PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILING OF SERIAL KILLERS: UNDERSTANDING MOTIVES AND BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

In popular culture, serial killers have long been a source of fascination and terror, but it's critical for criminal profiling and public safety to understand the psychological elements that motivate these people to commit several murders. To better understand the murky world of serial killers, this study article will look at their motivations, recurring patterns of behavior, and the function of numerous psychological elements that influence their behavior. This research article aims to shed light on the brains of serial killers through the analysis of case studies and psychological theories, offering useful knowledge for both law enforcement and mental health specialists. This article delves into the history of serial killers and how early childhood trauma could lead to a heinous criminal in the future. This research highlights the importance of criminal profiling in the investigation of these types of cases so that they could take preventive measures beforehand. In all this Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) plays an important role by giving the term serial killer and definition which are all briefly discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Serial Killer, Criminal Profiling, Investigation, Psychological Theories, Case Studies.

INTRODUCTION

Through movies, television and real-time documentaries, serial Killers have captured the public's imagination for decades. TV. Shows like Memories of a Murderer: The Nilsen Tapes and songs like The Ripper by Judas Priest (The Ripper is a brief recounting of all the bad deeds and crimes of Jack from the viewpoint of a Killer)[1], provide evidence of worldwide popularity and fascination with serial killers. As serial Killing is an extreme form of violent criminal behavior, the study of serial killers is beyond morbid curiosity.

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[1] Songfacts; The Ripper by Judas Priest <https://www.songfacts.com/>accessed 19 July 2023

Serial Killers are humans with rare minds. The term 'serial killer' is defined as a person who repeatedly murders people in the same pattern.[2]These individuals commit a series of heinous crimes, leaving a trail of terror and devastation in their wake. The term 'Serial Killer' was first coined by investigator Robert Ressler of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 1970.[3]They are also generally called mass murderers by the judicial system and media. The study of serial killers has attracted the attention of many criminologists, psychologists and law enforcement organizations around the world. Understanding the psychological underpinnings of such types of crimes is crucial for effective investigating strategies and preventive measures.

Psychological profiling, also known as criminal profiling or offender profiling, is a valuable tool used by law enforcement agencies to understand the behavioral patterns and motivations of criminals, including serial killers. This process includes shreds of evidence, investigation of the crime scene, developing the psychological profile of the offender, searching for background, and gaining insights into the offender's personality traits and potential triggers for their criminal acts.

Psychological profiling can assist in identifying patterns and connections between seemingly unrelated crimes, allowing law enforcement to link cases and potentially apprehend serial killers before they strike again. A serial killer is a person who commits at least three murders between a certain interval of death. Serial Killers call it a cooling-off period between each murder. Serial Killers have a psychopathologic profile that commits crimes with a certain frequency. They generally try to make a good and respectable image and personality in society.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF SERIAL KILLERS

The term Serial Killer always captivated the public's attention throughout history. The phenomena of serial killing evolved, and there are numerous cases solved or unsolved. There could be various motives for serial killers to kill or murder someone in patterns, they often leave a certain type of remark after killing just to show their authority. The primary motive is to take control of the people.

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[2] Serial Killer <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/> accessed 19 July 2023

[3] Lefebvre, M. (2005). Conspicuous Consumption. *Theory, Culture & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276405053719>accessed 19 July 2023

INFAMOUS SERIAL KILLER CASES

Ted Bundy: Ted Bundy loved attention and love from people, he often tries to make a good image, and he often pretended to be injured and need assistance.He was active during 1970, an American Serial Killer who murdered almost 30 young women. Bundy was once arrested in Colorado but run off police custody eventually he was arrested again and executed in an electric chair in 1989.[4]

Jack The Ripper: He was one of history's most notorious and enigmatic serial killers. He appeared in Whitechapel of London in 1888. As no one knows the real personality of the killer who brutally murdered five women all were prostitutes so, people named him Jack the Ripper. After the profiling of the killer, it was estimated that he was a surgeon, or someone skilled with the scalpel. The killer has never been identified.[5]

Elizabeth Bathory: She was one of the most minacious female serial killers almost 650 girls were victims of her reign of terror. She tortured young girls who are mostly peasants, widows, or orphans. As she belonged to a well-known and noble family of the Hungarian Kingdom of 16th Century Europe, she never faced any type of trial instead she was confined in a windowless room, and eventually died after five years.[6]

Peter Niers: He murdered almost 544 people in the span of 1566 to 1581. His modus operandi was to rob and murdered his victims and also ate the fetus of the pregnant women victims. He was arrested by the police on 13 September 1581 and quartered alive on the breaking wheel three days later and died.[7]

TYPOLOGY AND CLASSIFICATION OF SERIAL KILLERS

The development of these classifications and types of serial killers was the need of the hour for understanding the patterns and behavior of killers and making laws and strategies accordingly.

