

Original Paper

Case Study: Criminal Psychology Analysis and Profile on a Case of the Judge Being Shot

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Abstract

This paper provides a comprehensive criminal psychology analysis and profiling of a case involving the shooting of a judge. Two perpetrators, motivated by alleged injustices in divorce property disputes, targeted the judge, her family, and associates of their ex-wives, resulting in two fatalities and two injuries. The perpetrators eventually committed suicide after being cornered by police. The study delves into the psychological entanglements, latent stage, malignant transformation, implementation, and decline phases of the perpetrators' criminal psychology. The case underscores the complexity of emotional homicides, the role of revenge and jealousy, and the dynamics of joint criminal activity.

Keywords

criminal psychology analysis, emotional homicide, revenge and jealousy, joint criminal activity, psychological stages of crime

1. Executive Summary

Two perpetrators, convinced of alleged injustices in the property disputes during their divorce proceedings, resorted to gun violence, targeting the judge, their families, and associates of their ex-wife. This resulted in two fatalities and two injuries. The suspects were eventually cornered by the police and committed suicide in their vehicle.

The sequence of events unfolded as follows: On the evening of the incident, around 21:00, the perpetrators located the current husband of one of their ex-wives and opened fire, injuring him in both arms, thankfully non-fatal. They fled the scene in a white sedan five minutes later. Approximately half an hour after the first incident, they proceeded to the judge's home. One of the perpetrators knocked on the door with a firearm, but when the judge's husband answered, their gun malfunctioned, preventing

them from firing. They attempted to flee but were pursued by the judge and her husband. In the ensuing struggle, the judge was fatally shot twice, while her husband sustained injuries. The assailants once again made their escape in the white sedan.

Later that evening, just before midnight, the perpetrators lay in wait for another target outside his residence. Upon his arrival, they immediately opened fire, fatally shooting him. An hour later, police intercepted the perpetrators' vehicle. Without offering much resistance, they took their own lives inside the car.

2. Background

Following the incident, neighbors recalled that the slain judge and her husband were exceptionally kind individuals who always greeted everyone they encountered. Known for her reserved demeanor, the late judge dedicated countless hours to her work, preferring to delve into her cases rather than engage in social gatherings. She maintained a humble profile yet was always eager to offer detailed explanations when approached by neighbors seeking legal advice or clarification. Some neighbors expressed admiration for her profession, prompting her to confess that while her job appeared glamorous, it often came with its own set of challenges. Specifically, presiding over cases frequently put her in the cross hairs of various individuals, potentially exposing her to danger.

The slain judge had been involved in the trial of a divorce property division case involving one of the perpetrators, Mr. Li. However, it seemed that Mr. Li was dissatisfied with the outcome, leading to a degree of resistance and misunderstanding towards the judicial process. The perpetrator frequently visited the court to dispute the matter, but the final ruling, which prioritized the female party's rights, was deemed fair and lawful.

Apart from the slain judge and her injured husband, the other two victims had indirect emotional connections to the perpetrators. One victim, the current husband of a perpetrator's ex-wife, shared a strong marital bond, envied by their neighbors. The other victim's wife was familiar with one of the perpetrators, who had recently gone through a divorce. It's worth noting that apart from these connections, there were no other forms of disputes between the perpetrators and the victims.

3. Key Problems

In this case, there are several crucial issues related to criminal psychology, as follows:

- 1) The crime type is unclear. The first step in analyzing the criminal psychology of the perpetrator and the case is to determine the specific type of crime. Different types of crimes exhibit distinct psychological characteristics in perpetrators.
- 2) The developmental stages of criminal psychology are not well-defined. To understand the criminal mind, it is essential to make clear distinctions in its developmental trajectory and stages. Each phase of criminal psychological development corresponds to different psychological states and

methodological manifestations of the perpetrator, requiring a phased understanding.

- 3) As a case of joint criminal activity, the perpetrators' criminal psychology differs from that of individual offenders. Group crimes tend to rely more on collectivism, display diminished sense of responsibility, and exhibit heightened aggression, all of which merit attention.
- 4) The shooting incident targeting the judge in this case should be divided into two stages. Specifically, the second stage, where the perpetrator fled and then resumed shooting, demands psychological analysis. This psychological process is particularly noteworthy. Typically, fugitives flee to avoid risk, but what prompts them to commit another criminal act while trying to evade capture?
- 5) The perpetrator's suicide is a common occurrence in many homicide cases. The psychological state behind the "homicide-suicide" dynamic in this particular case warrants close attention and analysis.

4. Criminal Psychology Analysis and Profile

4.1 Crime Type

Certainly, the psychological entanglements involved in this case, such as love, jealousy, and hatred, have greatly contributed to the motivation and certainty of the criminal act. Among various types of homicides, there is one particular type that often occurs between socially intimate individuals, such as siblings, close friends, spouses, or lovers. These individuals share certain relationships that can give rise to emotional entanglements. When these entanglements accumulate without proper resolution, they can become a driving force and determining factor in the perpetrator's emotions. Eventually, this can escalate into criminal behavior aimed at unlawfully depriving others of their right to life, as seen in this case (Alison & Canter, 1999, pp. 21-54).

