

# Ethical Consideration in a Psychological Case as Suicide Proved Homicide: A Case Study



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## Abstract

Ethical consideration is an essential part of any psychological problem especially in a sensitive area like suicide, and hence, a postmortem report plays a vital role in sorting suicidal cases as homicidal. In the present paper, the case of a 30-year-old woman whose husband proclaimed in the hospital and to her family that she committed suicide. Initially, the police and her family members were under the impression that she committed suicide as manipulated by the statement reported by the husband. However, after the deceased's psychologist endorsed, her family members decided to get a postmortem. The initial postmortem report from territory care hospital suggested that the case might not be suicide, but the reason of death was still unknown. After approximately 40 days of constant requests of investigation staff for further clarification, another postmortem of the dead body was done in the presence of judicial magistrate, police and medical board doctors. So, this time, the detailed examination of the body, medical board cleared it a homicidal case on the basis of the fractured skull (right side/head bone), and nasal bone. The murderers hit the woman on her head first and then strangled her with rope which resulted in asphyxia and cardiorespiratory arrest, which caused her unfortunate death. To spread awareness in the society that no other daughter of Adam and Eva have to suffer the same unfortunate fate as this innocent soul.

**Keywords:** Ethical consideration; Postmortem; Suicide; Homicide

## Introduction

Homicide can be defined as taking someone's life whereas suicide is taking one's life, voluntarily or intentionally, in order to escape from an unbearable psychological or physical situation [1]. There are different reasons for committing a crime like suicide. Interpersonal theory of suicide said that there are two significant factors that can lead to suicide: perceived oneself as a burden on others and dissatisfaction in belongingness [2] There are different other factors that include in the risk of suicidal behavior such as anger, impulsivity, and hostility [3].

Approximately 1.4 million deaths were recognized to violence in 2004, with 600,000 defined as homicide, and 844,000 the result of suicide [4]. The suicide similarly to homicide is considered a crime. Homicide is emotional, and violent crime whereas suicide is a spiritual crime [5]. There are less psychological data to understand the relationship between homicide and suicide [1,6,7]. However, at least psychologists found that there is no correlation between diagnosed mental disorders and dangerousness, or between mental illness and criminal behavior [8]. Violent death is recognized as an essential public health issue. The World Health Organization's

definition of violence [9] as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either result in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation.

## Case History

The case is of a 30-year-old woman, ABC, whose husband declared in the hospital and to her family that she committed suicide. Initially, the police and her family members were all under the impression that she committed suicide because of what her husband's statement reported. However, after the deceased's psychologist's endorsement, her family members decided to get a postmortem done. The preliminary postmortem report from territory care hospital suggested that the case may not be suicidal, but the reason of death remained unknown. After approximately 40 days of constant requests of investigation staff for further clarification, another postmortem of the deceased was done in the presence of judicial magistrate, police and medical board doctors. And this time, the detailed examination of the body and medical board cleared it a clear homicidal case

based on the fractured skull (right side/head bone), and nasal bone. The murderers had hit the woman on her head first and then strangled her with a rope which resulted in asphyxia and cardiorespiratory arrest, and hence forth caused her unfortunate death.

### Remarks and Ethical Consideration of a Deceased's Psychologist

ABC came for marriage counseling two years back with the complaints of a disturbed relationships with husband and her mother in law. She further reported marital issues and revealed a feeling of dissatisfaction with her marriage. To elaborate, her primary marital issue was that her husband kept her deprived financially, emotionally and sexually. According to her therapist ABC had a pleasant personality, was a social person with a lot of friends and had a good relationship with neighbors and friends. What she needed in her life was love and care from others as she was herself a loving person. She was a mother of two kids whom she loved a lot, and she was a government employee and mainly worked for her children's education and a better lifestyle.

She had a very positive personality because she loved her husband and always wanted to have a good relationship with him. But in the last two months, prior to her death, she did not come for therapy. According to her she felt good and was calm and did not need further therapy. Just a day before her demise, she called her therapist asking for a session, but since she was out of the city, so they spoke on the phone and discussed many things on the same call that were disturbing her. Her main complaint was from her husband and mother-in-law at that time. According to the deceased they were both continuously criticizing and taunting her to the point that she felt tortured. Her therapist advised her to relax herself and divert her mind and go out somewhere. Considering all these traits of her personality, marital problems, and her positivity towards resolution of issues, her therapist convinced that she is a person of loving herself and cannot committed suicide. Hence, her therapist encouraged her family for postmortem and the postmortem clearly declared her death as a homicide. The ethical considerations here as a psychologist/therapist as knowing her ABC's personality, believing in her patient, convincing her family to get a postmortem done, and finally giving statements to the police and lawyers as many times as required, always concluding that she could not have committed a suicide.

### Conclusive remarks

- a) ABC was a person with pleasant personality and loved herself
- b) She had a strong motivation to live a healthy and happy life
- c) She loved her children and was even earning for their better lifestyle

d) She came for therapy to improve her marital relationships

e) She was a fully functioning individual with a professional job and a strong social life

### Results and Discussion

Therapist endorsement and postmortem provided a new direction to the investigation. The false statement was suicide changed into a proven fact of homicide. The primary goal of the present paper is this; our ethical consideration being in the mental health profession and scientific examination of crime that focuses on keen investigation as not every proclaimed suicide is a suicide, it can be homicide. The scientific examination of criminality act is the primary, essential and most fundamental step towards investigation of crime [9].

### Conclusion

While dealing with suspected deaths like suicide and homicide, the role of a psychologist and his/her ethical considerations and proficiency are very important. The forensic expert and investigators should adopt a scientific approach to evaluate the deaths with logical and systematic approach during examination of the dead body, by using his/her common sense and experience to reconstruct the actual findings. Even if, circumstances give the overwhelming appearances of suicide or accident, the investigation should be conducted in as much detail as possible [10,11].

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