

Honor Endorsement in Male Youth: A General Risk Factor for Aggressive Behavior?

Marie Kollek and Renate Soellner

Department of Psychology, University of Hildesheim

Abstract

Honor refers to socially conferred self-worth, strong norms of reciprocity, and direct retaliation for transgressions. Honor norms have been discussed as relevant in explaining aggressive behavior, particularly for immigrant groups. In this study we examined the endorsement of honor norms and their association with aggressive behavior in a culturally diverse sample in Germany. Online questionnaire data were used from male adolescents aged 11–18 years ($N = 774$; $M_{age} = 15.37$, 34.2% with a migration background). Multiple linear regression analyses indicated that students of Turkish and Russian origin endorsed honor more than students without a migration background, whereas students of Polish origin did not differ. Within negative binomial regression models, honor endorsement was significantly positively related to aggressive behavior, while this effect did not differ between students from different migration backgrounds and students without migration background respectively. Thus, the internalization of honor norms emerged as a general risk for aggressive behavior among male adolescents.

Keywords

Adolescents, males, migrants, honor, aggressive behavior

Introduction

Irrespective of historical and cultural contexts, criminal involvement is most likely to occur in adolescence compared to any other age (Rocque et al., 2016). In Germany, juvenile delinquency is largely represented by physical injury, a predominantly male phenomenon (Bundeskriminalamt, 2023). According to self-reports, nearly one in four male adolescents in Germany has committed a violent crime at least

once in their lifetime (Krieg et al., 2022). During adolescents' identity formation, normative systems are considered to be most influential in behavioral genesis (Somech & Elizur, 2009). Accordingly, beliefs about the social acceptability of behaviors among a reference group, also apply to violent behavior (Dedios Sanguinetti et al., 2023). In studying norms and their variation as part of a particular culture, nationality is often used as a marker of cultural systems.

Given the inferior predictive validity of common risk factors and prognostic instruments for violent delinquency among ethnic minorities (e.g., Olver et al., 2014), it has been discussed that the role of sociocultural norms in shaping everyday life has been neglected so far (Shepherd & Lewis-Fernandez, 2016). Rather, as a general problem of criminal psychology theorizing, authors have raised the issue

Author Note

Marie Kollek  <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9514-6214>

Renate Soellner  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6732-9076>

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Marie Kollek, Department of Psychology, University of Hildesheim, Universitätsplatz 1, 31141 Hildesheim, Germany. E-mail: marie.kollek@uni-hildesheim.de

that theories are formulated primarily for the Euro-American context (Schmidt & Ward, 2021). Hence, the fit of common explanatory models for different cultures urgently needs to be questioned. Furthermore, it should be considered whether risk and protective factor constellations for aggressive behavior apply to the nowadays culturally diverse German population.

In 2020, almost 40% of children and young people under the age of 18 had a so-called migrant background, which is defined as either the child or at least one of their parents being born without German citizenship. The most common countries of origin for these individuals or their parents were Turkey, Russia, and Poland (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2022).

Specifically, for young male violent offenders from a Muslim cultural background in Germany, prognostic instruments did not provide a valid prediction of recidivism, in contrast to native offenders (Dahle & Schmidt, 2014). Therefore, some authors argue that to explain violent delinquency among specific groups of perpetrators, namely people with Turkish and Arabic migration or Muslim cultural backgrounds, traditional norms of honor must be considered (Dahle & Schmidt, 2014; Schmidt et al., 2017, 2019). To date, it remains to be tested whether the internalization of honor norms differs across cultural backgrounds, and whether its impact on violent behavior is independent of national origin.

Cultural Logics of Dignity, Honor, and Face

Leung and Cohen (2011) distinguish three cultural logics, each of which subsumes specific shared beliefs, values, behaviors, and practices around the cultural themes of dignity, honor or face. Cultural logics establish a normative framework that promotes predictability, facilitates social coordination, prescribes strategies for safety as well as conflict resolution, provides group members with a sense of self-worth (Leung & Cohen, 2011), and evolves as adaptations to environmental conditions (Aslani et al., 2013). In the context of this study, the logics of honor and dignity are particularly relevant. In the cultural logic of dignity, individuals are presumed to have an inalienable self-worth that is primarily intrinsically derived (Leung & Cohen, 2011). A person is considered to have a strong sense of dignity if he or she acts in a self-determined manner and in accordance with his or her inner standards. Behavior within dignity cultures is guided by conscience and underpinned by a strong rule of law to provide pro-

