



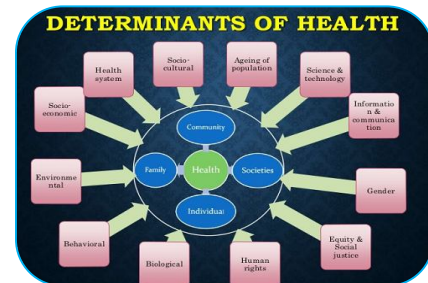
FEMALE HOMICIDE CRIMES: A REVIEW OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL DETERMINANTS

Kiran Bitla

Senior Lecturer , A.R. Burla College.

ABSTRACT

Female killers as a different class of review, isn't examined a lot of in the accessible writing regarding the matter. In India, the National Crimes Records Bureau, which maintains statistics on the country's murders, does not even discuss murders committed by men and women separately. This is due to the fact that the activities of male killers have become the most popular subject for research. Women have been depicted as very subdued, tamed, and passive creatures in the drama of life, which is the image of a nurturing and caring woman that has been perpetrated in the popular media. However, one frequently questions the facts and social perceptions of women when they hear about murders committed by females. When discussing female-perpetrated homicides, the fear, intrigue, and disbelief surrounding serial killings are the ones that garner the most attention. The society may develop an atmosphere of fear, mistrust, and chaos as a result of these murders. The purpose of this paper is to review the research on female killers' psychosocial factors, including their demography, uniqueness in personality traits, sexuality, media influence, gender stereotypes, and leisure activities. The perceptions of and comprehension of female killers may be influenced by these factors. By expanding our knowledge of female killers, the paper may assist in our efforts to combat them. It might be of assistance in laying the groundwork for future interventions and preventative measures to reduce the number of female murderers.



KEYWORDS: Psychosocial determinants, Female killers, Female homicide, and Risk factors for Crime

INTRODUCTION

The general perception is that women do not commit such heinous acts, despite the fact that women commit crimes like murder. On the other hand, there are always stories about female murderers. According to www.thisinsider.com, <https://en.wikipedia.org>, and <https://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com>, there are a great number of real-life cases in which female perpetrators are shown instigating, abetting, and committing murder in the most gruesome and criminal manners. According to studies, the majority of women's murders involve members of their immediate and close family, and many of the victims are innocent and helpless (Chesler, 2015). Despite this, the majority of stories about women committing lethal violence tend to portray it as a manly act. According to Tefler (2017), the narratives appear to be asking how a woman can commit such crimes and frequently minimize her guilt.

A solitary homicide by a lady isn't viewed in a serious way as it is viewed as a distortion brought about by extraordinarily deciding conditions, over which the female had no control. When discussing female-perpetrated homicides, the fear, intrigue, and disbelief surrounding serial killings are the ones that garner the most attention. Additionally, despite the fact that the crimes committed by female serial killers (FSK) are no less heinous, psychologist Marvin Zuckerman asserts that the male serial killers (MSK) receive the majority of attention (Harrison, 2015).

According to Reid (2017), the definition of "serial murder" has undergone numerous revisions. He emphasized the significance of establishing a consistent definition of "serial murder." He proposed Compulsive Criminal Homicide (CCH) as a new name for the term "serial murder," arguing that it should be used in all clinical research, academia, and the law. The media and academics have paid a lot of attention to serial murder as a type of crime. Only in the last five years (Farrell, Keppel, and Titterton, 2013) has the term "female serial killer" (FSK) been used to describe the group of women who carry out a large number of homicides.

Female serial killers are depicted in the cultural image of "Black Widow" in the United States. A woman who killed three or more husbands for money was known as the black widow serial killer. In 1944, her story was turned into the classic dark comedy film *Arsenic and Old Lace*, in which two sisters serve wine laced with arsenic and kill elderly men (Scott, 2015).

Women have demonstrated their criminality and violent tendencies. During the Nazi regime, numerous women were known to have worked as guards at concentration camps. In 1997, there were a lot of women involved in the genocide that took place in Rwanda. According to Quarmby (2016), they would spray chilli pepper all over the houses so that any child hiding there would sneeze, which would lead to the child being caught and killed. More research into these murderous women's "psychosocial and economic background" is needed. According to Jensen (2001), the majority of the explanations for female homicides are based on the characteristics of the current abusive relationship in the offenders' lives with their partners. According to Brennan and Breitenbach (2009), it is acknowledged that additional taxonomic research involving a large number of samples is required in order to prepare a better theoretical understanding of the female murderers. Farrell et al., (2013) suggested including additional variables, such as their relationship with the victim, the method of the crime, the location of the crime, etc., in addition to studying their motivations.

