

A STUDY OF ARRANGED HOMICIDE – SUICIDE PACT, IS A PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT OR RESPONSIBILITY OF MODERNIZATION?

Dr. Mohammed Iliyas Sheikh

Professor and Head, Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, Surat Municipal Institute of Medical Education & Research (SMIMER), Surat (Gujarat) India

Submitted on: June 2017
Accepted on: July 2017
For Correspondence
Email ID:
rmiliyas@gmail.com

Abstract:

The million-dollar question always rises when in this era of modernization, the human life as well as its surrounding atmosphere does not suit to live life comfortably. This is a bitter truth that human being never satisfied with what we have and we try to get more and more. We are not satisfied with our resource that's why we are planning to establish satellite stations and continuously in the search of new land in the universe as well as planning to develop residential plans on the moon and other places in the universe.

Modernization is carried out to make the human life comfortable and make a person to live life in whatever way he thinks so. To enjoy life every person is doing his/her efforts to his maximum capability, by working day and night in his work place, doing extra time job, investing money in property, mutual funds as well as in shares.

With all possible efforts, his/her life could not be so comfortable or because of various investments there may be burden of loans after word, he/she unable to live his life as enjoyable as he/she wants to enjoy. These all may result in mental, economical and social instability and may result in homicidal / suicidal tendency. **Context:** suicidal deaths are increasing now a day. The center is receiving many cases every day for medicolegal postmortem examination either death of individual or death in group. This makes me to have the study on these groups because such type of study has not been carried out commonly.

Aims: looking in to the magnitude of increasing group deaths I have choose this study to find out the causative factor or precipitating circumstances resulting in death of many people. **Results:** In present study 20 groups of homicide - suicide pact have been included. Incidences were commonly taking place in the months of January, April, and May. Maximum number of cases was resulted by the involvement of female and all were married and of young adult age group 21 -30 years. Commonly mother and children were involved and poisoning was the commonest mode of death followed by drowning. Middle of the month i.e.11 – 20 days is the peak duration for these types of deaths.

Keyword: Modernization, arranged homicide, suicide, family burden, psychological disturbances, poisoning

Introduction:

Suicide – the intentional killing of oneself⁽¹⁾. Present study is carried out at tertiary referral care center, Surat. Surat is a cosmopolitan industrial hub, one of the fast-developing cities of the country having ZERO percent unemployment. Here people come almost from all corners of the country as well as Non-Indian residents for their livelihood earning or for the purpose of business or investment. They work at various levels from labor class to executives.

Peoples here are having different economical, social, ethnical, cultural and religious backgrounds. All factors produce positive or negative affect on him as well as persons residing in the surrounding of these people. people those are enough strong to cop up with the situations producing momentary mental disturbances and make the alterative solution of that situation but those are unable to adjust or manage themselves in that situation may try to harm others or try to end life of himself or of the family. When he/she tries to end life alone or he/she may have thought what about the family members after him? Then first he/she kill the other family members then commit suicide or in group they decide to end life together by poisoning/ drowning / burns etc.

Types of suicide:

1. **Suicide pact** – when two more individuals are agreed on a plan to die together or separately in closely timed period. It usually involved a small group of peoples such as married couple or person in love together, family members or friends or small groups of trusted people and is having individual or persona motive.⁽²⁾
2. **Mass suicide** – when a large number of people kill themselves together for same ideological reason or in religious or political or military or paramilitary circumstances. Suicide missions, suicide bombers or Kamikizes are few examples

of mass suicides. Sometimes it is used as for political protest.⁽³⁾

3. Internet suicide – a suicide pact is negotiated over the internet often between complete strangers.⁽⁴⁾

Legal Provisions in India⁽⁵⁾

IPC 305 - Abetment of suicide – Provides punishment for abetment of suicide of a child or insane person with death sentence / imprisonment up to life / up to 10 years or fine.

IPC 306 - Abetment of suicide – Provides punishment for abetment of suicide with imprisonment of either description up to 10 years or fine.

IPC 309 - Suicide attempt – Provides punishment for attempt to commit suicide with imprisonment up to 1 year / fine or both.

