>.554</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td></td>
<td>.612</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You to romantic partner</td>
<td>7.07 (3.02)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.612</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You to police partner</td>
<td>6.79 (3.01)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

and police partners (Can and Hendy, 2015; Can et al. 2008; Gershon, 1999; Neidig et al., 1992; Violanti, 2004; Violanti and Aron, 1994; White et al., 1985), research has also focused on understanding which officers are at greatest risk for displaying such violence in their close relationships. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) suggests that the use of violence to resolve conflict would be more likely if frequently modeled by powerful others such as parents, with the same gender parental model being especially significant, and with the most frequent parental model being especially significant. Because police officers often view their police department as a second ‘family’ (Gershon, 1999), violence as a style of conflict resolution may also be modeled by powerful others within their ‘police family’ such as that displayed by the police supervisor, who is typically male. Social learning theory would suggest that, especially in male-dominated environments, violence modeled by powerful male ‘father figures’ would be significantly associated with increased violence displayed by younger males within that environment. In support of this idea, research has documented that in male-dominated professions, male employees are more likely to hold gender stereotypes and to display aggression toward co-workers (de Hass and Timmerman, 2010), especially when supervisors display ‘destructive leadership’ as a management tool by bullying employees, who are likely to model this aggressive behavior toward co-workers (Ferris et al., 2007; Padilla et al., 2007). American police departments remain a largely male-dominated work environment with mostly male supervisors and co-workers (Archbold and Schulz, 2012; Carlan et al., 2011; Melgoza and Cox, 2009), as are Turkish police departments in a largely male-dominated society (Kocacik et al., 2007; Marshall and Furr, 2010; Yuksel-Kaptanoglu et al., 2012).

Purpose of present study

The purpose of this study was to examine how violence reported by Turkish police officers in their close relationships (toward romantic partners, toward police partners) was explained by parental models from the ‘home family’ (father-to-mother, mother-to-father, father-to-participant, mother-to-participant) and from the ‘police family’ (supervisor-to-participant). We hypothesized that because the mostly male Turkish police officers work in largely male-dominated departments in a largely male-dominated society, violence displayed by the same gender ‘father figure’ of the police supervisor would provide the most powerful model of violence in their close relationships with romantic partners and with police partners. If another parental model was also found to be a significant predictor, we hypothesized that it would be the most frequent model of conflict resolution, which was the mother.

Results from this study could be useful for development of ‘Peace in the Family’ workshops to develop non-violent conflict resolution strategies to reduce the risk of violence by Turkish police officers in their close relationships.

Method

Participants

Study participants began with a sample of 250 Turkish police officers who completed an anonymous questionnaire (96.0% male; 66.1% under 30 years of age; 71.2% married; mean household size $= 2.94$, $SD = 1.04$; 74.8% with baccalaureate degrees or higher education; 79.6% with Patrol Officer rank; mean years of service $= 7.01$, $SD = 5.30$). Of these 250 Turkish police, 233 officers reported the degree of violence in nine close relationships within their ‘home family’ and ‘police family’ (95.7% male; 66.2% under 30 years of age; 71.7% married; mean household size $= 2.91$, $SD = 1.05$; 74.6% with baccalaureate degrees or higher education; 79.0% with Patrol Officer rank; mean years of service $= 6.88$, $SD = 5.20$) (Table 1).
Procedures and measurement

Anonymous questionnaires and sealable envelopes were distributed to 325 police officers from the Istanbul Police Department, randomly selected from a list of all active-duty officers provided by the Istanbul Police Human Resources Department, and after permission granted by the Turkish National Police. Of the 325 officers who received surveys, 263 returned them; 13 of the returned surveys were excluded because they were not complete, making the final response rate 250/325 or 77% of those who received the questionnaires.

The questionnaire requested demographic information such as gender, age, marital status, household size, education, police rank and years of service. To ask officers to report violent behaviors displayed within their close relationships, the questionnaire described that ‘No matter how well people get along, they may disagree. They may also use many different ways to settle their differences. During the past year, rate how often each action was shown in each relationship using a 5-point rating (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always): father-to-mother, mother-to-father, father-to-you, mother-to-you, police-supervisor-to-you, police-partner-to-you, you-to-police-partner, romantic-partner-to-you, you-to-romantic-partner.’ (Violence reported from the romantic-partner-to-you and police-partner-to-you was not used in the present study, but it was included because we believed that officers would be more likely to admit violent actions done to these others after reporting violence that these others had done to them.) The actions listed were from the 12-item Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (Revised-CTS, Caulfield and Riggs, 1992), chosen because the specific aggressive actions included could occur in a wide variety of relationships including between parents and children, romantic partners, work supervisors and employees, and co-workers. These 12 items from the Revised-CTS included six acts of violence that were the focus of the present study: (threatened to hit, hit something, threw something, shoved the other person, slapped, hit with a fist), with the violence score for each relationship calculated as the sum of the six ratings.

Data analysis

First, descriptive statistics (mean, SD) were calculated for violence scores in each of the seven relationships considered in the study: father-to-mother, mother-to-father, father-to-you, mother-to-you, police-supervisor-to-you, you-to-police-partner and you-to-romantic-partner. Additionally, bivariate Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated between each pair of relationship violence scores.

Then, simultaneous multiple regression analyses were calculated to compare violence modeled by powerful others within the ‘home family’ and within the ‘police family’ as possible predictors of the extent of violence reported by Turkish police officers to their romantic partners and to their police partners. For the regression analysis to explain romantic partner violence scores, the predictor variables evaluated were violence scores from father-to-mother, mother-to-father, father-to-participant, mother-to-participant and police-supervisor-to-participant. For the regression analysis to explain police partner violence scores, the predictor variables evaluated were also violence scores from father-to-mother, mother-to-father, father-to-participant, mother-to-participant and police-supervisor-to-participant. For both regression analyses, the required p-value was set at a conservative .01 instead of the usual .05 to focus on the parental models most powerfully associated with violence displayed by Turkish police to their romantic partners and police partners.

