



Letter to Editor

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## **The psychiatric and criminal history of family members of persons applying for a gun license should also be questioned**

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Dear Editor,

Upon examining the recent surge in women applying to our hospital's health board, we found that men with criminal records or psychiatric disorders, which could hinder their ability to obtain a license, often resort to using their wives or other women as intermediaries to obtain firearms. The purpose of this letter is to draw attention to the importance of questioning the psychiatric and criminal history of not only the applicant but also the family members of the applicant who live with him during the gun license application process.

Violent incidents have increased recently, spreading throughout society and even affecting healthcare professionals (Sahin and Yıldırım, 2020). In a study evaluating forensic deaths, it was reported that homicides were the second most common cause of death after traffic accidents, and suicides were the third most common cause of death (Gunaydin et al, 2002). Apart from murder and suicide, firearms can cause many injuries (Tascı et al, 2018).

The significant increase in firearms acquisition poses a significant threat to public health and safety and requires serious measures in this regard. There are some basic rules in the Firearms and Knives Law (Law No. 6136) that regulate the conditions of those who can obtain a gun license. According to this law, the criminal history and health status of the person applying for a gun license are among the evaluation criteria. Article 5 of the law emphasizes that licenses should not be issued to people with psychiatric illnesses. In addition, convictions for weapons crimes are also a reason for the rejection of the application (Law No. 6136, 1986). However, observations made in recent years show that evaluating only the applicant's personal history in gun license applications is insufficient. In particular, the fact that men with criminal pasts or psychiatric illnesses cannot directly obtain a gun

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license and that these people try to obtain weapons indirectly through their spouses will create a serious social security problem.

Such situations lead to an increase in violent incidents in society and the misuse of weapons. A study conducted in 2022 revealed that the misuse of weapons has increased, especially in domestic violence and murders (Yasuntimur and Ögünç, 2022). In addition, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) emphasizes the dangers that firearms pose, especially to women and children, and draws attention to the need for stricter control of gun ownership conditions (UNODC, 2020).

In this context, I believe that not only the past of the person applying for a license, but also the past of the family members living in the same house with the person should be investigated. In particular, the fact that firearms have become more accessible poses a risk to the safety of family members and the immediate environment.

Psychiatric and criminal background checks will be a critical measure not only for individual safety but also for social safety. The psychological or criminal condition of an individual within the family may increase the risk of misuse of the weapon. Such situations require the evaluation of not only the person applying for the license but also the individuals they live with. A study conducted in 2020 showed that 30% of domestic violence incidents were caused by individuals misusing firearms (Kivistove and Porter, 2020). This reveals how important it is to take into account family interactions before granting a gun license. From a broader perspective, technological developments and data-sharing opportunities make it possible to conduct such inquiries more effectively. For example, obtaining information about the family of the person applying for a license through central health databases and criminal records would be an important step in terms of security and health. However, the collection and processing of such information should be done with respect for personal rights and should be supervised by the necessary legal regulations.

As a result, it is not enough to evaluate gun license applications based solely on the applicant's psychiatric and criminal history. In particular, investigating the backgrounds of family members living in the same residence is of great importance in terms of social security and preventing violent incidents. Legal regulations to be made in this direction can make society safer and prevent the misuse of weapons.

Best regards.

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### **Research Statement**

**Ethical Approval:** The study does not require ethical approval.

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest for the study.

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