Historical aspects:

1. Before the Greek war of Independence, to avoid capture by opponent, women from the Souli, committed mass suicide by jumping over the precipice after through their children.⁶
2. During the late 2nd century BC when the Teutons are were then defeated by Gaius Marius in 102 BC at the Battle of Aquae Sextiae. Their King, Teutobod was taken in irons. The captured women committed mass suicide, which passed into Roman legends of Germanic heroism, by the conditions of the surrender three hundred of their married women were to be handed over to the Romans. When the Teuton matrons heard of this stipulation they first begged the consul that they might be set apart to minister in the temples of Ceres and Venus; and then when they failed to obtain their request and were removed by the lictors , they slew their children and next morning were all found dead in each other's arms having strangled themselves in the night.⁷
3. In the first century A.D, 960 members of the Sicarii Jewish community at Masada, committed suicide, the man

“A study of arranged homicide – Suicide pact, is a psychological aspect or responsibility of modernization?”

first killed his wife and children, then the men drew lots and killed each other until the last man killed himself.¹⁷

4. In ancient India, the Rajput communities in Rajasthan have practiced the mass suicides known as Jauhar in order to avoid capture, dishonor and forced conversion after defeat in the battle. Commonly practiced by females and children. The best-known cases of Jauhar are the three occurrences at the fort of Chittaur in Rajasthan, in 1303, in 1535, and 1568.¹³
5. In fear of capture from advancing Red Army about 900 people of Demmin, Germany committed mass suicide in April & May 1945.¹⁰
6. Japan is well known from centuries for its suicide tradition, from seppuku ceremonial self-disemboweling to kamikaze warriors flying their aircraft into American warships during World War II. During that same war on the island of Saipan hundreds of trapped Japanese committed mass suicide rather than surrender to the invading American forces.¹¹
7. In 1978, under the direction of head of Peoples Temple Jim Jones, 913 people were died in Jonestown, Guyana.¹²
8. The order of the Solar Temple, 74 people was committed mass suicide in Switzerland in 1994. 9,10
9. In 1997 near San Diego of California, the Heaven's Gate mass suicide occurred in a hilltop mansion. 39 people were died in a series of suicide over three days.
10. On 17 March 2000, more than 800 members of Ugandan cult Movement for the restoration of the Ten Commandments of the God were mass murdered and mass suicide orchestrated by the leaders of the cult.¹⁶

Forced Suicide:

1. In ancient Greece and Rome forced suicide was common mean of execution. It was considered as

aristocrat death sentence. The victims either drink hemlock or fall on their swords.

2. Death of the popular philosopher Socrates probably the most famous forced suicide, which drank the hemlock after his trial for corrupting the youth of Athens.
3. In ancient China forced suicides have occurred when generals were found responsible for Downfall of the states was given orders to commit suicide.
4. In parts of India and south Asia the Hindu historic practice of sati, or widow-burning, can be considered a form of honor suicide in those instances when the act is voluntary, with a deceased man's widow immolating herself on his funeral pyre as an act of pious devotion and to preserve her and her family's honor. Now in India sati has been banned and is considered as murder. The administrative authorities always keep a watch over the prone region where sati has been practiced. Even though with all majors to prevent such events in past decade this practice was carried out and the devoted people have created the Sati temple at that place.
5. In Japan the practice of Seppuku falls in the category of forced suicide.
6. In 2006 - BBC have investigated the cases of forced suicides by women in the Turkey. In some conservative Islamic societies of Turkey, the forced suicide was considering as a substitute of honor killing when a woman violet the namaz.

Material and Methods:

Present study is carried out at tertiary referral care center, Surat - Gujarat. Out of total 3186 postmortem conducted in the city at two centers, 20 group suicide cases were brought for postmortem examination from various police station areas. It comprises death of 53 persons i.e. 1.35%. Various parameters are discussed here.

“A study of arranged homicide – Suicide pact, is a psychological aspect or responsibility of modernization?”

Table no. -1 According to month

Month	Number of group	Percentage	Number of cases in each group	Percentage
January	3	15	7	13.21
February	1	05	2	03.77
March	1	05	3	05.66
April	3	15	8	15.09
May	3	15	7	13.21
June	0	0	0	0
July	1	05	3	05.66
August	1	05	4	07.55
September	2	10	5	09.43
October	1	05	3	05.66
November	2	10	7	13.21
December	2	10	4	07.55
total	20	100	53	100.00

The above table shows that maximum number of group suicides was observed in the months of January, April and May, while the numbers of people involved were more in April group (8).

Table -2 According to age group

Age group	Male	Female	Total	Percentage	P- value	OR	95%CI
1-10	16	10	26	49.05	0.003 [#]	5.60	(1.46,22.65)
11-20	0	02	02	03.77	0.337 [*]	----	---
21-30	3	14	17	32.07	0.033 [@]	0.19	(0.04,0.90)
31-40	3	05	08	15.11	0.888	0.82	(0.13,4.70)
>41	0	0	0	0	-----		
Total	22	31	53	100.00			

= Chi square test, * = Fisher exact test, @ =Yate`s correction.

