



ISSN: 0975-833X

RESEARCH ARTICLE

HOMICIDE FOLLOWED BY SUICIDE-A CASE REPORT

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 29th July, 2013
Received in revised form
15th August, 2013
Accepted 05th September 2013
Published online 10th October 2013

Key words:

Homicide followed by suicide,
Dyadic death,
Poisoning.

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ABSTRACT

Homicide followed by suicide (Dyadic death) is a severe form of interpersonal violence, in the present study the perpetrator was male who served poison mixed in cold drink to his children and spouse and consumed poison himself to end their lives. In the present study as per police inquiry (inquest report) the cause behind the Dyadic death was financial insecurity where the father and two daughters died but mother and her son survived in the incidence, the reason was that the daughters obeyed the father and they drank the cold drink served to them without questioning. But son and his mother taken drink in less amount as the taste was unusual and they survived. These Dyadic deaths are less common as compared to suicide and homicide alone as per several studies. Here we present a case of homicide followed by suicide between family members by consuming poison.

INTRODUCTION

Homicide followed by suicide is a relatively rare lethal incident in which an individual kills another and subsequently dies by suicide, usually shortly after the homicide.¹Homicide Suicide (HS) relatively infrequent event yet they are of great concern because they often result in the death of family members, young children and cause additional morbidity, family disruption and childhood psychological trauma. Homicide Suicide was defined as a violent event in which an individual committed Homicide and subsequently committed suicide within a few hours in most of the cases.² The major reasons of dyadic death are: breakdown in a relationship, mental and somatic diseases and financial stress. Very uncommon in dyadic death are cases of murder of people from the outside the closest family.³ Although the rate of combined homicide-suicides is low compared with that for suicide alone or homicide, homicide-suicides generate much public concern. In some cases, the homicide-suicide involves annihilation of an entire family or multiple non-family members. A difficult phenomenon to study--in part because the perpetrator is dead--it is, nonetheless, crucial to attempt to advance our understanding of this tragic phenomenon from a psychiatric view⁴. In the early 1960s, 15% of Finnish homicide offenders committed suicide after the crime. In 1998–2000, this ratio was 6%. The downward trend was due to the increase in non-suicidal homicide, as well as to a substantial decrease in the general homicide-suicide rate. The findings indicate that the percentage and the rate of homicide-suicide have been consistently highest among middle classes and lowest among the unemployed and working classes. Victim-offender relationship, stressful life events, and alcohol consumption are discussed as explanations for this stable social difference⁵.Homicides followed by the suicide of the perpetrator are a rare yet very serious form of interpersonal violence that occurs mainly in partnerships and families⁶. Murder-suicides have impacts that extend far beyond their numbers in causing trauma to families, neighbors, co-workers and communities.

Murder-suicides fall into several discrete patterns, most of which involve domestic violence or disputes in school or the workplace. Yet little is known about their actual incidence, underlying causes, or the means by which they could be predicted and prevented⁷.A father who drowned his daughter and then killed himself over the breakdown of his marriage left a lengthy note desperately justifying his actions⁸. Murder-suicide is occurring with alarming frequency among the elderly. A 93-year-old man reportedly stabbed his 95-year-old wife to death early Wednesday morning in their south Kansas City, Mo. home. Then he tried to stab himself in the chest, but failed to kill himself and woke up in the hospital⁹. Homicide-suicides are a rare yet very serious form of lethal violence which mainly occurs in partnerships and families. The extent to which homicide-suicide can be understood as being primarily a homicide or a suicide event; or rather a category of its own is examined¹⁰.

Case Report

A nuclear family comprising of father(48 Yrs),mother(44 Yrs) and three children two daughter elder one was 17 years, younger one was 14 years and one son aged 15 years old. They were student of class 10th, 8th and 9th standard respectively. They planned to visit Varanasi to worship Lord Shiva (Baba Vishwanath). They reached Varanasi on 14th March 2011 in the morning from Ghazipur (Uttar Pradesh).After darshan and Poojan they went to a restaurant near by temple and ordered for Puri and Sabji in the mean time head of the family i.e. father of children went outside the restaurant and came with cold drink bottle and plastic glass and served the drink to all mixed with white powder and asked to finish the drink. While saying this he became unconscious followed by his wife and children and taken to nearby government hospital with the help of nearby people and restaurant owner. When the investigating officer reached the hospital he came to know that three out of five family members died i.e. father and two daughter and diseased were taken to Department of Forensic Medicine, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University for Post-mortem Examination after completion of inquest report.

