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The Missing Geography of Honor Killing: Is Global Homicide Research Mapping Violence or Mapping What It Chooses to See?

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ABSTRAK

Honor-related lethal violence was documented across a wider range of jurisdictions than those usually foregrounded in honor-killing scholarship, but available studies did not establish its global distribution. An integrative literature review and comparative document analysis examined published research and documentary material from Turkey, Jordan and India alongside sources concerning South Sulawesi, Mindanao, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, Albania and the North Caucasus. The comparison assessed where relevant killings are documented beyond familiar settings, how local honor concepts and legal classifications affect the recognition of motive, and what these differences mean for geographical comparisons. Investigations in the North Caucasus and a reported Albanian family killing provided evidence of fatal events. Portuguese and Brazilian materials chiefly illuminated legal argument and judicial recognition, while Mindanao and South Sulawesi required closer attention to the boundaries of the concept. The sources distinguished documented collective-reputation enforcement from probable cases, intergroup retaliation and unproven claims of honor. They supported a classification-sensitive account of geographical visibility, not estimates of undiscovered killings or national prevalence. The reliability of comparison depended on keeping the fatal event, the motive attributed to it and its documentary label analytically separate.

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PENDAHULUAN

Honor killing has been studied most closely in countries whose case law and public debate use the term explicitly. Work on Turkey examines how family reputation can become a reason for lethal punishment (Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001; Doğan, 2014b). Jordanian studies consider recorded killings and the treatment of women under criminal law (Warrick, 2005; Hadidi et al., 2001). Research in northern India has examined the authority exercised by khap institutions over relationships (Bhattacharya, 2024). These contributions establish serious patterns of violence, yet they say less about places where comparable acts may receive another name. A country's prominence in the literature is an observation about research, not a measure of its homicide burden. International comparison becomes difficult when an event, its official record and its scholarly classification are treated as though they were the same thing. South Asian comparative work likewise addresses kin control over marriage (Aksoy & Szekely, 2025; Kadir, 2026c).

Homicide is recorded under different administrative and legal rules, and researchers depend on the information that survives those processes (Cook, 2025). An intentional death may be established while the alleged injury to family reputation remains absent from the record. The reverse arises when an accused person invokes honor but the court rejects the explanation. The difficulty extends beyond a missing database category to the evidentiary basis on which a claimed motive becomes an established finding (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021). Cross-national homicide research has

documented substantial variation in recording practices, making the origin and meaning of each classification essential to comparison (Kadir, 2026k; Miles & Cook, 2026; Sciarrino & Todesco, 2025).

Honor is not a single social mechanism. Research has examined insult and retaliation, but those responses extend beyond lethal violence (Cohen et al., 1996; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). An affront between rivals differs from a perceived breach of family morality punished by a relative. Thrasher and Handfield distinguish the motives associated with feuds from those associated with honor killing (Handfield & Thrasher, 2019). Psychology helps explain why reputational threats matter, yet a social norm or an attitude cannot establish that a homicide occurred (Cross et al., 2014; Uskul et al., 2012). The fatal act and its motive require separate evidence.

Canadian media analysis found that cases described as honor killings were framed differently from other family murders (Shier & Shor, 2016). Research on cultural scripts surrounding men's reputation, meanwhile, has examined attitudes in North and South American settings without treating them as evidence of a uniform lethal practice (Rodríguez Mosquera et al., 2002a; Vandello & Cohen, 2008; Vandello et al., 2009). A label attached only to offenders seen as culturally foreign may give one form of violence greater visibility while making similar questions less likely to be asked elsewhere. Neither observation establishes identical motives across cases. It does require the same evidentiary threshold to be applied before concluding that a particular death was inflicted to defend collective honor. Diaspora legal comparisons document variation among host states (Kadir, 2026d).

South Sulawesi research relates siri’ to accounts of shame and social dignity in homicide (Kadir, 2026i). Portuguese appellate cases offer evidence of a different kind, since the issue is how honor enters judicial reasoning (Matos et al., 2026). Brazil has contested the legal legitimacy of a defence based on male honor, while Mexican scholarship traces older crimes-of-passion arguments (Núñez Cetina, 2015; Barcellos, 2023). Investigators in the North Caucasus have documented fatal cases (Russian Justice Initiative & Stichting Justice Initiative, 2018). Research on Albania and Mindanao, however, often concerns retaliatory violence between kin groups (Macabuac-Ferolin, 2014; Mukherjee & Roy, 2023; Orozco, 2022). These materials belong in one discussion only if their differences are retained.

The wider geography of honor-based violence has not been ignored. A major international research review covered hundreds of studies, and a separate systematic scoping review addressed violence involving children (Bhatia et al., 2024; Baianstovu et al., 2025). Their scope is broader than intentional killing. Evidence about surveillance of adolescents or coercive family control may establish the presence of honor-related norms without documenting a homicide. Conversely, a fatal case may be described in criminal-law terms that never use the phrase honor killing. The unresolved problem concerns how much is lost when the boundaries of a literature search are treated as the boundaries of the conduct being studied.

A judgment may set out a narrative of family humiliation yet classify the offence under ordinary homicide law. A database may contain no separate field for honor. Neither condition means that the death was unrecorded or that the motive has been established. Femicide research faces a related problem when scholars seek to recover gendered circumstances from general homicide counts (Corradi et al., 2016; Dunaiski et al., 2024; Kadir, 2026e; Stöckl et al., 2013). Such work is valuable because it preserves the distinction between a documented fatal outcome and a social interpretation of its circumstances. Related femicide scholarship distinguishes missing records from unproven motives.