FSKS ACROSS COUNTRIES AND IN TIME

The number of female killers in the United States is the highest, with 835, which is more than Europe and Africa put together. With 112 female murderers, the United Kingdom ranks second. Australia, which has 22 female serial killers, has moved up to fifth place. Germany comes in second place with 12 female killers, just behind Australia. A woman whose face has not been made public was one of Germany's most wanted men. This lady was on a killing binge. She is accused of 17 attempted murders and 18 murders. While she was caring for the elderly, she carried out these atrocities. There are eight female killers in Mexico. Over 91 people—11 men, 80 women, and many unborn children—were buried under a piece of land owned by Delfina and Maria de Jesus Gonzalez, who were charged with their murder. Germany comes in second place with 12 female killers, just behind Australia. A woman whose face has not been made public was one of Germany's most wanted men. This woman was killing a lot of people. She is accused of 17 attempted murders and 18 murders. While she was caring for the elderly, she carried out these atrocities. Eight serial killers have reportedly been seen in South Africa. Daisy Smith murdered her son, her first and second husbands. The idea of inheriting the wealth of her victims was what drove her. Katherine Mary Knight is the most well-known person. She killed her husband by repeatedly stabbing him, carefully skinning him, and making a stew out of his meat for the whole family (www.worldatlas.com). According to a review conducted by Parker (2018), 79 of the 479 homicides committed in Australia between 2010 and 2012 were committed by females, or 15%, which is a typical percentage of FSKs.

Sweden, India, and Russia each have six female murderers. Madame Popova, who operated a murder-for-hire service to free wives from their cruel husbands, is the most well-known person in Russia. She is said to have hired killers and poisoned herself to kill 300 people. In India, Cyanide Mallika is serving a life sentence for administering cyanide to seven women in temples with the intention of stealing their jewelry (www.murderpedia.com). She was accused of doing so. There are supposedly five and four female executioners in Austria and Belgium separately. In Austria, an ice cream killer dismembered her husband and boyfriend with a chain saw after killing them. Marie Becker murdered her husband in Belgium so she could spend time with her lover. Later she killed her darling too. She robbed and then poisoned the elderly customers who frequented her dress shop. The Netherlands, Spain, Argentina, Finland, and Italy are just a few of the nations with at least three female serial killers. In Italy, Enriqueta Marti is known as a witch doctor who kidnaps and kills children for ritual purposes. It is believed that she killed more than ten children. There is also at least one female killer in Taiwan, Kenya, Pakistan, Nigeria, Nepal, Hong Kong, and Poland. In Kenya, Alice Njoki is known to have killed her deaf son to save her marriage. The fact that these incidents have been accurately and promptly reported in the media in the United States and are widely known may account for these high numbers. 10% of the murder suspects convicted in the United Kingdom were women. These murderers used techniques that were distinct from those of men. Additionally, they had a history of sexual abuse, childhood brutality, and traumatic experiences. Beverley Allitt, Mary Ann Cotton, and Joanna Dennehy are among the well-known names. According to World Atlas (<https://www.worldatlas.com>), twenty percent of these female murderers had a male accomplice.

Kethineni (2011) concentrated on female murder wrongdoings in homegrown settings and nondomestic settings, through a concentrate on detained ladies in India. She tried to determine the typical circumstances that led to these crimes and compared them to perspectives from both the United States and other countries. She learned from in-depth interviews with 74 female murderers in one of India's southern states that many domestic killings are carried out to end family violence and that many non-domestic killings are carried out with family members as accomplices to restore family unity and honor. In addition, these murders highlighted the subservient social status of Indian women. In this study, many of the causes and picture were very similar to those found in other countries' studies on female killers. The study recommended that battered women syndrome be recognized as a legal defense and that women's social and economic status be improved.

In a review of 65 cases, some of which involved partners, the female serial killers showed some unique traits related to their victims and themselves. They had distinct preferences regarding the person who would be their target, as well as distinct motives and methods for the murder. When homicides were committed in groups, the victims were likely to be adult strangers who would be killed in a variety of ways. According to Gurien (2009), the most likely weapon of a solo female serial killer would be poison, and the victim would most likely be a close adult family member.

Other researchers conducted studies with smaller samples and came to significant conclusions. In their review of newspaper accounts of ten American FSKs, Farrell, Keppel, and Titterington (2013) discovered that FSKs worked longer hours than MSKs (Male Serial Killers) and that 80% of FSKs were familiar with their victims. According to Parker (2018), FSKs' motivations differ from those of MSKs. Seven motives emerged for both FSKs and MSKs as a whole: vengeance, jealousy, thrill, "love," gain, conviction/hatred, and concealment (to cover up another crime), each with distinct characteristics for the offender and victim as well as its ghastliness. Of these seven intentions, camouflage and desire conviction, disdain and rush were inspirations for men. It was found that women kill primarily for money (in the insurance, business, etc.) and for what they thought was "love," primarily targeting their partners and those closest to them.

