

Homicide Followed by Suicide in India: A Review

Suraj Sundaragiri¹, Chaitanya Mittal²

Abstract

Violent unnatural deaths is a major menace of the society in India. The worst are those of Homicide-Suicides. Homicide followed by the suicide is a relatively rare act in which the perpetrator kills another person and subsequently commits suicide. The motives and circumstances that provoke the perpetrator to commit the crime may vary. This article by an integrated approach intend to describe the victim-perpetrator relationship, motivating factors and the cause of death of such cases of homicide-suicide reported in India which are documented in the literature.

Keywords: Homicide; Suicide; Dyadic Deaths; Perpetrator; Cause of Death.

Introduction

Dyadic death comprises both suicide pacts and homicide-suicide incidents [1]. Homicide-suicide denote an event of homicide by perpetrator, followed by his suicide almost immediately or soon after the homicide [2]. They are relatively uncommon and factors responsible and mode of implication vary from region to region [1]. The causes are multifactorial such as extramarital affair, mental illness, work stress, financial problems, domestic disputes etc. [3-5]. Majority of cases occurred between intimate partners, and parents and children. Males were the vast majority of the perpetrators and females being major victim [3-6]. In the study of Subba Reddy K et al., according to cases referred to National Criminal Record Bureau data of India 2014, 72 cases were considered in which perpetrator committed murder followed by suicide almost immediately or within a week. 91.66% (n=66) perpetrators were males and the remaining 8.34% (n=6) were females.

Author's Affiliation: ¹Senior Resident, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education & Research, Puducherry 605006, India. ²Senior Resident, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Jodhpur, Rajasthan 342005, India.

Corresponding Author: Suraj Sundaragiri, Senior Resident, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education & Research, Puducherry 605006, India.

E-mail: drsrajfm@gmail.com

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Majority of crimes (45.83%) were committed by perpetrators of age group 15-30 years and 37.50% by 30-45 years age group, 12.50% by 0-15 year age group and least was observed in above 45 years age group (4.16%). The major reasons for the murder-suicide were infidelity and domestic disputes were (44.44%). Apart from this financial instability and debts also contributed as the major factor (34.72%), Stress (13.88%) and influence of addictive drugs (6.94%) were additional reasons for committing murder suicides [5]. As we could find any study with an integrated approach to such cases of homicide followed by suicide. This article makes an attempt to integrate and describe cases of homicide-suicide in India which are documented in the literature.

Literature

Although research and reports pertaining to homicide-suicide are existing in many countries [1,2,6,7], only few are reported in India. The details are review are presented in Table 1.

Filicide-suicide is a special group of homicide-suicide where the victim(s) are children and the perpetrator being one of the parents or both [8]. In a study by Gupta BD et al. in Gujarat state from 2000 to 2004 reported 8 cases, in which 8 mothers committed murder of their children (age group of 6 months to 7 years) involving 10 female and 3 male victims, followed by their suicide. Methods of implication was either burning or drowning. The main motive for killing was family matters. History

Author	Victim-Perpetrator Relationship	Reason/ motive	Cause of death of victim	Cause of death of perpetrator
Gupta BD et al.9 (2008)	Mother (Eight Cases)	Family and family related matters, History of depression of the mother due to her previous miscarriage	Burning and Drowning	Burning and Drowning
Bardale R et al.10 (2010)	1. Mother 2. Mother 3. Mother	Mental illness Family disputes Family disputes and financial problem	Hanging Drowning Drowning	Hanging Drowning Drowning
Behera C et al.11 (2015)	Mother	Dowry harassment	Hanging	Hanging
Gadhari RK et al.12 (2015)	Mother	Marital quarrel and Dowry harassment	Drowning	Drowning
Garg S et al.13 (2009)	Father	Extramarital affair	Poisoning	Poisoning
Dhawane SG et al.14 (2007)	1. Husband cum father 2. Father 3. Father 4. Husband cum father 5. Father	Suspicion of infidelity Wife's denial to give money to consume alcohol Mental illness Domestic quarrel Domestic quarrel	Stabbing Fall from height Strangulation Strangulation Fall from height	Jumping in front of truck Fall from height Hanging Fire arm injury Fall from height
Bhengra A et al.15 (2017)	Husband	Suspicion of infidelity	Head Injury	Hanging
Ghormade PS et al.16 (2011)	1. Husband 2. Husband 3. Lover	Financial problems Domestic quarrel on unemployment Love failure	Stab Injury Strangulation Cut throat	Stab Injury Hanging Hanging
Chaudhari VA et al.17 (2016)	Lover	Monitory dispute	Fire arm injury	Fire arm injury
Behera C et al.18 (2009)	Brother-in-law	Frustration from love failure (rejection)	Fire arm injury	Fire arm injury