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Autopsy Finding

External Examination-Three bodies were that of one adult male (father) and two female children (daughter). There was no evidence of any external injury on these bodies. Rigor mortis present all over the body of all three deceased. Postmortem staining present on back except pressure point, fingernails and lip cyanosed in all three bodies.

Internal Examination-In all the three cases the visceral and vital organs were congested.

Case 1-Stomach content in male was 150ml brownish colour fluid with oily droplets, mucosa was severely congested and submucosal haemorrhage at places found. No untoward smell from the stomach content. Mucosa of oesophagus found congested. Oral cavity full of food particles as was regurgitated due to gaseous accumulation in the abdomen.

Case2-Stomach content in case of elder daughter was 35 ml brownish colour fluid with oily droplets mucosa was severely congested and submucosal haemorrhage at places. No untoward smell from the stomach content.

Case3-Stomach content in case of younger daughter was 80 ml brownish colour fluid with pieces of gram and puri. Mucous membrane severely congested and submucosal haemorrhage found at places. No untoward smell from the stomach content. In both the female the uterus was non gravid. In all the three cases routine viscera(stomach with its content,30 cm of first part of small intestine,500 gm of liver with gall bladder, half of each kidney and spleen) was preserved in saturated common salt solution in wide mouth glass jar for chemical analysis, and a sample of common salt in separate small plastic jar for control.

DISCUSSION

A homicide/suicide cluster was defined as one or more homicide with the subsequent suicide of the perpetrator that occurred in Kentucky from 1985-1990. Of the 67 homicide/suicide clusters included 80 homicides; seven clusters involved multiple homicides. Firearms were used in both the homicide and suicide in 63 (94%) homicide/suicide cluster¹¹. Homicide-suicide forms a distinct form of homicide. An analysis of cases in Yorkshire and Humberside region of England between 1991-2005 revealed 37 episodes with 42 victims. Studies have shown high rates of use of firearms which is in contrast to the present study¹². Homicide by hanging is rare. In one study done by Lew E.O. a young man stabbed his wife, hanged his son and then hanged himself. He was assumed to be mentally ill¹³. Murder-Suicide, homicide suicide and dyadic death all refer to an incident where a homicide is committed followed by the perpetrator's suicide almost immediately or soon after the homicide. Homicide-suicide are relatively uncommon and vary from region to region, here shooting was the common method of killing and suicide which is in contrast to the present study¹⁴. In dyadic deaths, a second victim acts in consort with, in association with or is killed by a person who, contemporaneous with the first death, then suicides. Dyadic death thus includes both homicide-suicides and suicide pact¹⁵. In England and Wales 5-10 per cent of homicides are followed by the suicide of the assailant. There were 65 victims, who were usually the spouse and/or children of the killer. Shooting was the most frequent method of killing and subsequent suicide¹⁶. In the present study killing was due to financial insecurity as per police investigation but according to their relative there was no such reason. Here also like other study perpetrator was male and perpetrator and victim closely known to each other (family member i.e. spouse and children). Homicide followed by suicide (referred to as "homicide-suicide) incidents are rare events but can have profound impact on families and communities¹⁷.

A small fraction of all homicides are followed by the immediate suicide of perpetrator (HS hereafter), sometimes including multiple victims¹⁸. In the present case, the male perpetrator poisoned their whole family comprising of wife two daughters and one son, perpetrator (father) and their two daughters died before reaching to the hospital. Here mother and son survived because of consumption of less amount of poison mixed in cold drink as comes in police inquiry as the taste of drink was bitter and unusual and it was also stated that this was resulted because of financial insecurity.

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