Geographical prominence in honor-killing scholarship may depend partly on how evidence is recorded and named rather than on the distribution of fatal events alone (Matos et al., 2026; Cook, 2025). Which killings linked to collective reputation have been documented in selected jurisdictions beyond the familiar core of the literature? How do local honor concepts and legal classifications shape recognition of the motive in homicide records and scholarship? What limits do those documentary differences place on geographical comparison? The evidence considered here concerns documented cases and the terms used to characterize them. A death without an honor label cannot automatically be treated as an unrecognized honor killing, and the absence of a retrieved report cannot establish that the event did not occur (Thrasher & Handfield, 2018).

RESEARCH METHODS

An integrative literature review was paired with qualitative comparative document analysis. Integrative reviews synthesize empirical and socio-legal work, while document analysis examines claims within their original records (Bowen, 2009; Snyder, 2019; Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). The

sources comprise purposively selected studies and accessible judicial, legal and investigative material, not a representative sample of global publications. Jurisdictions were selected because their documents present contrasting relations between homicide, claimed collective reputation and formal classification. The comparison concerns the evidentiary status of killings and motives rather than country-level incidence or publication shares (Rogers & Pridemore, 2023). Its documentary unit was the claim about an event or motive, assessed against the type and content of the source (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Material published between January 2000 and November 2026 formed the main set, with earlier work retained for theory or historical legal practice (Baianstovu et al., 2025). Sources were located through focused searches of Google Scholar, publisher sites, legal and institutional repositories, and the references of relevant studies (Bowen, 2009). English expressions such as honor killing, honour killing and homicide were supplemented by local terms including siri', rido, gjakmarrja and crimen pasional. Turkey, Jordan and India served as established comparators (Hadidi et al., 2001). Other jurisdictions were included where available records documented lethal sanctions, contested honor-based arguments or related retaliation (Russian Justice Initiative & Stichting Justice Initiative, 2018). The purposive selection was not designed to measure global publication coverage. The purposive documentary search was not presented as a systematic or scoping review with a complete screening record (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Munn et al., 2018; Tricco et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2020).

Publications and homicide events were treated as distinct documentary units, since several publications may discuss a single death. The material was examined for jurisdiction, time period when stated, source type, local terminology and evidence concerning the alleged or established motive (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Victim–perpetrator relationships were noted where the source supplied them. A defendant's explanation was not equated with a judicial finding, and a paper discussing an honor defence was not treated as documenting another honor-motivated homicide (Barcellos, 2023). Accounts of identifiable fatal events or documented case series informed the comparison of lethal conduct. Scholarship concerning social norms, legal doctrine or historical arguments supplied contextual material without being counted as additional killings.

Honor killing was understood narrowly as intentional lethal violence for which the documentary evidence links the act to enforcement or restoration of collective familial or communal reputation (Doğan, 2014a; Doğan, 2014b). Category A identified killings supported by that connection. Category B covered probable honor-related deaths where the evidence of motive remained incomplete. Category C concerned adjacent lethal retaliation, particularly feuds between kin groups, where the specific collective-reputation sanction had not been established (Rai & Fiske, 2011). Category D was used when honor appeared in a defence or other legal narrative without sufficient evidence for classification under A or B. Category E referred to nonlethal honor-based violence or control. The categories described the evidentiary fit of each source, not distinct criminal offences or measured frequencies.

Qualitative content analysis compared claims of reputational injury with the person harmed, the actor's relationship to the victim and the setting where motive was discussed (Cook, 2025). Differences between legal findings and interpretations in secondary research were retained. Claims of honor-related killing relied on category A documentation. Categories B–E informed the discussion of uncertain motives or related practices without being counted as additional deaths. A missing reference does not establish non-occurrence, just as prosecution for ordinary homicide does not mean that a death went unrecorded (Rogers & Pridemore, 2023). Uneven documentation, language access and purposive source selection limit the conclusions to the material examined.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Geography of Recognition is Not the Geography of Deaths

Studies from Turkey and Jordan investigate honor-related killings directly, giving their claims a firmer event-level basis than research confined to social attitudes (Doğan, 2014b; Hadidi et al., 2001). The range of geographical settings does not establish comparable contemporary rates. It instead reveals how the same honor vocabulary has been applied to different legal and ethnographic objects. A search restricted to publications titled 'honor killing' would differ from an inquiry into homicide judgments where collective reputation is contested as a motive. North African criminal-law comparisons further document differences in how these claims enter legal proceedings (Kadir, 2026b; Mappaselleng & Kadir, 2025).

More recent comparative work models the incentives generated by collective reputation and reported attitudes toward sanctions (Aksoy & Szekely, 2025). These studies are not interchangeable. Qualitative evidence can disclose how an offender explains a killing, a survey may capture endorsement of an honor norm, and aggregate records can describe patterns within a specific legal jurisdiction (Uskul et al., 2012). The usefulness of Turkey as an anchor derives from this plurality of source types, not from any inference that all its killings are easily or uniformly classifiable.

Collective-reputation research offers a possible explanation for the persistence of family pressure despite formal legal prohibitions (Heydari et al., 2021). It does not provide an incident estimate without an identifiable series of cases. The distinction is especially pertinent to India, where some studies examine collective institutions rather than administrative counts of deaths. Treating institutional analysis as equivalent to verified homicide data would create an unreliable benchmark for comparison with less researched countries. Rural-criminology research has also examined the conditions under which lethal sanctions acquire social legitimacy, although such accounts cannot substitute for case documentation (Kadir, 2026h).



Picture 1. Locations of the selected documentary evidence. Markers denote source visibility, not a census of publications or homicide incidence.