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[4] Newcomb, Tim. "7 of History's Most Notorious Serial Killers ". Encyclopedia Britannica, 17 Oct. 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/list/>7-of-historys-most-notorious-serial-killers. Accessed 20 July 2023.
[5] *Ibid[4]*
[6] The History and Profiling of Serial Killer; IAN, February 24, 2023, <https://thecrimewire.com/> accessed 20 July 2023
[7] The 10 Biggest Serial Killers in History <The 10 Biggest Serial Killers in History - All Top Everything> accessed 20 July 2023

One of the most common classifications of serial killers based on their behavior at crime scenes is Organized and Disorganized Killers.

Organized and Disorganized Serial Killers: Organized Serial Killers are intelligent and plan their crimes meticulously. They have control over their victims and leave less evidence at the crime scene. They are socially skilled and generally have a good image and personality in their community. For example, John Wayne Gacy was married, and people like him in his community, he plans his action in a very systematic way and used to dress up as Pogo the Clown to execute his crimes. On the other hand, Unorganized Serial Killers are less intelligent and messier, they used to leave the crime scenes more chaotic and felt like they were suffering from a mental disorder as they are socially inept, mentally inept, and sexually inept, they are the opposite to organized one[8].

Another Classification is based on their motives to carry out the crimes. The above categorization is described their characteristics and not motives. There are currently four types of Serial Killers.

Hedonistic Serial Killers: They kill people for their pleasure only. It can be in any form like sexual gratification or financial gain etc. Giving pain and seeing their victims die is an immense pleasure for them. They can go beyond any social and ethical norms of the society. This can be further divided into subcategories as it is a complex type. These subcategories are Lust, Thrill, and Comfort[9].

Visionary Serial killers: They kill people because they believe someone is commanding them. They are disorganized killers and generally suffer from some mental disorders. They do not put any effort to hide the crime or don't have an action plan to execute the crime. The best example of this is Herbert Mullin who killed 13 people as a "blood sacrifice"[10].

Mission-Oriented Serial Killers: These people only murder a certain type of people just to finish that community from society. They don't have any personal attachments or grudges

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[8] Organized and Disorganized Serial Killers; Act for Libraries <Organized and Disorganized Serial Killers | Actforlibraries.org> accessed 20 July 2023

[9] Typologies of Serial Killers; Studocu,<Typologies OF Serial Killers - TYPOLOGIES OF SERIAL KILLERS Serial killers are defined as - Studocu> accessed 20 July 2023

[10] The Four Types of Serial Killers <The four types of serial killers: Visionary, Mission, Hedonistic & Power. (thisinterestsme.com)> accessed 20 July 2023

from their victims. They believe that they're meant to cleanse society and are popularly known as cause killers[11].

Power/ Control Serial Killers: This is the most common type as they want to gain power and authority over their victims. They are organized and plan their actions before execution. As they always have feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness, they felt empowerment and a sense of achievement by dominating and killing their victims.

Studying these typologies and classifications helps investigators identify patterns and profile the killers for prevention and catch the killer.

THE ROLE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (WHICH MAKES THEM A SERIAL KILLER)

Adverse childhood experience plays an important role in shaping psychological development and behavior throughout life. It is essential to understand these factors which later contribute to the criminal actions of that child. We will explore three key aspects to acknowledge this behavior that leads a child to a serial killer.

Childhood Abuse and Neglect: We cannot neglect the relationship between childhood abuse and a serial killer as we have seen many cases where a child who was the victim of abuse, neglected by parents, and deeply traumatized in childhood became a serial killer. According to criminologist Doctor Adrian Raine, both social and biological factors contribute to the making of a serial killer and develop "secret aggressive fantasies"[12]. Children who have been subjected to abuse or neglect may grow up with a strong feeling of mistrust for other people and have trouble forming loving connections. They may also display violence, antisocial behavior, a lack of empathy, or guilt, all of which are traits frequently associated with serial murders. However, we need to understand that it is not mandatory that people who have faced childhood trauma and neglect become serial killers but it can play a major role in becoming one.