The psychological entanglements in this case meet the criteria for "emotionally charged homicide", making it fall under this category. However, it's important to note that emotional entanglements do not necessarily lead to this specific type of crime. They can manifest in various forms and do not have a one-to-one direct causal relationship with emotionally charged homicide.

4.2 Analysis and Profile on the Latent Stage of Criminal Psychology

This case is an emotional homicide caused by revenge, jealousy, and emotional entanglements. Perpetrators of such homicides often suffer from unhealthy personalities and psychological factors, and their emotional impulses tend to be strong and uncontrollable. This type of individual often develops paranoid personality disorder due to setbacks in life and abnormal situations, becoming suspicious, sensitive, prone to intense jealousy, aggressive, and likely to distort others' goodwill (It's important to note that this is not an antisocial personality disorder, as the planned, relatively public nature of the criminal behavior, as well as the clarity of its purpose and target, rule out the possibility of an antisocial personality disorder.). In this case, after experiencing negative life events that hindered purposeful behavior—mainly emotional setbacks and dissatisfaction with property division—the perpetrator

developed a paranoid personality disorder, gradually becoming sensitive, intensely jealous of the target, distorting verdicts, and even generalizing emotions towards relevant personnel.

4.3 Analysis and Profile on the Malignant Transformation Stage of Criminal Psychology

This stage primarily involves information exchange and accumulation for the perpetrator. In this case, external information reveals that the victims were current husbands of women who had previous or suspected emotional entanglements with the perpetrator. Such information would be easily accessible to the perpetrator without external promotion, including details like the current emotional state of the couple, whether they argue frequently, their economic status, and how they distribute their assets. The perpetrator may experience negative psychological factors due to perceived discrepancies between their own situation and the realities they learn about the couple (Hald, Malamuth, & Yuen, 2010, pp. 14-20). Undoubtedly, the greater this contrast, the stronger the feelings of jealousy and skepticism, leading to thoughts like “Why not me?” or “Why are they so happy together?” However, despite these negative psychological factors, the perpetrator remains conflicted because they cannot deny their love for the woman involved. This intense inner conflict fuels a stronger desire for revenge, but the target of this revenge shifts from the woman to her current husband, who is perceived as having taken the perpetrator’s place. This explains why, during the shooting in this case, the women with whom the perpetrator had previous emotional entanglements were unharmed, even when present at the scene. This illustrates both the psychological conflict caused by emotional attachments and the transfer of emotions to a clear and specific target (Alison, Smith & Morgan, 2003, pp. 185-195).

The information about the victim judge may have come from various sources for Li, such as government website commendations or inquiries through other channels. The more outstanding the judge’s performance at work, the stronger Li’s desire for revenge against them. Li may have thoughts like “Such excellent performance is built on the disputes of people like us, hurting the interests of me and others similar to me”. This could further lead to extreme negative thoughts like “Since you’ve taken everything from me, I’ll show you something spectacular. I have nothing left to lose anyway”. Such a profound deterioration can trigger what is known in criminal psychology as “self-organization”, where the perpetrator’s unhealthy psychological factors become dominant and form a “combined force” that drives the externalization of their psychological structure.

4.4 Analysis and Profile on the Implementation Stage of Criminal Psychology

This stage is primarily characterized by the externalization of motives into actions, actively seeking opportunities to commit crimes and creating conditions for them. In this case, the two perpetrators had a preliminary plan for the timing of their crimes, but they did not conduct further reconnaissance or observation. Despite having a premeditated plan, it was evidently imperfect. Both the first and second shootings occurred during times when most people would be at home. Although they misjudged the actual situation of the judge at the second shooting scene, it did not hinder the progression of the criminal act. The third shooting appeared to be a result of preliminary understanding followed by

on-site waiting, as evidenced by the fact that Shao was shot immediately upon appearing at the door (Alison, West, & Goodwill, 2004, pp. 71-101). A noteworthy aspect of this stage is the preparatory action of crafting homemade pistols and stockpiling ammunition, which laid the material foundation for the commission of the crime. Judging from the large quantity of bullets found in the perpetrators' car after their suicide, it is possible that the two perpetrators might have committed further acts if they had not been intercepted.