Jordan is a useful benchmark because the criminal-justice treatment of alleged honor motives has been studied directly (Gill & Kaplanian, 2019). A forensic report covering 16 cases in 1995 supplies observations at the level of individual deaths, although the sample cannot establish national prevalence (Hadidi et al., 2001). Warrick examined the legal position of victims under gendered criminal regulation, while other scholarship addressed the role of custom and the courts in honor-related offences (Al Gharaibeh, 2016; Warrick, 2005). These sources permit a distinction between legal discourse and the motive attributed to an offender. An allegation may affect proceedings without being accepted as the cause of death. In other cases, the judicial record may contain evidence linking an alleged breach of family morality to the killing. The variation concerns both geographical recognition and institutional classification.

Indian research on khap panchayats describes collective regulation of marriage and intimate choice (Bhattacharya, 2024). Such work differs from intimate-partner homicide research, where the victim–offender relationship is often the principal organizing category (Stöckl et al., 2013). Communal opposition to a marriage does not determine the motive for a particular death. Evidence about the event is still required. Collective sanction becomes relevant to homicide classification when a judicial or investigative record connects the killing to a perceived breach of shared reputation. By contrast, an interpersonal dispute cannot be recoded as honor killing merely because it occurred in a community where marriage rules are strictly enforced.

Swedish studies on honor-based control expand the relevant field beyond fatal violence (Björktomta, 2019). They help identify how collective expectations are enforced in family settings, yet they cannot be added to homicide studies as though they recorded the same outcome (Bhatia et al., 2024). There is also a geographical complication. A study conducted in Sweden may concern violence in a diaspora household, but its location in a database reflects the study site, not necessarily the origin

or reach of every norm described. Comparing regions therefore requires researchers to retain the location of the event and the population under study as separate variables.

Such research demonstrates why classification is necessary for prevention and comparison. But "intimate partner," "female victim" and "family-related" are not synonyms for "honor-motivated." The categories overlap empirically without sharing the same defining property. A woman may be killed by a partner following coercive control without evidence of a collective honor sanction (Stöckl et al., 2013). Conversely, an honor-related killing may involve a male victim or a relative outside the ordinary intimate-partner dyad. Treating these categories as equivalent would overestimate a phenomenon whose actual prevalence remains uncertain (Corradi et al., 2016).

The literature on honor-based violence is broader than stereotypical accounts suggest. Bhatia and colleagues' review of violence against children includes work from Europe, North America and other world regions, while the University of Gothenburg's international review (Baianstovu et al., 2025) covers a substantially larger body of honor-related scholarship (Bhatia et al., 2024). These findings demonstrate the existence of transregional research activity, yet they are not a valid denominator for lethal episodes. The distinction is substantive — coercive socialization, threatened violence and fatal enforcement belong to related but non-identical analytical sets (Loza, 2022). A global account restricted to homicide must first recover which reviewed documents contain actual deaths and which concern vulnerability or norms. Failure to separate outcomes could make a richly researched region appear to have a high share of killings simply because its nonlethal forms of violence have attracted systematic attention.

The omission of a place from one body of research does not mean that it is absent from every record. Courts may document a homicide without tagging it as honor-related. Local-language studies may be missed by an English-language query. Neither situation proves deliberate concealment. Missing records and missing research labels are different problems, although both can limit the visibility of collective-reputation motives in comparative homicide studies (Cook, 2025). A further distinction concerns disagreement over motive within an accessible judgment. Such disagreement should remain visible in the classification rather than being resolved by the researcher without evidentiary support.

A consistent evidentiary threshold is necessary regardless of a case's cultural setting. A death in South Sulawesi does not automatically qualify because siri' appears in its surrounding narrative (Kadir et al., 2026). Equally, a Portuguese killing does not fall outside the inquiry merely because it was prosecuted under an ordinary homicide provision. Classification depends on evidence of the motive and the alleged social sanction, rather than on a national or cultural label. Allowing different thresholds for familiar and unfamiliar settings would reproduce the geographic distortion that comparative research seeks to examine (Carrington et al., 2016; Hogg et al., 2017).

Southeast Asia: Overlapping Honor Vocabularies and Distinct Lethal Mechanisms

In South Sulawesi, siri' connects social dignity with the experience and recognition of shame (Mappaselleng & Kadir, 2025). Its meanings in Bugis–Makassar settings extend beyond lethal violence or punishment within families. Legal and socio-legal studies nevertheless discuss particular homicide narratives in which siri' is invoked (Kadir et al., 2026; Kadir, 2026i). Some of those studies use the local term rather than the English expression honor killing, creating a plausible retrieval limitation for narrowly framed searches. The existence or size of that limitation has not been measured here. Nor does the appearance of siri' in a judgment establish why the defendant killed. A reputational grievance must be linked to the fatal act before the event can be classified as collective-reputation enforcement.

Judicial reasoning is especially relevant in the South Sulawesi material. Research on siri' narratives in homicide cases involving women identifies circumstances in which cultural explanations enter legal argument (Kadir et al., 2026). Such references do not necessarily imply judicial approval of honor-related violence. The distinction depends on whether the judgment merely records a defendant's account of shame or adopts that account in assessing culpability or sentence (Mappaselleng & Kadir, 2025). Published case summaries can omit evidentiary passages that determine the answer. Claims about sentencing therefore require access to the relevant judgment and a clear separation between allegations and judicial findings.