Results

Multiple regression analysis revealed that the set of parental figure models from the ‘home family’ and ‘police family’ explained 42% of the romantic partner violence reported by Turkish police officers (as indicated by the adjusted $R^2$), with violence received by the officers from police supervisors being the most significant model (beta = .25, $p = .000$).

Multiple regression analysis also revealed that the set of parental figure models from the ‘home family’ and ‘police family’ explained 74% of the variance in police partner violence reported by Turkish police officers (again, as indicated by the adjusted $R^2$), with violence received by the officers from police supervisors being the most significant model (beta = .65, $p = .000$), but with violence received by the officers from their mothers also being significant (beta = .24, $p = .000$) (see Table 2).

Discussion

As suggested by social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), the results of this study suggest models of violence from ‘powerful others’ from both the ‘home family’ and the ‘police family’ help to explain variance in violence displayed by Turkish police officers in their close relationships. For example, violence received from the police supervisor was a significant predictor of violence reported by Turkish police to both their romantic partners and their police partners. One interpretation of these results is that when joining a police department, the Turkish officer becomes part of a new ‘family’ in which the police supervisor
Table 2. Simultaneous multiple regression results for ‘parental models’ of violence from the ‘home family’ and the ‘police family’ as predictors of violence to romantic partners and police partners as reported by Turkish police officers. Violence in all relationships was measured with the six-item violence subscale from the Revised Conflict Tactics scale. (A conservative value of \( p < .01 \) was used for significance.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models of violence</th>
<th>Romantic partner violence</th>
<th>Police partner violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Home family'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father to mother</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother to father</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father to participant</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother to participant</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Police family'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police supervisor to participant</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\text{Adjusted } R^2 = .42 \\
F(5, 227) = 34.21 \\
p = .000
\]

\[
\text{Adjusted } R^2 = .74 \\
F(5, 227) = 135.99 \\
p = .000
\]

becomes the primary ‘father figure’ in his male-dominated profession (Archbold and Schulz, 2012; Carlan et al., 2011; Melgoza and Cox, 2009). Similarly, verbal aggression and violence modeled by the police supervisor were found to be the most consistent predictor of aggression displayed to romantic partners and police partners for a sample of American officers from Pennsylvania (Can and Hendy, 2013). The influence of a male police supervisor may be further enhanced in a somewhat male-dominated society such as Turkey (Kocacik et al., 2007; Marshall and Furr, 2010; Yuksel-Kaptanoglu et al., 2012).

Besides the model of violence displayed by the police supervisor, violence displayed by the mother was also a significant predictor of violence Turkish officers displayed toward their police partners. According to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), the mother would have two characteristics that would make her a significant model for violence: she is a ‘powerful other’ within the home, and she is probably the ‘most frequent model’ of conflict resolution style experienced by the Turkish police officer during development. This pattern of results was also found for samples of American and Turkish college students for whom violence received from the mother was a significant predictor of romantic partner violence (Akin et al., 2015; Hendy et al., 2003, 2012).

**Applications of present results**

For Turkish police departments that wish to design ‘Peace in the Family’ workshops to reduce the risk of violence to romantic partners and to police partners, our results suggest that the police supervisor must be involved and work to control his or her own conflict resolution style to encourage police officers in his/her department to develop non-aggressive means of conflict resolution at home and at work. Research with American police officers has discovered they experience high levels of repressed anger associated with the stresses of their profession (Can and Hendy, 2015), so anger management would be an appropriate goal for such ‘Peach in the Family’ workshops. For example, such workshops could include cognitive behavior therapy techniques to ‘re-think’ the situations causing anger, guidelines for daily exercise, sleep hygiene, good nutrition, time management and other research-based methods documented to help individuals control their anger (A. S. Anderson and Lo, 2011; G. S. Anderson et al., 2002; Erwin et al., 2005; Santos et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2010).

**Study limitations**

One limitation of this study was that the survey responses by the Turkish police officers only allow conclusions about correlations among variables, rather than causations. For example, although it is much more likely that the police officers were modeling the violence displayed by their older and more experienced ‘parental figures’ (police supervisor, mother), it remains possible that these ‘parental figures’ were modeling their violence from that displayed by the younger and less-experienced police officers of the present sample. For a clearer picture of the direction of these variable relationships, future longitudinal research could record perceptions that new police officers have concerning their supervisors’ and mothers’ conflict resolution styles at the time they first join the force, then monitor changes across the years in their own conflict resolution styles shown in their close relationships with romantic partners and police partners.
References


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Author biographies

Turgay Karagoz is a member (Captain) of Turkish National Police. He completed his masters at Penn State University. He is currently a teaching assistant and is working on his PhD at the School of Public Affairs at Penn State University. Data used in this study were collected by Mr Karagoz as part of his thesis.
S Hakan Can began his career in law enforcement in 1984. He worked with Interpol, Anti-Smuggling Department, Drugs subdivision, and Fiscal Crimes subdivisions. After completing his PhD, he joined Pennsylvania State University in 2006. He has authored and co-authored 5 books (3 of them for police service use), 6 book chapters and 43 articles, 27 of them peer reviewed. His current research focus is on law enforcement organizational issues around the globe and the efficiency of local police operations.

Helen M Hendy is Professor of Psychology at Penn State University, Schuylkill Campus. She earned her PhD in psychology from the University of California, Riverside, and her education and research have been funded by the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Mental Health, and Children's Miracle Network. Dr Hendy’s current research programs focus on social factors associated with health outcomes and coping behaviors.