Family Dynamics and Parental Influence: Family dynamics and parents' relationship with their children play an important role in the psychological development of the child.

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[11] Randy Kraft, News by Murder Town;Uncovering of Dark History of Serial Killers: A timeline <Uncovering the Dark History of Serial Killers: A Timeline - Randy Kraft> accessed 20 July 2023
[12] Childhood Trauma As the Biggest Drive of Serial Killers, April 20, 2023; <Childhood Trauma As The Biggest Drive Of Serial Killers [Free Essay Sample], 2274 words | WritingBros> accessed 20 July 2023

Dysfunctional families are categorized with abuse, violence, and absent parental figure that badly harms the child's emotional health. Many serial killers who have experienced childhood trauma or early separation from their mothers have learned to suppress empathy and suffered damage to the areas of the brain that control emotional impulses[13]. Children may grow up with these feelings of rejection, neglect, and worthlessness. These feelings can lead to feelings of rage, rebellion, and want to gain power and terror in extreme cases. Most of them do all these crimes or mass murders just to gain attention and fame from the media and society.

The Macdonald Triad and Its Implications: Macdonald Triad or Triad of Sociopathy was first proposed by psychiatrist J.M. Macdonald as a thesis in 1963[14]. This thesis proposed three sets of characters observed in childhood may be predictive of later violent behavior including serial killers. The three characters of the Macdonald Triad are:

1. Cruelty to Animals
2. Obsession with starting fires
3. Bed-Wetting past the age of five years old

However, this theory also got criticism from people for lack of research, testing, and empirical shreds of evidence, etc. because serial killers exhibit more characteristics in their childhood which can be the major reason for their violent behavior. To sum up, Childhood experience, family dynamics, rejection, abuse all these behavior plays a crucial role in the development of a child. It can be beneficial for us to recognize and approach these things on a serious note for preventive measures and to address the root cause of these violent behaviors.

SIGNATURE BEHAVIORS AND RITUALS

Signature Behaviors and Ritual shows the unique psychology of serial killers on the crime scene. Serial Killers often develop a signature behavior to claim their authority, individuality, and personal mark on the crime scene. This serves to gratify them emotionally during the act of murder. It can be repetitive and ritualistic and may evolve. It is necessary to understand this ritual and repetitive behavior to strategies the investigation and capture the killer predominantly for prevention purposes. These actions serve the killer's psychological

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[13] Central Community College, Serial Killers <https://libguides.cccneb.edu/> accessed 20 July 2023

[14] True Crime Lists, The Macdonald Triad and Dark Triad: The Psychology of Serial Killers; June 15, 2022; <https://truecrimelists.com/the-macdonald-triad-and-dark-triad-the-psychology-of-serial-killers> accessed 20 July 2023

demands and are regarded as their "calling card." For instance, a serial murderer might pose their victims in the same way each time or leave a certain item or statement as a message at the crime site.

VICTIM SELECTION AND PROFILING

Victimology is the study of victim characteristics and it is crucial to understand this to know the preferences of serial killers to select the victims. Serial Killers target their victims based on factors such as age, gender, occupation, or any other personal characteristics. Childhood traumas and unresolved psychological issues contribute to victim selection. Sometimes they choose their victims as an opportunity and without any preferences[15]. These signature behaviors and rituals also aid in predicting the type of victim a serial killer may target next. Criminal profiling and offender profiling which is an investigating tool that helps to enable preventive measures and law enforcement.

MODUS OPERANDI

Modus Operandi is a method adopted by serial killers to commit murders. Modus Operandi is something that a killer must do in the execution of the crime. For example, the killer must have the means to control the victim at the crime scene such as tying in a particular way. It is subject to change and will not remain the same in all situations[16]. The Modus Operandi of Jack the Ripper was that he attacked prostitutes with a knife and cut their throats first so that they could not scream for help. It includes the choice of weapons and the way to dispose of the body. Modus Operandi and Signature Behavior are different but essential to understand both of them for criminal profiling.

CRIMINAL PROFILING AND INVESTIGATIVE TECHNIQUES

Criminal Profiling is an investigating tool, forensic technique, and process in which the nature of a crime is used to make inferences about the personality and other characteristics of the likely offenders such as Modus Operandi and signature behavior[17]. Criminologists and investigating officers use their expertise, inferences, and experiences to deduce the leads and narrow down their search to catch the offender.