A defendant's account of restoring siri' may be offered after a killing has occurred and can compete with testimony about anger, jealousy or an earlier dispute (Mappaselleng & Kadir, 2025). A judgment, in turn, may summarize those accounts without adopting every one of them as fact. Some

scholarship has treated the local concept as a route to understanding violence, while more recent work considers whether its meaning can be carried into the international category of honor killing (Kadir et al., 2026). The cases cannot be pooled without examining the reasoning in the individual judgment. A broad cultural explanation should never become a substitute for evidence about the disputed act.

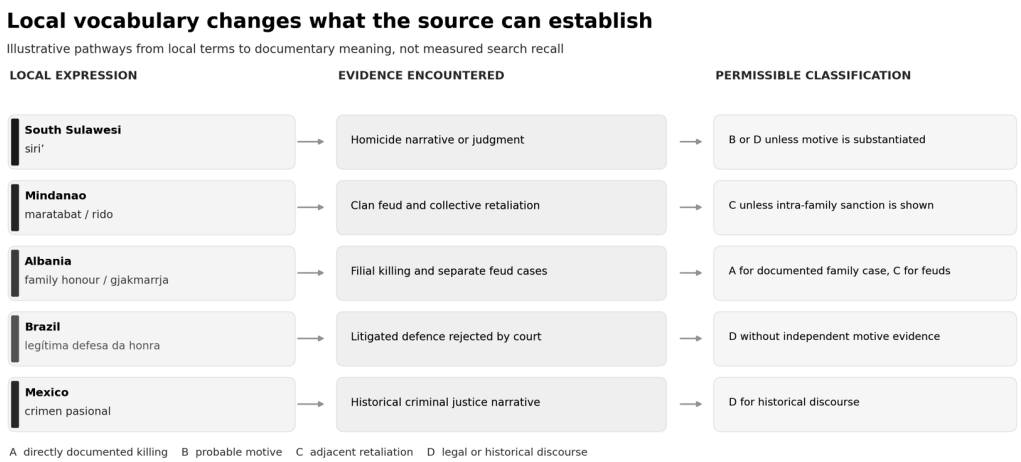
Table 1. Regional evidence and permissible inference from the reviewed sources.

Location	Core classification and evidence	Limits of interpretation
Turkey, Jordan and India	Core honor-motive literature — social norms, homicide cases and judicial studies (Aksoy & Szekely, 2025; Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001)	Not nationally comparable rates, evidence designs differ.
North Caucasus	Documented investigative reports of deaths linked to perceived honor (Russian Justice Initiative & Stichting Justice Initiative, 2018)	Report-derived cases, not representative annual incidence.
South Sulawesi	Local siri' homicide commentary and court reasoning (Kadir et al., 2026; Mappaselleng & Kadir, 2025)	Requires event-specific verification for core classification.
Portugal, Brazil and Mexico	Judicial recognition, litigated defense, historical crime-of-passion terminology (Barcellos, 2023; Matos et al., 2026)	Honor discourse is not by itself evidence of motive.
Albania	Family honor killing documented alongside gjakmarrja feud literature (Amnesty International, 2006; Mukherjee & Roy, 2023)	One family case does not estimate prevalence, feuds remain distinct.
Mindanao	Rido and maratabat describe clan retaliation (Macabuac-Ferolin, 2014; Orozco, 2022)	Adjacent to, but not automatically equivalent to, family honor killing.
Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, East Asia and Oceania	Exploratory discussion of adjacent norms in selected sources	Neither confirmed occurrences nor absence of relevant killings can be inferred.

Honor-related emotions can be intense in ordinary nonfatal conflicts (Rodríguez Mosquera et al., 2002b; Vandello & Cohen, 2003). A homicide qualifies for category A only if there is documentary evidence that the perceived offense to shared reputation materially informed the decision to kill. Where the available publication merely reports that an offender invoked siri', category B or D is more defensible. This conservative treatment protects the local concept from being reduced to a criminological stereotype while preserving the possibility that a subset of cases displays the relevant mechanism.

Rido in Mindanao is commonly described as retaliation between families or clans (Macabuac-Ferolin, 2014). Its links with maratabat make reputation central to the dispute, though the target may belong to a rival group rather than the offender's family (Orozco, 2022). That difference matters. A killing during a feud may enforce a perceived obligation to retaliate without being punishment for an internal breach of family morality (Handfield & Thrasher, 2019; Thrasher & Handfield, 2018). Research on rido is consequently relevant to the boundary of honor killing, not automatically evidence of its prevalence.

The Indonesia–Mindanao comparison exposes the limits of classification based on translated honor terms. The decisive questions concern who allegedly violated the norm, who was targeted and whose reputation the punishment was meant to defend (Rai & Fiske, 2011). Killing an accused family member may serve a different social purpose from attacking a rival clan in a continuing feud (Thrasher & Handfield, 2018). Those mechanisms cannot be collapsed into one category merely because both mobilize a language of honor.



Picture 2. Honor-related terminology found in selected regional sources. The comparison concerns vocabulary, not measured database retrieval rates.

Studies organized around siri' or rido are not necessarily indexed by the English expression honor killing. That terminological difference creates a potential obstacle for narrowly framed literature searches, but the additional documents that a multilingual strategy might retrieve cannot be estimated from these examples. Such an estimate would require comparable database queries and documented screening decisions (Peters et al., 2020; Tricco et al., 2018). The selected publications instead establish a narrower point. Local expressions of reputation and English-language research categories may refer to overlapping but different forms of violence. Their relationship has to be assessed from the conduct and evidence described, not inferred from translation alone.