In the age group 1 -10 years males are more involved as compared to female while in the age group 21 – 30 years females are more. This is because commonly the mother plays the instrumental role to set up the circumstances and carry out the action. It is also observed that all accused and victims are below 40 years of age.

Table -3 According to sex

Sex	Number	Percentage
Male	24	45.28
Female	29	54.72
Total	53	100.00

According to the above table the females out numbers the male.

Table 4 - According to relations

Relation	Number	Percentage
Mother	15	28.30
Son	17	32.09
Father	04	07.54
Daughter	11	20.75
Husband	03	05.66
Wife	03	05.66
Total	53	100.00

The above table suggests that the son, mother and daughters were more 17, 15 and 11 respectively as compared to father and wife or husband.

Table 5 - According to mode of death

Mode of death	Male	Female	Total	%	P- value	OR	95% CI
Burns	04	05	09	16.98	0.851@	0.88	(0.17,4.50)
Drowning	10	9	19	35.84	0.5515#	1.41	(0.40,5.05)
Poisoning	10	13	23	43.39	0.637#	0.77	(0.22,2.63)
Accident	01	01	02	03.79	1.000*	1.93	(0.00...,77.70)
Total	25	28	53	100.00			

= Chi square test, * = Fisher exact test, @ =Yate`s correction.

Poisoning is the commonest mode of death followed by drowning. Accidental deaths involved only two in which the couple had jumped in front of moving train and committed suicide.

Table 6 - According to date of month

Date	Number	Percentage
1 -10	3	15
11-20	12	60
21 -31	5	25
Total	20	100

The incidences were common in the middle part of the month, which includes 60% of total cases.

Discussion:

Inventions are made for better and easy working for human being which must be cost effective and less time consuming. With the invention of computers, internets and advancement of telecommunication, our life become so comfortable that we can communicate with any person sitting at any corner of the world, known or unknown to him, share feelings and views on the common interested topics of different interest, guide to each other about solutions of the problems, find out answers about quarries on science, history, geography etc. he can buy thing while sitting at home or in the office.

Each available thing always having positive and negative aspects, it is depending upon the user how he utilizes the facility. Similar provision also applied to internet user. As mentioned above it has many positive aspects but when people with same motive person with mental disturbances or having similar feeling at the moment of time.

They try to end their life though there are far away from each other or sometimes they are completely stranger. They fix time, place and manner of the act. Day by day such incidences are

increasing. Some internet sites not only guide about the suicide but also providing & suggesting different patterns / means / ways to end life.

Majority of internet –related suicide pacts have occurred in Japan, similar cases have also been reported from other countries like Australia, Sweden, United States, Germany, Hong Kong, South Korea, Canada and United Kingdom. In October 2000, the first internet related suicide pact reported in Japan and second case was reported in February 2003. Day by day such incidences were increasing in Japan. It is observed that in 2003 about 34 deaths from such pacts occurred, in 2004 around 50 deaths and in 2005 about 91 deaths occurred it seems that the trained increasing day by day though it is less as compared to other types of suicidal pacts^{6, 7, and 8}.

One of the consultant Psychiatrist from London have noted in his article published in British Medical Journal in December 2004 the emergence of new phenomenon of cyber suicide pacts¹² the young people living on their own and meeting over internet with strangers are more common because of common

“A study of arranged homicide – Suicide pact, is a psychological aspect or responsibility of modernization?”

feelings, liking and disliking and who may have committed suicide alone, join with this internet stranger of likeminded suicidal persons to die together. The first online suicidal pact of United Kingdom was reported in 2005.

Comparison between traditional suicide pacts and internet suicide

Christchurch School of Medicine of New Zealand in May 2005 published as article on "Suicide Pacts", made some notable comparisons between the nature of "traditional" suicide pacts and more recent Internet-related suicide pacts or cyber-based suicide pacts. According to this study the traditional suicide pacts have been extremely rare and usually involve older individuals (50–60 years old) and very few adolescents and tend to be between individuals with family or marriage-type relationships and suffering with complementary mental disorders. On the other hand, the growing numbers of Internet-related suicide pacts are almost the exact opposite: they involve young people almost exclusively; tend to be between complete strangers or individuals with platonic friendship-type relationships; and the commonly suffering from clinical depression.

