Case Report

A REPORT OF DYADIC DEATH WITH MOTHER AS PERPETRATOR
Dr. RK Gadhari, Dr. NA Devraj, Dr. AG Pathak, Dr. KM Chaudhari

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Abstract-
Murder-suicide also referred to as homicide-suicide or dyadic death referred to an incident where a homicide is committed followed by perpetrator’s suicide almost immediately or soon after the homicide. Homicide-suicides are relatively uncommon and vary from region to region. This is a report of a homicide-suicide of a mother and her 2 children below 5 years of age.

Keywords- dyadic death, homicide-suicide, drowning.

Introduction
Murder-suicide also referred to as homicide-suicide or dyadic death referred to an incident where a homicide is committed followed by perpetrator’s suicide almost immediately or soon after the homicide. Homicide-suicides are relatively uncommon and vary from region to region\(^1\),\(^2\),\(^3\). So in situations, where murder has occurred and perpetrator has found dead at the scene, the most likely scenario is that this represents homicide-suicide or dyadic death\(^1\),\(^4\),\(^5\). Marzuk et al. classified murder-suicide as a homicide followed by the suicide of the assailant within a week, typical cases where the victim and assailant are known and suicide of the assailant rapidly follows the killing of the victim\(^1\),\(^3\). The Hanzlick-Koponen typology has the following special classifications, which can be divided into 2 broad categories: single victim and multiple victim events\(^3\),\(^6\).

Drowning is form of death in which the atmospheric air is prevented from entering the lungs due to submersion of the body in water or any other fluid medium. Sometimes people who commit suicide by drowning tie their hands and feet together or attach heavy weight to their person before plunging into water. Injuries are generally absent but may be found on the body coming accidentally into violent contact with a hard object during a fall in the water\(^7\). Majority of deaths due to drowning are either by an accident or by suicide\(^8\).

Case report-
A 26 year old married Hindu female committed suicide by drowning after killing her 2 sons aged 4 years and 2 years respectively by throwing them in the well water. Bodies were brought for postmortem examination at Government Medical College, Dhule.

Postmortem findings in mother-
1. External examination- clothes were intact and wet. Hands and legs not tied. Cyanosis was present over finger nail beds. On pressing the chest, typical froth of drowning (white, lathery, tenacious, copious, blood tinged) oozed out from nostrils. No injuries were present.
2. Internal examination- Larynx, trachea and bronchi were intact; mucosa was congested and showing fine white froth. Both lungs were intact, congested, voluminous, heavy and edematous. Rib markings present over surfaces of both lungs. On cut sections of both lungs showed blood tinged froth oozing through the cut surfaces of lungs. Weights- right-500gm, left- 450gm. Stomach was intact, contains about 250cc watery fluid, no peculiar smell, mucosa congested. No injury to internal organs. Uterus was non-gravid. No disease pathology was present.
3. Blood and viscera samples were preserved for chemical analysis. Report of chemical analysis did not reveal any poison in the samples. Based on postmortem findings and report of chemical analysis cause of death was given as asphyxia due to drowning.

Postmortem findings in son aged 4 years-
1. External examination- clothes were intact and wet. Hands and legs not tied. Cyanosis was present over finger nail beds. Typical froth of drowning (white, lathery, tenacious, copious, blood tinged) was oozing from nostrils. No injuries were present.
2. Internal examination- Larynx, trachea and bronchi were intact; mucosa was congested and showing fine white froth. Both lungs were intact, congested, voluminous, heavy and edematous. Rib markings present over surfaces of both lungs. On cut sections of both lungs showed blood tinged froth oozing through the cut surfaces of lungs. Weights- right-250gm, left- 200gm. Stomach was intact, contains about 100cc watery fluid, no peculiar smell, mucosa congested. No injury to internal organs.
3. Blood and viscera samples were preserved for chemical analysis. Report of chemical analysis did not reveal any poison in the samples. Based on postmortem findings and report of chemical analysis cause of death was given as asphyxia due to drowning.
Postmortem findings in son aged 2 years-

1. External examination- clothes were intact and wet. Hands and legs not tied. Cyanosis was present over finger nail beds. Typical froth of drowning (white, lathery, tenacious, copious, blood tinged) was oozing from nostrils. No injuries were present. Internal examination- Larynx, trachea and bronchi were intact; mucosa was congested and showing fine white froth. Both lungs were intact, congested, voluminous, heavy and edematous. (Photo 5- autopsy photograph of victim son aged 2 years with pulmonary edema) Rib markings present over surfaces of both lungs. On cut sections of both lungs showed blood tinged froth oozing through the cut surfaces of lungs. Weights- right-220gm, left- 170gm. Stomach was intact, contains about 150cc watery fluid, no peculiar smell, mucosa congested. No injury to internal organs.

2. Blood and viscera samples were preserved for chemical analysis. Report of chemical analysis did not reveal any poison in the samples.

Based on postmortem findings and report of chemical analysis cause of death was given as asphyxia due to drowning.

Discussion:

In these cases a bizarre dyadic death was perpetrated by a married lady who was housewife, and was from lower socioeconomic strata, residing in a small village. She committed suicide immediately after throwing her 2 sons into the well. The postmortem interval was same (6 to 12 hours) in all the 3 dead bodies. History revealed that she was not under any kind of psychiatric treatment. No suicide note was found. History of marital quarrels/cruelty to married lady regarding dowry was present. So, it was found that she was under some kind of stress since a week before the tragic event. Her husband who was a daily wage worker used to earn a meager income and was alcoholic. She used to live separately from her in-laws. After we issued the postmortem report the police authorities recorded a case under 306 IPC for abetment of suicide and section 498 of IPC for cruelty towards married woman against her husband and in-laws and a case of murder of her 2 children against her under section 302 of IPC.

Table 1: showing details about victims, accused and cause of death-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perpetrator</th>
<th>Relationship of victim with perpetrator</th>
<th>Cause of death (victim)</th>
<th>Cause of death (perpetrator)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Elder son 26 years, Elder son 4 years, Younger son 2 years</td>
<td>Asphyxia due to drowning</td>
<td>Asphyxia due to drowning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Milroy et al had reported that of 52 cases of homicide-suicide pact studied, common causes are breakdown in a relationship (46%), mental illness (21%), physical ill-health (11%), financial stress (10%)\(^3^9\). Bossarte et al observed that shooting (80.4%), sharp weapon injuries (11%), hanging (6%), poisoning (4%), fall from height (3%), burns (1%) and vehicular injuries are common methods of suicide in perpetrators of dyadic deaths\(^3^10\). In the Indian scenario financial burden and marital disharmony are the principal reasons for dyadic
deaths. Such suicidal tendencies are now commonly seen in farmers due to agrarian crisis and unemployed youths making them vulnerable populations.\textsuperscript{3,11,12} Bardale et al reported 2 different cases of dyadic deaths in which perpetrator were married mothers who committed suicide by drowning in water and killed their children aged 18 months and 6 years by throwing them into the waters respectively.\textsuperscript{13} The reason being family dispute and financial hardship similar to our case report. Gupta S et al,\textsuperscript{14} Dhawane SG et al\textsuperscript{15} and Gupta BD et al\textsuperscript{16} had described homicide-suicide episodes involving male as a perpetrator but only few reports with mother as perpetrator had been published.\textsuperscript{13,17} In our case the perpetrator killed not one but two immediate family members.

When comparing homicides with dyadic deaths, research suggests that the perpetrator is more likely to commit the later when the motive is related to possessiveness, jealousy, sickness or stress and these incidents are more likely to be premeditated than a homicide alone.\textsuperscript{18}

**References:**