Southern Europe and Latin America: The Legal Visibility of Honor

Matos and colleagues examined appellate and Supreme Court material from 1993 to 2025, identifying how issues of honor appear within intimate-partner homicide adjudication (Matos et al., 2026). This finding permits a classification-sensitive question — whether judges characterize the relevant conduct through domestic violence, possessiveness or motive language without treating honor as a formally separate attribute (Stöckl et al., 2013). The data do not demonstrate that Portuguese intimate-partner homicide is predominantly honor-related. They establish that honor can enter the legal narrative in a jurisdiction whose official categories do not routinely foreground the term.

Criminal offences ordinarily classify conduct by legally prescribed elements. The court need not use a sociological concept to prove that the defendant intentionally caused death. A trial record may therefore contain extensive discussion of humiliation, sexual conduct or perceived loss of standing while its formal result is indexed under homicide (Matos et al., 2026). To characterize that phenomenon as hidden honor killing, however, requires evidence that the collective-reputation element actually belongs to the killing. Otherwise the analysis risks substituting a preferred interpretation for the court's findings (Rogers & Pridemore, 2023).

It is difficult to infer a stable motive from a legal expression alone. A defence can be repeated in court because it once offered a familiar path to mitigation, even when the evidence of collective family enforcement is weak. The Brazilian dispute is especially valuable for showing how legal institutions can reject a claim without denying that the defendant attempted to invoke it (Supremo Tribunal Federal, 2023). In the Portuguese material, the more relevant issue is whether honor is visible in the narrative of the appellate decision. These distinct observations should remain separate in coding. Neither the assertion nor its rejection makes a nationwide series of honor-motivated deaths. Sentencing scholarship likewise requires evidence before honor receives legal weight (Kadir, 2026f).

Brazil provides an overtly juridical example. The legal status of an honor-based defence is distinct from the motive in each case where the argument was raised. Judicial rejection of that defence establishes its significance as a legal claim, but it cannot supply a numerical series of honor-motivated killings (Barcellos, 2023). Evidence of collective-reputation enforcement must come from the factual record. In the absence of such evidence, the material belongs to category D. Research on cultural

defences likewise distinguishes an account of conduct from a justification that the law may recognize (Kadir, 2026g).

The distinction matters when comparing Brazil with classical honor-killing settings. A different case might involve agreement among relatives that a woman's alleged conduct dishonors the wider family. These episodes are normatively related but cannot automatically share an identical classification. Cross-cultural research concerning perceived honor, female fidelity and interpersonal aggression supplies evidence that the relevant moral language is not geographically exclusive (Vandello & Cohen, 2003; Vandello & Cohen, 2008). Such research does not prove that the relationship between such norms and killing operates in the same way across populations. A comparative account that ignores this distinction would exchange one form of geographical selectivity for conceptual overextension.

Mexican legal history offers a different form of evidence. Scholarship on crimen pasional in Mexico City between 1929 and 1971 documents the relationship between gender, emotion and the interpretation of violent crime (Núñez Cetina, 2015). The record illuminates historical legal language rather than the contemporary frequency of honor-related homicide. A historical account of reputation in criminal proceedings cannot be placed on the same temporal footing as a recent investigation of fatal cases. Research on male honor and female fidelity concerns broader domestic-violence scripts, not a historical case series from Mexico City (Vandello & Cohen, 2003).

The Italian expression delitto d'onore belongs to a legal history in which claims about reputation once received distinct treatment. Its historical presence establishes that the relationship between honor and homicide is not confined to the regions most often highlighted in contemporary scholarship. It says little, however, about present-day incidence. The repeal of a law cannot establish that the underlying attitudes disappeared. Equally, the former existence of a legal privilege cannot establish how many current deaths were driven by related motives. Italian Law No. 442 of 5 August 1981 expressly repealed Article 587 and other provisions tied to the penal relevance of honor (Repubblica Italiana, 1981). General femicide frameworks offer a separate contemporary classification and cannot substitute for this historical legal source (Corradi et al., 2016; European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

Table 2. Motive classification of selected examples under categories A–E.

Case/phenomenon	Analytical category	Basis for decision
Jordanian homicide case series	A for individual events with documented honor motive	Forensic and legal studies identify relevant cases, but classification still depends on each event (Hadidi et al., 2001; Warrick, 2005).
North Caucasus investigated incidents	A where documented, B when motive remains uncertain	The investigative report records fatalities but does not provide population incidence (Russian Justice Initiative & Stichting Justice Initiative, 2018).
South Sulawesi siri'-framed homicide	B for a probable motive, D for an unproven claim	Use judgment-level facts rather than the presence of siri' in a case narrative (Kadir et al., 2026; Mappaselleng & Kadir, 2025).
Portuguese domestic homicide appeals	D unless case-specific motive established	Judicial language may be implicit or contested (Matos et al., 2026).
Brazilian honor-defence litigation	D	Claimed justification need not demonstrate underlying honor motive (Barcellos, 2023; Supremo Tribunal Federal, 2023).
Mexican historical crimen pasional	D (historical)	Historically located legal discourse, 1929–1971 (Núñez Cetina, 2015).
Albanian family honor killing	A for documented case	Grosha Martincanaj case in Amnesty report (Amnesty International, 2006).

Case/phenomenon	Analytical category	Basis for decision
Albanian blood feuds and Mindanao rido	C	Retaliation between kin groups differs from intrafamily sanction (Macabuac-Ferolin, 2014; Orozco, 2022).

Honor appears in Portuguese, Brazilian and Mexican materials through different legal and historical processes. Portuguese scholarship examines its place in appellate reasoning, Brazilian material concerns a contested defence, and Mexican research investigates historical narratives of passion and reputation (Barcellos, 2023; Matos et al., 2026). A map that treated these sources as equivalent observations of honor-motivated killing would obscure the type of evidence behind each location. Their value lies in identifying different forms of legal recognition, not in expanding the count of verified fatal incidents.