of depression of the mother due to miscarriage was reported in a case [9]. Bardale R et al. reported three cases of filicide. In first case, 26 years aged mother killed 18 months old daughter and committed suicide by hanging due to some mental illness. In other case, due to some family dispute, mother aged 33 years drowned her 6 years old daughter and later drowned herself. In third case, 22 years old mother killed his son aged 18 months and committed suicide by drowning due to family dispute and financial problem [10]. Case of double homicidal hanging by the mother aged 28-year-old of children, daughter aged 3 ½ years and son aged 2 years followed by her suicidal hanging, was reported by Behera C et al. in 2015 [11]. Gadhari RK et al. reported a case of 26 year old mother who committed suicide by drowning after killing her 2 sons aged 4 years and 2 years respectively by throwing them in the well water [12].

In a case reported by Garg S et al. father poisoned his two children and later poisoned

himself by consuming Aluminum phosphide due to unfaithfulness of his wife [13]. Dhawane SG et al. reported 5 case series. In first case, due of suspicion of infidelity of wife, a 28-year man committed suicide by jumping before a running truck after stabbing his wife and two sons (aged 2 and 4 years). In another case, a 30-year father after throwing his 3-year son and 10 months daughter in the well committed suicide by jumping in the same well, out of anger as wife's denial to give money to consume alcohol. In third case, under mental illness, a middle aged widower man committed suicide by hanging after strangulating his 7 and 14 years daughters. In forth case, perpetrator in domestic quarrel shot himself after strangulating his 2-year daughter and wife. In last case, due to some domestic quarrel, a middle aged father committed homicide by throwing his 6 years son and 8 years daughter in well and committed suicide by jumping in the same well [14].

In a case reported by Bhengra A et al., a 37-year man killed his 34-year wife by the hitting with saline stand on suspicion of infidelity and later committed suicide by hanging [15]. In three case series reported by Ghormade PS et al., husband aged 39 years stabbed his wife aged 34 years and daughter aged 13 years and later stabbed himself due to financial burden. In second case, due to domestic quarrel on unemployment, husband (25 years) strangulated his wife (21 years) and hung himself. And in third case, boyfriend (22 years) cut the throat of his lover (19 years) and later hung himself [16]. In a case reported by Chaudhari VA, a forty-year-old male shot his lover forty-eight-year-old female due to some monetary dispute and committed suicide by shooting himself [17]. In a case reported by Behera C et al. in 2009, 25-year old brother-in-law shot a 21-year-old girl with locally-made pistol, and later, shot himself with the same gun. The reason being extreme frustration of rejection of his love by her [18].

The observations noticed from the documented cases of homicide-suicide in India suggest common victim-perpetrator relationship, motives and cause of death. The common perpetrators involved were mother, father, husband and lover. The common motives observed were domestic quarrel, family disputes, extramarital affair, love failure and financial problem. Death by asphyxia (strangulation, hanging, drowning) was common cause of death in both perpetrators and victims, followed by other causes like fall from height, fire arm injury, stab injury and poisoning.

Conclusion

Though frequency of homicide-suicide is uncommon, they reflect many facts and facets of life in society. For investigating officer, as the offender is no more, it is suffice to make appropriate investigations and close the case file. But for betterment of society, there should be social, psychological and psychiatric investigations to prevent or reduce the further occurrence of such incidences. Both targeted prevention efforts for prone victims and perpetrators and maintaining an awareness of the increased risk of Homicide-Suicide are needed.

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Ethical clearance

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