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[15] Michael Munday; What makes a Serial Killer<https://michaelmunday.com.au/> accessed 21 July 2023

[16] Scott A. Bonn, Serial killers: Modus Operandi, Signature, Staging, and Posing; Understanding and classifying serial killer crime scene, June 29, 2015;<https://www.psychologytoday.com/> accessed 21 July 2023

[17] Wayne A. Petherick, Brent E. Turvey, Criminal Profiling (Fourth Edition), 2012; <https://www.sciencedirect.com/> accessed 21 July 2023

The FBI's Profiling Program began in 1970, as an informal analysis. The FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU)is a specialized division within the National Centre of Analysis of Violent Crimes (NCAVC). It plays a crucial role in developing the criminal profile of the perpetrator and helps to predict the offender. Ted Bindy, George Metesky, Joseph Paul Franklin, Wayne Williams, and Andrew Cunanan are some serial killers who are caught by the FBI using Criminal Profiling[18].

The system of criminal profiling which is used by the FBI includes six steps process to develop the report. The first step is Profiling Input which includes every minute detail of the crime which is present at the crime scene such as crime scene photographs, medical examiner's report etc. The second step is Constructing a Decision Process Model which includes fundamental characteristics of the murder, if the murder is single or serial or whether the victim was killed on the crime scene or anywhere else etc. The third step is Crime Assessment in this step, the profiler tries to characterize the offenders based on their behavior at the crime scene whether the offender was organized or disorganized, or a mix of both. The fourth step is Criminal Profile, in this process, the FBI profiler produces reports for local investigators that predict the possible characteristics of that offender such as physical and social character, personal life, etc. The fifth step is Investigation in this step local police incorporate all the details and investigate using the FBI's profiling report. Local police use investigative strategies that are likely to lead to an arrest. The last step is Apprehension, in this process, The accountability or performance-proof step is now. By comparing an FBI profile's information and attributes to those of the real offender in custody, one can establish how accurate it is[19]. This criminal Profiling report is essential to catch the offender and end the series of heinous crimes.

INDIAN SERIAL KILLER: A CASE STUDY

SEBASTIAN: Cheviathan Sebastian, born in 1981, was an illiterate, single man who murdered more than four people between 1996 and 2005, in the Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala and Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu[20].His Modus Operandi was to sexually

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[18] Five Serial Killers caught using Criminal Profiling <https://www.online-psychology-degrees.org/> accessed 21 July 2023

[19] Scott A. Bonn, How the FBI Profile Serial Offenders, Profiling is the comprehensive six-step process; May 6, 2019, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/> accessed 21 July 2023

[20] Deepak, S A. (2021). Serial Killings in India: Case Studies and Profiling Strategies. October 2021; <https://www.researchgate.net/> accessed 22 July 2023

assault young girls in the village in which he tries to make a good image and gain trust. He attacked his victims at night and sexually assault them and eventually murdered them.

ANALYSIS

As Serial Killer is not a new term to us, a person who murdered three or more people as separate events but somehow related by his signature behavior or modus operandi to serve an abnormal gratification is known as a serial killer. They often act as a well-wisher of victims and have a good image or personality in society.

We can classify serial killers based on their behavior at the crime scene and on their motives to carry out the crime.

We can recognize Organized serial killers based on the intelligence shown at the crime scene, less intelligent or messier killers can be classified as disorganized. There are four types of killers based on motive which are Visionary, Mission Oriented, Hedonistic, and power control serial killers.

Early childhood traumas, worthlessness, rejection, and all extremely negative experience could contribute to the making of a serial killer. These people show empowerment by killing and assaulting victims to cope with their failures as a child.

Investigating authority and forensic experts play a crucial role and have a very challenging job to make criminal profiles and make linkages to solve the case and catch the criminal.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided valuable insight into the psychological profiles of serial killers and given us a better understanding of their motivations and actions. We investigated the various and complex characteristics of serial killers by looking at historical examples, typologies, and classifications. The role of early childhood development as a critical factor and the role of investigating agencies in criminal profiling of offenders.

But there is a gap between our research and the minds of serial killers. Criminal profiling also has many challenges and limitations in itself like the Evolution and adaption of serial killers, lack of empirical validation, misinterpretation or misuse, etc. We need to sharpen up our limited knowledge about these serious issues. Here are some suggestions to cope with this.

1. Explore more about the minds, signature behavior, and modus operandi of serial killers.
2. Create more public awareness by telling them about the characteristics of a serial killer so that they can be more careful.
3. Interpret the crime scene using an expert's team and not local investigating officers.