tection and justice (Leung & Cohen, 2011). In honor cultures, a person's self-worth has a distinct external quality in addition to an internal one (Leung & Cohen, 2011). It is defined as "the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society" (Pitt-Rivers, 1968, p. 21). Honor can be acquired and withdrawn, and must be proven by others. To maintain one's honor, a person is expected to not tolerate cheating and insults, and to repay the wrong done to him or her (Leung & Cohen, 2011). Honor is conceived as a form of social organization when formal legal structures and the protection of individuals by state institutions are perceived as weak (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994). In describing ideal types of dignity and honor logics, the key differences can be summarized as follows: the value of the person is inalienable vs. socially conferred, individual behavior is constrained by guilt for violating internal norms vs. the shame of public condemnation, and the individual is protected by an effective legal system vs. bonds of reciprocity (Leung & Cohen, 2011; Uskul et al., 2019). The idea of external self-evaluation and the emphasis on social image and reputation universally apply to individuals in honor cultures, but the behaviors that honor codes prescribe as appropriate vary by culture and gender (Rodriguez Mosquera, 2011). Female honor norms tend to focus on values of modesty and decency, while male honor codes emphasize strength, toughness, and physical protection (Rodriguez Mosquera, 2016).

All cultural logics are simultaneously accessible, but some may be activated more often than others (Oysermann, 2017; Oyserman & Lee, 2008). If many individuals rely on the same logic, this logic becomes more likely to be seen as normative. Germany, representing a modern Western individualistic and egalitarian society, is expected to be relatively familiar with the dignity motivational system (Leung & Cohen, 2011), whereas the normative system of honor is expected to predominate in Turkey (Uskul et al., 2012), Russia (Helkama et al., 2012; Friedrichs, 2016), and Poland (Krys et al., 2017; Świdrak et al., 2019; Zdybek & Walczak, 2020). Most research on honor has focused on comparisons within the United States or between Western dignity cultures and southern and southeastern European honor cultures (e.g., Spain and Turkey; Uskul et al., 2019). The few studies on Polish honor culture suggest that compared to Norwegians, Poles evaluate themselves more externally (Świdrak et al., 2019), aggression is the preferred response to provocation (Krys et al., 2017), and general gender roles maintain men as active users of violence in response to provocation (Zdybek & Wal-

czak, 2020). Compared to Finland, Estonia, Italy, and Switzerland, honor was considered a more important cultural value among Russian participants (Helkama et al., 2021). The present study extends previous research by focusing on immigrants from different honor cultures within the German majority society, which is expected to emphasize the dignity motivational system.

Even within normative cultures, individuals vary in the extent to which they act in accordance with the surrounding cultural logic. According to Leung and Cohen (2011), “[...] people are active agents within a cultural system, responding to or against the dominant organizing syndrome of their culture” (p. 523). Moreover, individuals can be socialized into different microcultures that support or oppose the norms of the larger society (Anderson, 1994) and given growing multiculturalism, there are increasing opportunities to interact with groups that adhere to different social norms and thus cultural logics.

Honor Endorsement and Aggressive Behavior

The Significance-Quest Theory (Kruglanski et al., 2014, 2022) defines the motivational need to have a social worth and to matter to others as central. As a result of genetics, socialization, and culture, the need for significance differs individually. This need is typically satisfied by measuring up to a given value treasured by the community or culture, the norms of which one has internalized. In the case of a (threatened) loss of significance, such as through evidence of disrespect or incompetence, or the opportunity of significance gain, a quest for significance can be activated. Thus, in order to restore or enhance the sense of belonging, values that are shared with significant others will be provoked. Thereby, cultural narratives have the dual effect of shaping values when significance is quested, and of linking values to actions taken to achieve them (Kruglanski et al., 2022). With higher internalized honor norms, individuals are more sensitive to rejection and insult, tend to feel thereby more attacked, and are more likely to experience significance-loss (Kruglanski, 2014). Since men from honor cultures have been found to endorse violent behavior for self-protection, defense of honor, or socialization of children (Cohen & Nisbet, 1994), it is expected that narratives in honor cultures will code aggressive behavior as significance-lending. The Significance-Quest-Theory is widely supported empirically, indicating greater tendencies to respond aggressively to perceived insults and threats, greater

likelihood to carry weapons for protection, more positive perceptions of war, and greater support for aggressive security policies when honor is endorsed (Cohen et al., 1996; Felson & Pare, 2010; Krys et al., 2017; Saucier et al., 2018).