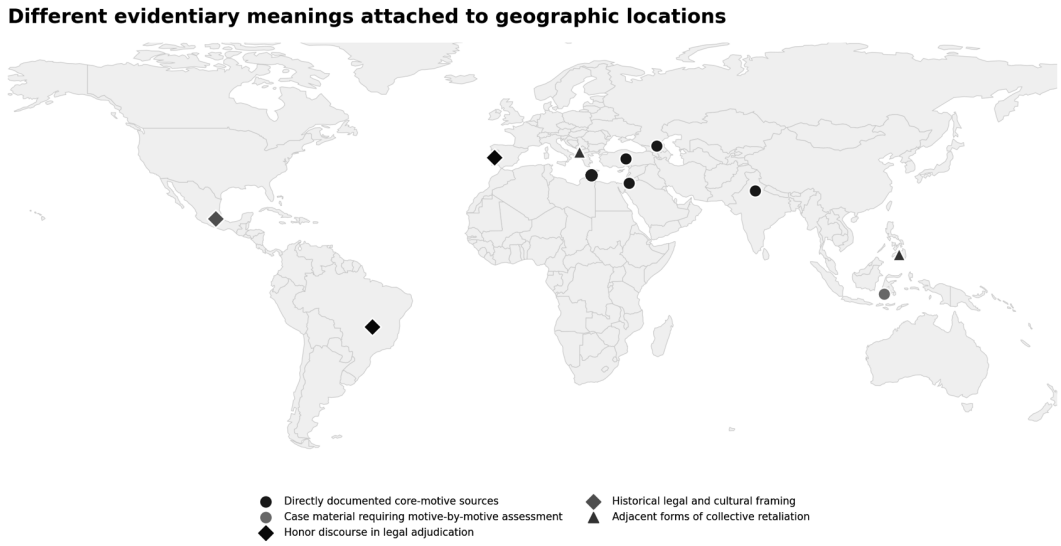
North Caucasus, Albania and the Boundaries of Violent Honor

Human-rights documentation from the North Caucasus presents a more direct association between collective honor and intentional deaths (Loza, 2022). The Russian Justice Initiative's investigation, Killed by Gossip, identified 33 incidents and 39 women and men killed in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Chechnya during 2008–2017 (Russian Justice Initiative & Stichting Justice Initiative, 2018). An explicit claim of reputational punishment appears in the investigated material, although individual incidents still require careful evaluation (Russian Justice Initiative & Stichting Justice Initiative, 2018). The North Caucasus therefore occupies a different evidentiary position from regions for which only survey attitudes or general reports of gender-based violence are available. It is possible to recognize credible documented lethal episodes without estimating an incidence rate.

The North Caucasus material also shows why counting publications is an inadequate substitute for examining source provenance (Cook, 2025). An investigative report may supply names, locations and testimony. Later academic commentary can discuss the same deaths without identifying additional cases. The 2018 investigation therefore provides documentary evidence of particular incidents rather than a peer-reviewed incidence estimate. References to those incidents must be traced to the investigation itself to avoid duplicate counting. Research on investigative selection further cautions that recorded cases may reflect the paths through which information becomes available to authorities (Kadir, 2026j).

The report from the North Caucasus also illustrates the limits of an otherwise strong documentary source. Its investigators sought out incidents consistent with their research problem, and successful identification depended partly on information reaching them. The 33 incidents and 39 deaths should consequently be read as the results of an investigation rather than as a denominator-adjusted rate (Russian Justice Initiative & Stichting Justice Initiative, 2018). The documented deaths make the region relevant to the core research question. The same evidence does not establish how much larger the underlying population of cases might be (Cook, 2025). Using the report responsibly requires preserving both its substantive findings and the uncertainty built into its mode of collection.

Albanian gjakmarrja describes obligations of revenge maintained across families (UK Home Office, 2024; Mukherjee & Roy, 2023). Collective reputation can be central to these disputes, but the violence commonly targets members of a rival kin group rather than relatives accused of violating family morality. Treating every blood feud as honor killing would expand the geographical category by definition rather than by evidence. The distinction between intra-family punishment and intergroup retaliation is recognized in comparative legal research (Kadir, 2026a). Particular feud killings can qualify as honor-related only where their documented motive meets the narrower definition.



Picture 3. Selected source locations by the type of evidence discussed. Albanian sources include both a documented family killing and distinct blood-feud cases.

Albania also has evidence that fits the narrower concept more directly. Amnesty International described the 2004 killing of Grosha Martincanaj by her father and examined the family's claim that her conduct brought dishonor (Amnesty International, 2006). The report treats the case as an example of a crime of honour, although that characterization remains grounded in the documented proceeding rather than a population estimate. The event must be distinguished from gjakmarrja, in which retaliation generally involves rival families over a sequence of earlier disputes and deaths (Thrasher & Handfield, 2018). Albania therefore contributes a particular family killing as well as a different set of feud practices. Combining them would conceal the very mechanism the comparison seeks to isolate.

Documented killings connected to honor claims in the North Caucasus can be examined alongside the distinct forms of violence described in Albanian sources (Loza, 2022). Albania includes a specifically reported intra-family killing, but much of the cited literature also concerns blood vengeance. The cases should not be merged. Collective reputation may influence both, while the target, underlying transgression and social purpose of the fatal act remain different (Thrasher & Handfield, 2018). The geographic comparison is consequently informative only when it preserves those distinctions.