4.5 Analysis and Profile on the Decline Stage of Criminal Psychology

In this stage, the perpetrators begin to exhibit their normal psychological state, with psychological conflicts increasing and accompanied by negative emotions such as regret, self-blame, and panic. The decline phase of this case is somewhat unusual, divided into several sub-stages. The first occurred after the gunman Li successfully carried out the first shooting, injuring the current husband of Nie in both arms. Li then fled, and his criminal psychology entered a decline stage for adjustment. Although he experienced feelings of panic and tension after the crime, the success of the criminal act and his evasion from immediate capture still reinforced his criminal psychology, accelerating the process of further deterioration. The second stage emerged during Li's second shooting, specifically after his gun misfired during an attempt to shoot the victim judge, which will be analyzed later. The third stage arose after Li completed the second shooting, killing and injuring the victim judge and his wife before fleeing. At this point, his criminal psychology once again entered a decline phase for adjustment (Bandura, 2016). Due to the success of his criminal act, the negative emotions he experienced were far less intense compared to the first shooting, further reinforcing his criminal mindset. Since Li did not commit any further shootings, his normal psychology began to emerge, accompanied by feelings of self-blame, skepticism, and fear. The fourth stage occurred after the gunman Zhang carried out the shooting against Shao. This was accompanied by significant feelings of panic and psychological conflict, as it was Zhang's only shooting incident.

4.6 Criminal Psychological Analysis of Shooting after Escaping after Failing to Shoot for the First Time

This section focuses on the psychological changes brought about by unexpected situations in planned crimes. The execution of criminal behavior is influenced by various factors and many variables, making it challenging to proceed strictly according to plan. In this case, the plan itself was imperfect, increasing the likelihood of unexpected situations arising. According to the gunman Li's plan, he intended to shoot the victim, a judge, immediately upon the opening of the door and then quickly turn around and leave the scene. The chosen time for the crime was between 9 and 10 pm, as most people are still awake and active in the living room during this time. However, an unexpected factor arose when the judge's husband answered the door instead of the intended target. This deviation from the plan created additional psychological conflicts and uncertainties for the gunman Li, leading to a somewhat odd conversation between him and the judge's husband. Li was trying to ascertain if the

judge was at home. Upon learning that the judge was indeed present, it further strengthened his intention to commit the crime (Bartlett & Miller, 2012, pp. 1-21).

Another unexpected situation occurred when the judge confronted and sternly reprimanded the gunman, contrary to the fear and panic the gunman had anticipated from the victim. This brave behavior might be attributed to the judge's years of work experience. This unexpected reaction caused fear in the gunman, resulting in panic and two shots being fired at the closest target in front of him. However, a third unexpected event occurred - a misfire. In the event of a misfire, the gunman Li instinctively chose to flee. At this moment, the criminal's evasion psychology prevailed, and his criminal mentality rapidly declined. However, when the judge and her husband chased after him, it sparked another psychological cycle of committing a crime in Li. On the one hand, his criminal intention was reinforced, and on the other hand, to evade the chase, he resorted to a second shooting.

4.7 Psychological Analysis of Joint Crime

Two gunmen, Li and Zhang, both divorced men, share similarities in their targets despite having different ones. Their targets are either their ex-wives' current husbands, the current husbands of women involved in emotional entanglements (as the relationship between Zhang's target, Mr. Shao's current wife, and Zhang remains unclear), or individuals believed to be involved in their divorce proceedings. It is evident that the two men sought a form of collaboration, which was assistive rather than direct behavioral. In other words, they did not attack a target together but had clear individual objectives. This suggests that both gunmen were rational. The clarity of their respective criminal targets indicates that they had already developed strong personal motives and intentions before conspiring together. This foundation accelerated the formation of a conspiratorial psychological environment (Burt, Sweeten, & Simons, 2014, pp. 450-487).

Moreover, it is apparent that the two men had a certain level of trust. One would provide assistance when the other achieved their goal, indicating a mutual emotional trust that had formed psychologically. This trust was based on their shared experiences, jealousy, and entanglements, as the women associated with both men were now enjoying their new lives.

The two perpetrators had clear criminal intentions but lacked a rigorous organizational structure or clear division of responsibilities. Their specific criminal objective, implemented together, was homicide. By collaborating to achieve their individual goals, the crime itself became a subjective self-reinforce. This feedback and learning mechanism continuously strengthened the psychological foundation for the two perpetrators to commit crimes together.

4.8 Psychological Analysis of the Criminal Who Shot Himself in the Car without Extra Resistance

In this case, the two perpetrators were not apprehended. Instead, after being stopped by the police, they committed suicide by shooting themselves in the car without any resistance. Their suicidal behavior suggests that they had likely considered this option beforehand. Upon realizing the disparity in power

after being stopped, they chose not to resist. However, the discovery of a large amount of ammunition in the car indicates that they still retained the possibility of resistance.

Among various viewpoints in criminal psychology, a widely accepted theory views suicide as an act of “killing” directed towards oneself, essentially a form of self-murder (Cornish & Clarke, 1987, pp. 933-947). Often, those who commit homicide have contemplated suicide before the crime, indicating a potential conversion between suicide and homicide. This is especially true for perpetrators involved in group suicides or mass killings (as in this case), where the likelihood of having suicidal thoughts is highest. Criminals who attempt mass killings often develop suicidal intentions due to despair about life and their dire circumstances. Feelings of resentment and jealousy towards the society that has pushed them to such extremes can lead to a desire for more people to die with them. In this process, their emotional entanglements gradually shift to multiple targets, resulting in severe criminal behavior targeting multiple victims.

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