The Cultural Agency-Model of Criminal Behavior (CAMCB; Schmidt et al., 2021; Schmidt & Ward, 2021) also considers cultural influences in the development of violent behavior. The impact of culture is conceptualized through cultural traits that develop as adaptive responses to the demands of the social, institutional, physical, and historical environment (Kim & Lawrie, 2019) and are acquired through social learning processes in order to achieve desired goals and avoid undesired ones (Mesquita et al., 2016). Thus, in this model, cultural influences on aggressive behavior are conceived as highly functional adaptations to environmental features without reference to an individual’s national background.

The Present Study

Summing up, violent crime is a common phenomenon among Germany’s young male population, which is becoming increasingly culturally diverse. It is assumed that adolescents differ in their inalienable vs. socially conferred self-esteem, which is represented in the cultural logics of dignity and honor. Some authors argue that for a valid risk assessment of violent delinquency in certain groups, traditional norms of honor must also be considered, suggesting its conceptualization as a unique risk factor. Honor norms, once adopted, are likely to be carried with migration (Oyserman, 2017), and strong manifestations of honor norms may persist in new societies regardless of their functionality (Vandello & Cohen, 2003). With reference to the normative classification of Germany, Turkey, Russia, and Poland, we expect to find the following group-level differences in the relative familiarity with the honor motivational system among the young German population:

H1: Students with a Turkish, Russian, or Polish immigrant background are more likely to agree with honor norms than students without a migration background.

According to the models presented above, it can be assumed that the means of fulfilling central needs vary according to cultural socialization (Kruglanski et al., 2022). In the context of high familiarity with an honor motivational system, individual violent behavior may have been learned as socially normative

for self-esteem maintenance (Enzmann et al., 2003). Therefore, it is more likely to be performed through the significance attached to the behavior.

H2: Honor endorsement and aggressive behavior are positively correlated.

The learning context of honor norms is thereby assumed to transcend ethnic and national boundaries (Leung & Cohen, 2011). Even in Germany as a dignity culture, microcultures characterized by social disadvantage and marginalization show framework conditions for an organization through honor logic (Enzmann et al., 2003). Thus, we assume that the internalization of honor norms provides an explanation for aggressive behavior regardless of the (national) context in which these norms are acquired. This argumentation leads to the following hypothesis 3:

H3: The effect of internalization of honor norms on the performance of aggressive behavior is not moderated by migration background.

Because migration background and socioeconomic status (SES; Statistisches Bundesamt, 2021) are confounded, and SES is associated with the occurrence of aggressive behavior (Derzon, 2010), SES will be controlled for in the analyses.

Method

Sample

Data stem from the larger representative Communities That Care (CTC) survey, conducted from November 2021 to January 2022 in Lower Saxony, Germany (Soellner et al., 2023). The target population was students in grades six to eleven of all public and private regular schools and the first year of vocational schools. Stratified systematic sampling was used with grade and school type as stratification variables. After adjusting for individuals who did not report their or their parents' place of birth, data from 774 male students aged 11–18 years ($M = 15.37$; $SD = 1.78$) were used for the analysis. 65.8% of the students had no migration background, 3.7% had a Turkish, 7.1% a Russian, 2.3% a Polish background, and 21.1% a migration background that could not be further specified. The data were weighted according to grade level and school type.

Measures

Migration Background

Country of birth of the student and his parents was used to operationalize migration background. If Turkey was indicated at least once as the country of birth while Germany was selected for the remaining variables, the students were categorized as being of Turkish origin. The same procedure was used to classify students as having a Russian or Polish migration background. All other information led to the categorization of having an “*other migrant background*”.

Honor Endorsement

To measure honor the translated and adapted German version (Kollek & Soellner, 2023) of the honor scale from the Social Norms Survey (Frey et al., 2021) was used. The adapted scale consists of five items measuring negative reciprocity, retaliation, and permeable self-family boundaries as aspects of honor (e.g., “You should always punish those that betray you”). Students were asked to agree on a scale from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). The items were aggregated to a mean value. The omega coefficient of the scale is reported in the results section.