DEMOGRAPHY

Harrison, et. al., (2015) discovered, after collecting data on 64 female serial killers who were active in the United States between 1821 and 2008, that the majority of FSKs belonged to the middle and upper classes, approximately 92% knew their victims, all were white, used poison to kill, and their

primary motivation was financial gain. They had worked as religious teachers, nurses, babysitters, and prostitutes, among other occupations, and had some higher education. As nurses, 40% of them worked in health care facilities, and 22% were mothers or babysitters. At some point, each of them had tied the knot. Their looks were either average or above average. They were all Christians. About a third of these people killed their close family members, while 44% killed their own biological children. One-fourth had killed the elderly or infirm, and more than half had killed children. 40 percent of these women had some kind of mental illness. In her study of eight FSKs, Schurman-Kauflin (2000) also found that nurses make up the majority of the FSKs.

GENDER STEREOTYPES

Rippon, et. al., (2014) found that physical aggression, tenderness, and mental rotation, all of which are typically regarded as masculine and feminine across cultures, overlapped significantly with male and female characteristics that are traditionally considered masculine and feminine. They proposed that consequently isolating individuals into male and female has hindered progress on getting experiences into the connections among mind and conduct. The extent of this overlap has been the subject of numerous subsequent studies. Therefore, it may not be necessary to take into account the gender differences between male and female killers.

However, significant findings have been reported regarding gender differences in victim characteristics, the weapon of choice, and the location of the crime. Men are more likely to kill strangers and acquaintances in unfamiliar places, according to a Swedish study on homicide perpetrators, while women are more likely to kill intimate partners or family members in their own homes. Family members account for 80% of female murder victims, with intimate partners accounting for 50%. In their own homes, the victim was killed by nine out of ten female killers. According to Trägrdh, Nilsson, Granath, & Sturup (2016), their victims were found to be under the influence of a substance at the time of the crime, and the weapon of choice was primarily a knife.

The Media Representation

According to research, many violent crimes committed by women go unreported, such as many partner homicides in Toronto, Canada, between 1975 and 1999, which received very little or no media coverage. These murders were regarded as "normal" in the sense that they were supposed to be caused by the unique circumstances, characteristics of the victim, and characteristics of the offender surrounding these women. For example, the woman committing the murder was thought to be acting differently from her feminine nature, and the murders were made justifiable by the events that occurred in their immediate vicinity. According to Pelvin (2017), this may be one reason why single murders or "normal" murders committed by women are less frequently reported and thus remain unsolved.

Personality Features

Twenty-four of the 30 females convicted of murder in Italy between the ages of 21 and 52, all white Caucasian and without a college degree, were found to have a severe personality disorder in a personality study. Thirteen of these people had borderline personality disorder, which is characterized by emotional instability, a distorted self-image, impulsivity, self-destructive behaviors like attempts at suicide, and substance abuse. Six of these women had delusions and paranoid personality disorder. According to Giannetakis (2017), another five individuals had schizotypal personality disorder, which is characterized by social and emotional isolation.

According to psychiatrists, one of the most notorious killers in the UK, Joanne Dennehy, who killed three men and is accused of attacking two others, had a psychopathic disorder. "superficial charm, a disregard for others, pathological lying, and a capacity for showing no remorse, to exaggerate and lie" were characteristics of this disorder. She was prone to frequent emotional outbursts and emotional instability (Cawley and Devlin, 2014). The police said that she was probably just having "fun" when she did the crime. A forensic psychiatrist, on the other hand, diagnosed her with paraphilia

sadomasochism, or a preference for "sexual activity that involves the infliction of pain, humiliation, or bondage." She made it abundantly clear in her mind that she did not want to kill women, particularly those who were pregnant. She likewise had a past filled with self-hurt, since she had a background marked by misuse. Psychologists believe that she "flipped" and then "externalized" her anger about sexual abuse in her case. Since her first homicide, it could be her "displaced anger" unleashed (Cawley, 2014).

A survey with measures related to demography, psychopathology, and personality features was carried out as part of an exploratory study about the personality features of female serial killers. This was done by obtaining firsthand information from four of the perpetrators themselves. The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 and the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-III were used to assess each subject's personality profile. Since women tend to have lower rates of psychopathology than men, only one of the four murderers appeared to be psychopathic (Hildebrand and Culhane, 2015).