The study also points out that the trend of Internet-related suicide pacts is changing the way that mental-health workers need to deal with depressed and/or suicidal youngsters, advising that it is "prudent for clinicians to ask routinely if young people have been accessing Internet sites, obtaining suicide information from such sites, and participating in cyber suicidal pact through suicide chat rooms".¹¹

The suicidal pacts shown in movie and television episodes sometimes play a major role to attract the young or mentally ill person to commit such type of act or the media gives them idea about the way to end the life. Some notable television episodes or film that shows the pact suicides are:

1. An internet suicidal pact seen in Japanese movie **Suicide Circle**.
2. An internet suicidal pact in the episode of the “Anime Paranoio Agent”. In this episode of **Happy Family Planning**, an old man, a young man, and a young girl meet to attempt suicide.
3. In a television serial Welcome to the NHK, in an episode **Welcome to the Offline meeting**, an old man, a medical student and a teen aged girl commit suicide together after making a suicidal pact on internet, they go to a private island and ends their life.
4. In the Billy Talent video "Nothing to Lose", a teen commits suicide by piping the carbon monoxide from the exhaust into the interior.

New group-suicide method - A new and unique method of group suicide recently focused in the media among the people committing group suicide is by carbon monoxide poisoning achieved by burning charcoal briquettes or stoves within an enclosed area, such as a small sealed room, tent, or car. The Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare reports that "group suicide through gas inhalation and particularly carbon monoxide increased in 2003, with 3,538 people involved, up by 2,024 from 2002." This trend was also published by Japanese media as poisoning trends, referring to it as a “new method of suicide.” In 2001 in a Hong Kong based psychiatric article reports that suicides via charcoal-produced carbon-monoxide poisoning, in that case the victim learned the method from a Chinese film.” The article reports that suicide-by-charcoal cases in Hong Kong have risen dramatically and steadily since 1998, and concludes that, due to intense media coverage of such cases, a “copycat effect” is a contributing factor. Japanese serial killer Hiroshi Maeue lured victims by forging bogus suicide pacts with them, made them suffocate by burning charcoal in a sealed car.

“A study of arranged homicide – Suicide pact, is a psychological aspect or responsibility of modernization?”

Conclusion:

1. It is observed that these incidences were commonly took place in the months of January, April, and May i.e. three cases in each month and eight number of people are involved in April, followed by seven members in January, May and November.
 2. Vulnerable age group is 1 -10 years i.e. the children (son / daughter) and 21 -30 years i.e. the reproductive age group (husband / wife / mother / father).
 3. Female outnumbered (54.72%) the male (45.28).
 4. Involvement of mother (28.30%) is more as compared to father (07.54%) where as that of son (32.09%) is more as compare to daughters (20.75%).
 5. In three group suicides only husband and wife were died i.e. no children.
 6. In two incidents, complete family was involved i.e. mother, father, son and daughter.
 7. In two cases father had committed suicide with children (Son or Daughter).
 8. In rest of the cases mother 17 (28.30%) had committed suicide either with the children or before committing suicide she killed the children first.
 9. Poisoning was the commonest mode of death (43.39%) and in this Aluminum phosphide was the on first choice followed by organophosphorus.
 10. Drowning was on number two followed by burns and in one case they committed suicide by jumping in front of running train.
 11. Most of the cases taken place because of economic burden.
- In three cases family problems were responsible while in one case the wife was raped by someone and to hide in society they ended their life.

References:

1. The Oxford English Minidictionary, 6th edition, 2008, P -519.
2. Suicide pact, HTML document, free encyclopedia, Wikipedia.
3. ABC, Hology: Mass suicide.

4. Suicide pacts and the internet – Rajagopal 329 (7478): 1298 – BMJ.
5. “Indian Penal Code” Law Publishers (India) Private Limited, 2000.
6. “Japan suicide reports”, Japan Mental Health, January 31, 2005.
7. “Seven dies in online suicide pact in Japan.
8. “Six dead in Japan suicide pact”, BBC, March 10, 2006.
9. “Japanese net suicide pact murderer to hang”, The Registrar, March 28, 2007.
10. “Suicide as Japan’s major export”, Kayoko Ueno, Revista Espacio Academico, January 2005.
11. Victory of Roman Forces over Germanic Teutons & Climbri: Rajkumar Kanagasingam 6th July 2007.
12. Masada and the first Jewish revolt against Rome: Near East Tourist Industry, Steven Langfur 2003.
13. Rajasthan: Monique Choy, Sarina Singh p.231 ISBN: 1740593634, Lonely Planet Publications, October 2002.
14. MDR Fakt of Sepatember 22, 2003.
15. 1978: Mass Suicide leaves 900 dead BBC News,” On this day”, 18th November 1978.
16. How the Millennium Comes Violently: From Jonestown to Heaven’s Gate: Catherine Wessinger, ISBN-10: 1889119245 p 218.
17. Cognitive Therapy for the Prevention of Suicide Attempts, Brown, G.K., Have, T.T., Henriques, G.R., Xie, S.X., Hollander, J.E., Beck, A.T., Journal of the American Medical Association, 2005.
18. DNA, World p12, January 28, 2008.