Socioeconomic Status

A German version (Lampert et al., 2018) of the MacArthur Scale for adolescents (Goodman et al., 2001) was used to assess socioeconomic status. Students were asked to rank their family on a yardstick meant to represent German society, ranging from 0 (*people with the least money, the lowest education, and the worst jobs or no job*) to 10 (*people with the most money, the highest education, and the best jobs*).

Aggressive Behavior

To assess students' aggressive behavior, items of the German translated and adapted version (Soellner et al., 2018) of the U.S. CTC survey (Arthur et al., 2002) were used. Aggressive behavior was assessed with four items. Students were asked if they had engaged in the following behaviors in the past 12 months (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*): intentionally breaking something that didn't belong to them, attacking someone, threatening someone, and sometimes carrying a weapon (such as a knife). The four items were aggregated into a sum score.

Implementation of the Survey

Classes were invited to participate through the school administration. Parents had to give prior consent for minors to participate in the survey. The survey was designed as an online classroom survey with a duration of one class period. Students were informed that their participation was voluntary, their answers would be treated anonymously, they could choose not to answer questions, and that data protection would be assured. The study was approved by the Ethical Committee of the University of Hildesheim.

Data Analysis

The statistical software R (v4.2.2; R Core Team, 2022) and the following packages were used: (a) psych (v2.2.9; Revelle, 2022) for the calculation of the descriptive statistics, (b) semTools (v0.5.6; Jorgensen et al., 2022) for the calculation of the omega coefficient, (c) AER (v1.2.10; Kleiber & Zeileis, 2008) to test the count outcome data for overdispersion, and (d) performance (v0.10.2; Lüdtke et al., 2021) to test the count outcome data for zero-inflation. The multiple regression model and the negative binomial generalized linear models (NB GLM) were calculated in MPlus (v8.9; Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017).

Student data were nested within classes (number of clusters = 122, mean cluster size = 6.34). Since 7.9% of the variance in honor endorsement ($ICC = 0.079$) could be attributed to between-class variance, a single-level analysis with standard errors adjusted for non-independence of observations was chosen for H1 to account for the nested structure. Less than 5% of the variance in aggressive behavior can be attributed to between-class differences, and thus the nested data structure can be neglected in the analyses of H2 and H3 (Heck et al., 2014).

Multiple regression was used to test H1. Migration background was dummy coded, with the group of students with no immigrant background as the reference category. Maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors (MLR) were used and missing data (6.01% of all cases) within this model were addressed using full information maximum likelihood (FIML).

To test H2 and H3, a moderation analysis was conducted with honor endorsement as the predictor, migration background (dummy-coded) as the moderator, and aggressive behavior as the criterion, while controlling for SES. The moderation model was cal-

culated in two steps. First, the main effects were analyzed before the interaction terms were included in the second step.

As the dependent variable consists of non-negative integer values representing the variety of aggressive behavior carried out in the past twelve months, the data are concentrated on a few small discrete values, here 0 to 4, and form a positively skewed heteroskedastic distribution. Thus, a count model was applied (Cameron & Trivedi, 2005).

Within the framework of a generalized linear model (GLM; McCullagh & Nelder, 1989) regression models for a variety of outcome variable types including count data can be handled. Since count data can follow different distributions, a multi-stage model selection procedure was first performed based on conducting score tests (for a description, see Walters, 2007). The data were overdispersed compared to the distribution assumptions of the Poisson GLM, with no excess of zeros expected by the negative binomial model. Hence, a NB GLM was selected (Walters, 2007). The NB regression model was fitted using MLR via Monte Carlo numerical integration. Missing data (20.28% of all cases) were handled with FIML.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics and internal consistency coefficient of the metric model variables are shown in Table 1. The honor scale items had a satisfactory level of reliability in the present study ($\omega = 0.78$). Skewness and kurtosis values indicated that SES and honor endorsement were approximately normally distributed, but the distribution of aggressive behavior was extremely skewed, with only 25.8% reporting having committed one or more violent acts in the past 12 months. Students reported a mean socioeconomic status above the midpoint of the scale at 6.37. On average, students tended to be somewhat

Table 1
Descriptive Analysis and Omega Coefficient (Unweighted Sample)

| | SES | Honor Endorsement | Aggressive Behavior |
|----------|-------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Mean | 6.37 | 1.5 | 0.43 |
| SD | 1.57 | 0.87 | 0.88 |
| Skewness | -0.28 | 0.17 | 2.35 |
| Kurtosis | 0.88 | -0.25 | 5.14 |
| Omega | - | 0.78 | - |