Sexual Deviance

It is thought that female serial killers do not engage in sexual violence or deviance. However, there have been exceptions to this, such as a female killer who was found to have committed rape and another who used to bark like a dog while having sex. Despite this, it is a fact that females typically kill primarily for resources. This is also consistent with evolutionary theory, which Harrison and her co-authors elaborated on, which states that women are motivated by the desire to find partners who can commit to a relationship and have enough resources (Harrison, et al.). al., 2015). An exemption for the regular profile of female chronic executioner is Aileen Wuornos, from US, an expressway whore, known to have killed seven men during 1989 and 1990, in Florida. She killed outside rather than inside her house, killed strangers rather than friends and family, and the motivation was not money but her sense of justice. She did these things because she was angry and wanted to get even. She wanted to exact her vengeance on the men who had picked her and raped and beaten her. She used a weapon that is unusual for FSKs (Scott, 2015).

Joanne Dennehy, in US, killed three men and was blamed for going after two others, had a psychopathic problem, as evaluated by therapists. "superficial charm, a disregard for others, pathological lying, and a capacity for showing no remorse, to exaggerate and lie" were characteristics of this disorder. She was prone to frequent emotional outbursts and emotional instability (Cawley and Devlin, 2014). The police thought that "simply having "fun"" was the best way to explain her crime. However, after she was evaluated by a forensic psychiatrist, it was discovered that she had a condition known as paraphilia sadomasochism. This means that she preferred "sexual activity that involves the infliction of pain, humiliation, or bondage." She made it abundantly clear in her mind that she did not want to kill women, particularly those who were pregnant. Due to her history of abuse, she also had a history of self-harm. Psychologists believe that she "flipped" and then "externalized" her anger about sexual abuse in her case. Since her first homicide, it could be her "displaced anger" unleashed (Cawley, 2014).

Leisure

Although serial killers' crimes have received attention from psychological and medical perspectives, they have not been examined from a leisurely perspective, which may be crucial (Williams, 2017). This viewpoint views at murders as a relaxation movement by its culprits. After studying 14 teams of male and female serial killers, Gunn and Caissie (2006) found that these killers spent a lot of time on activities related to their crimes, like meticulous planning and practicing their crimes. According to the authors, these activities may be these killers' leisure activities, and the murder itself may be their leisure activity. William and Walker (2006) likewise reasoned that relaxation could be a consider the different phases of homicide, right from dream improvement, through savaging, then, at that point, catch, trailed by the demonstration of homicide, the tribal stage, and at last sorrow, as characterized in the 'chronic homicide cycle', given by Norris (1989).

CONCLUSION

In the conclusion, it is suggested that homicide, whether it occurs one time or repeatedly, is a highly dysfunctional act for the perpetrator and society as a whole. Undergoing trials must examine the act in a gender-neutral manner. However, the circumstances, experiences, psychological, social, and economic factors may be very unique to females as a group, and these require in-depth investigation and clarification. Since psychological, social, and economic factors are found to play a significant role in determining the likelihood of a woman committing acts of murder in a patriarchal society, preventative measures must be taken. Women need to be taught how to deal with sexual and other forms of abuse early on and given the power to do so. They need to learn how to speak up and raise their voices against any violations of their dignity, respect, and capabilities through workshops, schools, and at home. In order to prevent their circumstances from escalating to the point where they are compelled to take this extreme step, families, communities, and nations must collaborate in order to address their issues with compassion, care, and concern. Much needs to be addressed in this area by future research. It requires to look, first, profoundly into the mind of FSKs, investigate their previous encounters exhaustively, really at that time might we at any point comprehend the variables compelling them towards this way. Assessments of girls' mental health on a regular basis, training them to deal with any kind of abuse, both inside and outside their homes, and the establishment of institutions that can safeguard them against harm and abuse are examples of preventative measures. Women may be less likely to commit serial murders if steps are taken to provide them with social security. Women's killing sprees can be largely avoided by boosting their social status and financial independence through education and gainful employment.

REFERENCES

1. Bitna, K., Jurg, G., Yeonghee, K. & Hassett, M. R. (2018) Female Perpetrated Homicide in South Korea: A Homicide Typology, *Deviant Behavior*, 39:8, 1042-1057, DOI: 10.1080/01639625.2017.1395671
2. Crumpton, E. M. (2017). "Murder Becomes Her: Media Representations of Murderous Women in America from 1890-1920". All Graduate Theses and Dissertations. 6634. <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd/6634>
3. Brennan, T. and Breitenbach. M. (2009). The Taxonomic Challenge to the General Theories of Delinquency. Pp. 1–38 in *Delinquency: Causes, Reduction, and Prevention*, edited by O. Sahin and J. Maier. Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science. [Google Scholar].
4. Cawley, L. and Devlin, L. (2014). Joanne Dennehy's sister Maria on triple killer's childhood, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-25876050>, BBC News, 12 February 2014
5. Cawley, L. (2014). Joanne Dennehy: The woman who murdered men 'for fun', <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-25669206>, BBC News, 12 February 2014