Unresolved Regional Prospects and the Evidence Threshold

Studies from Central Asia may describe normative attitudes toward violence. Such evidence matters for comparative theory, particularly where a survey item names a proposed sanction for violating familial norms (Aksoy & Szekely, 2025). Yet an expression of approval in a hypothetical situation is not a homicide event. It does not reveal offender behaviour, police recording or a judicial account of motive. The distinction between attitudes and acts is fundamental when moving from psychological research toward criminological mapping (Rai & Fiske, 2011). A region with survey evidence should remain marked as a candidate for further investigation unless a traceable lethal episode also meets the criteria for inclusion.

Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania raises a difficult comparative question. Some recorded killings involve accusations of witchcraft or threats to communal standing. Those concerns are not enough to identify a case as an honor killing. The alleged transgression, the person targeted and the reason for a fatal sanction must still be examined. Where the reviewed sources cannot establish that sequence, the location remains open for further inquiry. It would be misleading to mark it as either a confirmed occurrence or proof of non-occurrence. Southern criminology warns against generalizing categories across local settings when their historical and institutional meanings differ (Carrington et al., 2016; Hogg et al., 2017).

Normative surveys, historical legal research and homicide investigations contribute different forms of knowledge about honor. A survey may document support for a family sanction, while an older court record shows how reputation once entered criminal proceedings (Rai & Fiske, 2011). An investigation may establish a fatal incident. None of these sources is interchangeable with the others

(Thrasher & Handfield, 2018). Where no adequately documented killing has been located, the available evidence supports an unresolved classification rather than a confirmed occurrence or categorical absence.

East Asian cases require the same caution. Literature on shame, family relations or domestic homicide can contain themes that appear resonant with honor, but broad cultural analogies cannot substitute for evidence that killing was intended as collective-reputation enforcement. Family suicide, filicide motivated by perceived economic failure or murder arising from partner jealousy may all involve shame without reproducing the social logic defined here. An event may be deadly and culturally meaningful while remaining outside the concept of honor killing. Without that step, geographic broadening becomes a mechanism of conceptual inflation rather than a correction to scholarly selectivity. Cross-cultural psychological research has documented distinct dimensions of honor and emotional responses to offence, without establishing an East Asian homicide series (Cross et al., 2014; Rodríguez Mosquera et al., 2002b).

Mexican prosecutions from the mid-twentieth century illustrate the historical role of reputation in legal explanation without measuring present-day homicide exposure (Núñez Cetina, 2015). Earlier European provisions raise the same temporal problem. Publication dates and event dates therefore need separate treatment in comparative documentation. An account written decades after an offence may illuminate the legal vocabulary of the earlier period while saying little about current patterns of killing. Historical material can demonstrate the geographic diversity of honor-related language, but it cannot be treated as contemporary evidence of an equivalent lethal phenomenon. Such distinctions matter when older legal categories remain visible in recent literature. The modern Brazilian dispute over an honor-based defence concerns a different setting and period from the Mexican historical material (Barcellos, 2023).

The available sources differ in their capacity to establish homicide and motive. Court records and investigations may document the fatal act, whereas scholarly interpretation can clarify the social meaning attributed to it. The victim–perpetrator relationship is relevant but insufficient to establish a collective honor sanction (Stöckl et al., 2013). Keeping relationship and motive separate reduces the risk of classifying family-related deaths as honor killings on relational grounds alone. It may also improve comparison with national homicide databases, which commonly record relationships more consistently than culturally specific motives (Rogers & Pridemore, 2023).

Classification-Sensitive Homicide Research: Substantive Implications

Homicide becomes available for comparison through successive acts of detection, recording and interpretation (Rogers & Pridemore, 2023). Investigators and courts may preserve evidence of motive or leave it undocumented. Researchers then classify the resulting records using concepts that can be recognized in international publications, and bibliographic systems index those studies according to titles, languages and metadata (Cook, 2025). Each stage can retain the fatal outcome while losing information about collective-reputation claims. Conversely, research on honor norms can circulate without documenting a death. These are analytically distinct possibilities, not stages of a verified causal sequence.

Local cultural narratives do not replace the legal elements of homicide. An offender may invoke honor selectively to explain or excuse unlawful conduct, while an ordinary homicide classification may preserve no separate information about collective reputation. A layered record could retain the legally established fatal outcome alongside the evidentiary status of a claimed motive (Rogers & Pridemore, 2023). Such documentation would improve comparative clarity without requiring jurisdictions to establish a separate offence for every culturally specific explanation of lethal violence (Carrington et al., 2016).

Table 3. Evidence-confidence matrix and classification-sensitive limits on inference.

Evidence grade	Eligible material	Permissible interpretation
Higher confidence	Detailed judicial/forensic or investigated event with documented collective-reputation sanction	A particular honor-motivated killing is documented, no incidence extrapolation.
Moderate confidence	Peer-reviewed case discussion with incomplete independent motive evidence	Plausible or probable honor-related homicide, classified B.
Adjacent (not a weaker A)	Clan feud, intergroup revenge, or reputation-linked killing without sanction element	Category C, conceptually nearby but not equivalent.
Discourse-only	Defense, judgment terminology, legal history or nonlethal norms	Category D/E, informative about recognition, not count of lethal cases.
Missing / not established	No adequately sourced matching event located in bounded set	Source limitation only, not zero events, absent norms or suppression.

Documentary absence, terminological absence and classificatory absence describe different limits on geographical inference. Documentary absence means that an adequate source about a suspected case was not located in the selected material. Terminological absence is possible when an existing record is not captured by a particular search expression (Cook, 2025). Classificatory absence occurs when a homicide is recorded without a separate attribute for a claimed honor motive (Aebi, 2018). The first calls for better case documentation, the second for broader retrieval and the third for examination of administrative or legal records. None establishes deliberate suppression, a regional incidence gap or the number of unrecognized honor killings.