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables by Migration Background (Unweighted Sample)

| Variable | Without MB (n = 509) | | Turkish MB (n = 29) | | Russian MB (n = 55) | | Polish MB (n = 18) | | Other MB (n = 163) | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|------|------------------------|------|------------------------|------|-----------------------|------|-----------------------|------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| SES | 6.54 | 1.40 | 6.24 | 1.73 | 6.00 | 1.83 | 6.58 | 1.16 | 5.91 | 1.88 |
| Honor Endorsement | 1.46 | 0.84 | 2.02 | 0.97 | 1.82 | 0.90 | 1.38 | 0.94 | 1.61 | 0.88 |
| Aggressive Behavior | 0.39 | 0.82 | 0.74 | 1.26 | 0.57 | 1.07 | 0.50 | 0.86 | 0.46 | 0.90 |

Note. MB = Migration Background.

in disagreement to undecided with the aggregated honor scale ($M = 1.5$, $SD = 0.87$) and reported 0.43 ($SD = 0.88$) aggressive assaults in the period under review. Table 2 shows the sample sizes, means, and standard deviations for the model variables by migration background subgroups.

Main Analyses

Students with a Turkish and a Russian immigrant background approved of honor norms by 0.51 units ($SE(b) = 0.20$, $p = 0.012$) and by 0.35 units ($SE(b) = 0.12$, $p = 0.003$) more, respectively, than those without a migrant background (see Table 3). No differences in the internalization of honor norms were found between persons with a Polish migration background ($b = -0.03$, $SE(b) = 0.20$, $p = 0.887$) and persons with an unspecified migration background ($b = 0.23$, $SE(b) = 0.12$, $p = 0.064$) compared to those without a migration background.

Table 4 displays the results of the negative binomial regression for the main effects of honor endorsement and migration background (dummy-coded) on aggressive behavior, while controlling for SES. Adolescents' approval of honor norms was significantly positively related with the performance of aggressive behavior, $b = 0.70$, $SE(b) = 0.09$, $p < 0.001$. Holding all other variables constant, a one-unit increase in agreement with honor norms doubles the likelihood that a person will engage in aggressive

Table 3
Results for Multiple Linear Regression on Honor Endorsement

| Variable | b | 95% CI for b | | SE ^a | β |
|-------------------------|---------|--------------|------|-----------------|-------|
| | | LL | UL | | |
| Turkish MB ^b | 0.51* | 0.11 | 0.91 | 0.20 | 0.11 |
| Russian MB ^b | 0.35*** | 0.12 | 0.58 | 0.12 | 0.11 |
| Polish MB ^b | -0.03 | -0.42 | 0.36 | 0.20 | -0.01 |
| Other MB ^b | 0.23 | -0.01 | 0.47 | 0.12 | 0.11 |

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

^aComplex survey standard errors were computed using the Hubert-White sandwich estimator. ^bReference category is students without a migrant background. * $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.001$.

behavior, $exp(b) = 2.02$. Given equal SES and level of endorsement of honor norms, the frequency of aggressive behavior did not differ between migrant groups and students without migration background respectively (all $p > 0.140$).

In a second step, the interaction terms were included in the model (see Table 5). As hypothesized, none of the interaction terms were significant (all $p > 0.111$). The effect of honor endorsement on aggressive behavior thus not differs between each of the migrant groups and students without migration background.

Discussion

The present study investigated differences in the endorsement of honor norms among male adoles-

Table 4
Results for Negative Binomial Count Regression on Aggressive Behavior (Main Effects)

| Variable | b | 95% CI for b | | SE | exp(b) |
|---|---------|--------------|------|------|--------|
| | | LL | UL | | |
| SES (C ₁) | 0.05 | -0.06 | 0.16 | 0.05 | 1.05 |
| Honor Endorsement (X) | 0.70*** | 0.52 | 0.88 | 0.09 | 2.02 |
| Turkish MB ^a (W ₁) | 0.61 | -0.2 | 1.41 | 0.41 | 1.83 |
| Russian MB ^a (W ₂) | 0.01 | -0.50 | 0.52 | 0.26 | 1.01 |
| Polish MB ^a (W ₃) | 0.44 | -0.52 | 1.41 | 0.49 | 1.56 |
| Other MB ^a (W ₄) | 0.04 | -0.35 | 0.43 | 0.20 | 1.04 |

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; exp(b) = exponentiated regression coefficient. ^aReference category is students without a migrant background. *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 5
Results for Negative Binomial Count Regression on Aggressive Behavior (Conditional and Interaction Effects)

| Variable | <i>b</i> | 95% CI for <i>b</i> | | <i>SE</i> | <i>exp(b)</i> |
|------------------------------|----------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| | | <i>LL</i> | <i>UL</i> | | |
| SES (C1) | 0.04 | -0.06 | 0.15 | 0.05 | 1.05 |
| Honor Endorsement (X) | 0.75*** | 0.50 | 0.97 | 0.13 | 2.12 |
| Turkish MB ^a (W1) | 1.73* | 0.01 | 3.45 | 0.88 | 5.64 |
| Russian MB ^a (W2) | -0.38 | -1.95 | 1.19 | 0.80 | 0.68 |
| Polish MB ^a (W3) | 0.95 | -0.72 | 2.63 | 0.86 | 2.59 |
| Other MB ^a (W4) | 0.28 | -0.60 | 1.16 | 0.45 | 1.32 |
| X*W1 | -0.58 | -1.29 | 0.13 | 0.36 | 0.56 |
| X*W2 | 0.17 | -0.48 | 0.82 | 0.33 | 1.18 |
| X*W3 | -0.32 | -1.03 | 0.38 | 0.36 | 0.72 |
| X*W4 | -0.13 | -0.55 | 0.30 | 0.22 | 0.88 |

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; *exp(b)* = exponentiated regression coefficient. ^aReference category is students without a migrant background. **p* < 0.05. ****p* < 0.001.

cents in Germany either with or without a migration background. Further, the relation of approving of these norms and behaving aggressively was examined. It was also questioned whether this relation applies to adolescents independent of their migration backgrounds. Students with Russian and Turkish migrant backgrounds were found to internalize norms of honor on average higher than students without migration background, whereas adolescents of Polish origin did not differ from students without migrant backgrounds. Approving of honor norms turned out to be positively related to behaving aggressively over all groups. It is worth noting that the effect of honor endorsement on aggressive behavior did not differ between students from different migration backgrounds and students without a migration background.

In line with the assumption that Turkey and Russia are closer to the cultural logic of honor (Friedrichs et al., 2016; Uskul et al., 2019), the present findings indicate a higher adherence to honor norms among young Turkish and Russian migrants in Germany. So, honor related values seem to endure migration at least for some time. Since norms are highly dependent on social expectations, they will persist simply by assuming that they are still valid and desirable in the social environment (Vandello et al., 2008), and independent of the norm orientation of the actual residential country. Furthermore, in the sense of segmented assimilation theory (Portes & Zhou, 1993), migrants might assimilate to the specific segment of German society to which they migrate. Since norms vary across social segments, in the context of higher levels of poverty and social deprivation among migrants in Germany (Statistisches Bunde-

samt, 2021), norms of honor might still be evaluated as functional and thus, normative assimilation seems to appear less necessary. Contrary to expectations, students with a Polish migrant background agreed with honor norms at the same level as students without a migration background. This might reflect the above-average integration of the Polish migrant group into the labor market and society (Loew, 2017), but could also be an artefact due to a lack of statistical power (*n* = 18).

The internalization of honor norms was significantly associated with self-reported aggressive behavior in male youth, independent of the migration background. Thus, the results suggest that a socially conferred self-worth and strong reciprocity ties are similarly associated with aggressive behavior, regardless of the (national) context in which they were acquired. Hence, the endorsement of honor is one conditional, psychological factor for explaining aggressive behavior. It is therefore important to shed light on the conditions under which honor norms develop, especially in Germany, which is moreover regarded as a normative culture of dignity. One developmental condition is the reliability of and trust in social institutions in the local context (Nowak et al., 2016). The subjectively perceived effectiveness of or trust in public institutions is in turn influenced by socialization processes and individual life situations and might therefore vary widely even within one national culture. In a German sample, trust in institutions was found to be strongly related to educational status, with the less educated being less likely to report trust in institutions (Karnick et al., 2021). Additionally, it was found that across ethnic groups, such honor norms generally emerge among young

people in Germany in the context of social disadvantage and marginalization (Enzmann et al., 2003). Therefore, social deprivation, low educational attainment, and low levels of trust in public institutions, seem to foster norms of honor to emerge.