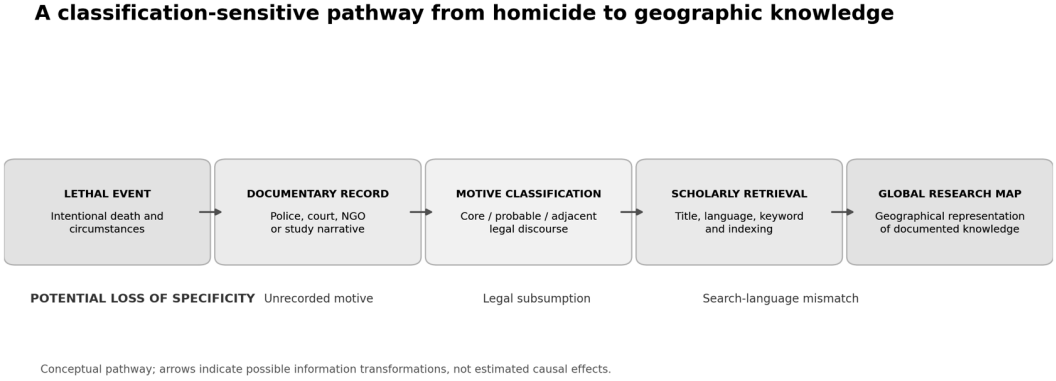
Differences in public recognition may also create asymmetries in the study of offenders. Where the case is primarily coded as domestic homicide, the available research may emphasize dyadic control or individual risk. Each literature may be empirically warranted within its own focus. The Portuguese and Canadian sources demonstrate how a change in the language of description can redirect attention even when both types of inquiry concern lethal harm in familial settings (Matos et al., 2026; Shier & Shor, 2016). This remains a plausible mechanism of differential recognition, not a proven universal media or judicial bias.

Prevention also depends on distinguishing the mechanisms behind lethal threats. Measures developed for immediate intimate-partner danger may not address threats emerging from several relatives who regard an individual's conduct as a collective reputational breach (Rai & Fiske, 2011; Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001). Responses framed around family honor may likewise be poorly suited to prolonged retaliation between clans. Available documentary evidence does not establish the effectiveness of these interventions. It does, however, support careful attention to victim–perpetrator relationships and the social audience of threatened punishment rather than assuming that one category corresponds neatly to an ethnic or religious population.

An administrative motive field would not require a distinct criminal offence. It could record whether collective-reputation enforcement was alleged, substantiated, contested or rejected. Such distinctions preserve the difference between what an offender claimed and what investigators or courts established. They also allow disagreement between researchers to be examined rather than concealed behind a binary label. Femicide research has similarly encountered difficulties in interpreting the social meaning of deaths from administrative records (Corradi et al., 2016; Miles & Cook, 2026). Transparent uncertainty is preferable to apparent agreement achieved by excluding ambiguous cases.

Research on honor-related deaths is not produced exclusively in a few metropolitan centres. Indonesian scholars have examined siri' through local publications and homicide judgments, while legal historians in Latin America have studied the rhetoric surrounding intimate violence (Kadir et al., 2026; Núñez Cetina, 2015). Their work is not interchangeable with event-level case investigations. Nor should its location be taken as proof that the scholarship is invisible. The difficulty concerns whether distinct concepts and records can be compared without turning them into the same thing. Southern criminology

is useful here as a critique of interpretive authority, not a replacement for evidence (Carrington et al., 2016; Hogg et al., 2017).



Picture 4. Documentary and classificatory pathways through which evidence of motive may be retained or lost. The pathways are conceptual rather than estimates of causal effects.

No global count of unrecognized honor killings can be derived from sources selected for their documentary contrasts. The available case material covers different jurisdictions, languages and periods, and it lacks a shared population denominator (Rogers & Pridemore, 2023). The findings are stronger at the level of classification. Cases, legal arguments and locally named forms of retaliation cannot be mapped as equivalent homicide events. Differences in the visibility of these source types may affect geographical interpretations, but they do not demonstrate quantified regional underrepresentation (Cook, 2025). Establishing the latter would require an exhaustive multilingual search with a reproducible screening record. The present documentary evidence warrants a narrower conclusion about what can be compared reliably.

CONCLUSION

Documented investigations in the North Caucasus and the reported killing of Grosha Martincanaj in Albania establish that lethal violence framed as enforcement of family reputation has been recorded beyond the jurisdictions most familiar in honor-killing scholarship. South Sulawesi sources raise a related but less settled question, since invocations of siri' require examination of the motives established in particular homicide cases. Mindanao rido and Albanian blood feuds identify the boundary separating collective retaliation from punishment for a perceived violation of family morality. Portugal, Brazil and historical Mexico contribute evidence about the legal recognition of honor, but not comparable contemporary incidence. The geographic contribution of these sources lies in their different evidentiary content rather than in a measurable distribution of killings across world regions.

Local honor concepts and ordinary homicide classifications may preserve different aspects of a fatal event. A death can enter judicial records while the alleged reputational motive remains disputed or undocumented. An honor defence may also appear without proof that collective-reputation enforcement caused the killing. Those distinctions constrain geographical comparisons built from inconsistent documentary categories. The findings support separating documented honor-motivated deaths from probable cases, adjacent intergroup retaliation and legal discourse alone. They cannot establish how many relevant publications an English-language search misses, or how many killings remain unrecognized worldwide. A comparative account is defensible only when its geographical claims remain proportionate to the evidence used to classify the deaths.

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