Finally, it is necessary to consider the specifics of the age group in question. Adolescents' social worlds are becoming larger, more diverse, and more peer-oriented, and peer affiliation is an important source of status (Agnew, 2003). Forming or participating in youth groups organized around norms of honor may offer incentives such as easily identifiable role models in a hierarchical organization, the provision of protection, and the opportunity to exercise power and control over others, particularly in the context of male adolescents' search for identity and orientation (Somech & Elizur, 2009). This may be reinforced by an environment of low social status, where resources are scarce and opportunities to provide masculinity in prosocial ways (e.g., as a provider) are limited (Somech & Elizur, 2009). Thus, under conditions of social exclusion and marginalization, honor norms might develop as milieu-specific forms of organization among young males in order to cope with developmental tasks typical of adolescence (Enzmann et al., 2003).

Limitation and Future Directions

The cross-sectional design does not allow for inferences about causality between the variables studied. The current design only allows for the identification of potential risks that need to be further confirmed for validity based on evidence from longitudinal studies. Also, the sole use of self-reports may have overestimated the effects found in terms of shared method variance. The survey is embedded in the context of primary prevention needs planning and thus provides a low-threshold definition of aggressive behavior. It remains to be examined whether the internalization of honor norms is also suitable for predicting recidivism among officially registered juvenile violent offenders and thus extreme groups. Furthermore, in this analytical model, honor norms were considered as the only influencing factor. Thus, it remains to be seen whether the endorsement of honor norms contributes to the explanation of aggressive behavior when tested in a more complex explanatory model that includes broader risk factors.

Because honor norms may be differently related to coping with typical adolescent developmental tasks in specific milieus, further research is needed on the

persistence of these norms during the transition to adulthood or, more generally, on possible changes over the course of aging. In particular, since perceived peer attitudes and behaviors form the basis of social norms that influence how adolescents behave (Cotter & Smokowski, 2015), the individual and peer-level internalization of these norms in predicting aggressive behavior should be analyzed. This knowledge is relevant for designing effective preventive interventions, as they may indicate to prioritize peer group settings.

Implications

The findings suggest that studying cultural group differences, usually by equating nation and culture, should be done carefully in order to not overgeneralize across national groups. That is to say, divergent norms in subgroups of supposedly homogeneous societies might exist, e.g., honor as the predominant logic in segments of classified broader dignity cultures. The attribution of certain norms and their association with criminal conduct as valid only for migrant groups should also be handled sensitively, as it can promote stigmatization. This is particularly relevant in the context under consideration, as notions of honor are primarily studied in the context of aggressive behavior and crime, and thus seem to have negative connotations, while the theorized warm side of honor with politeness and great positive reciprocity rarely receives attention (Aslani et al., 2013). In principle, it is necessary to recognize the functionality of this normative system within the social and ecological context in which it emerges.

In terms of preventing honor-related violence, it may be advisable to target program audiences based on their level of internalization of honor norms, rather than pre-selecting individuals from a particular cultural background. Although students from Turkish and Russian backgrounds endorsed higher honor norms on average than students without a migration background, the internalization of these norms was found to be a proxy for violence regardless of cultural origin.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study provides a comprehensive examination of honor endorsement and its relation to self-reported aggressive behavior in a culturally diverse sample of male adolescents in

Germany. The results show that although agreement with honor norms differs between groups according to migration background, its explanatory contribution and thus its potential predictive power for aggressive behavior is equivalent for all groups. Given the same level of honor endorsement, the likelihood of aggressive behavior is independent of migration background. The endorsement of honor norms, thus, emerge as a generally relevant value-based risk factor for the perpetration of aggressive behavior among male adolescents.

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Bio Sketches

Marie Kollek, Ph.D. candidate at the Division of Evaluation and Research Methods, Department of Psychology at the University of Hildesheim, conducts cross-cultural research on risk and protective factors for adolescent externalizing problem behavior and the concept of mental disorder.

Dr. Renate Soellner, Professor for Methodology at the University of Hildesheim and Head of the Division “Evaluation and Research Methods”, is engaged in the research on evaluation of health prevention programs and juvenile substance use.