

## Exploring the Determinants of Crimes of Passion: A Review on the Newspaper Reports

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### ABSTRACT

There is a fundamental need for positive and lasting relationships. Since our birth, our views about others, our perceptions, beliefs and values largely depend on the attachments we develop with our immediate caregivers. In this review paper, the intentions and the motives or what led the perpetrator to attack a person, lover or spouse that they once loved so dearly will be explored. Along with which psycho-socio determinants of social acceptance and rejection will be discussed, emphasizing on the emotional, cognitive, behavioral and biological responses of individuals committing crimes of passion. The psychological consequences following social rejection offering a theoretical account to explain when and why social rejection produces desirable and undesirable outcomes will be reviewed followed by understanding what coping methods people adopt to cope with the pain of social rejection. The paper concludes by identifying heightened and diminished responses to social rejection, providing insights into the need for instilling an awareness of social acceptance and social rejection, coping mechanisms and our responses to rejection in relationships at a very early age to prevent from committing crimes in the name of love.

**Keywords:** *Social rejection, crimes, passion, love, attachments, early attachments, Rejection sensitivity*

Crimes in India exist in various forms, ranging from murder, theft, money laundering, cheating, etc. These have a very different statistical trends that changes with time and evolution of human perceptions. There have been tremendous efforts from the government to curb and prevent the occurrence of such offences but in vain. There are considerable changes to the laws that needs to be made. Above all, it's very important to understand the root cause of such offences. The experiences, thought processes, feelings an individual engages in prior to committing a crime is an area to be explored. Rehabilitation and preventive measures also play considerable role in curbing crimes. This paper focuses on understanding the psychological makeup and behavioral patterns of people committing specifically crimes of passion.

Some of the factors that precipitate crimes of passion include unrequited love, suspicion of infidelity, jealousy, rejected love, acting out of impulse, an attempt to protect one's

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reputation or hide any immoral act. It is a crime committed as a result of rage or heartbreak, in other words while in a passionate state. The passion can be either due to a heartbreak, cause by break-up in relationships, or out of rage, during heated arguments escalating to something horrible. Crimes of passion statistics of the US show that, out of all the homicides committed in a given year, most offenders know their victims personally (legaldictionary.net)

Not all crimes of passion are between marital couples. Aggression involved in a passion of crime is that of hostility. There are crime reports of homicides committed due to hit of rage or that cause accidental deaths. Pre-mediated crimes and crimes of passion are to be differentiated. According to the Texas' murder statute crime of passion can be defined as:

The main difference between a crime of passion and premediated crime is that the crime must be immediate to follow and directly related to the event that triggered the offender to committing the crime.

<b>Crimes of passion</b>	<b>Pre-mediated crimes</b>
Immediately follows	Cool off periods and planning time involved
In a fit of rage or anger, reckless	Calculated

The prevalence of criminal offending behaviour has been high and the occurrence of gruesome crimes even higher. There are still those that are unreported or not available in the public domain. However, there also have been diligent efforts of the forces in cracking the cases and nabbing the offenders. In order to prevent similar offences being committed in future as well as rehabilitate the offenders its essential to go deep into the psychological makeup of the offenders. Society and to a larger extent our close entity, our family, plays a major role in shaping our behaviour, ideologies, beliefs and our identity. Once an individual develops a sense of self, he may choose his own path and believe what is wrong and what is right based on the values, belief system that he has created for himself. Morality regulates social behaviour. Our morality construct is bound by the foundations forming our perceptions, values, attitude toward society, communities as well as towards ourselves. There are two types of moral values- binding values, that govern behaviour in groups, individualizing values, which promote personal values and freedom.

The behaviour of the individuals who feel rejected, worthless, abandoned takes a toll rendering them to behave in inappropriate ways. Those vulnerable fall prey to such heinous means are usually the ones who have low sense of self-worth and sense of insecurity. The person doesn't value himself or herself and gives more importance to their partners. This really breaks down the individual when the significant other doesn't reciprocate or abruptly ends the relationship. There is an influx of emotional reactions that may lead to complex feelings of sadness, anger and sometimes low self-esteem. There are persistent feelings of not being good enough striving to be constantly loved by the other person in the process of losing oneself. This may sow the seeds of vengeance, followed by thoughts and actions that may be detrimental to their wellbeing.

Feelings and emotions that arise out of or follow negative events play a pivotal role in shaping their thoughts and attitudes towards the individual in context. Feelings of not being worthy enough, and thoughts of abandonment can ruin anyone's sense of self-worth. Being rejected was the common factor in the above discussed cases. Rejection can lead to a number of adverse psychological consequences. There is a cascade of emotional and

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cognitive processes. It reduces performance on difficult intellectual tasks, and can also contribute to aggression and poor impulse control. These processes elicit anger, frustration, sadness, jealousy, hostility, and feelings of worthlessness. This reflects in their perceptions and begin to have feelings of hatred toward others and themselves. Aloofness, recluse, and avoiding social contact become the characteristics that shape their further attachments with people.

Murdering or inflicting any kind of harm to a person one loves never crosses the mind of that lover but, it is the various things that trigger the murderous emotions.

**Ignoring existing problems.** Unable to identify red flags early in relationships. Taking or proceeding with the relationship knowing one person is not interested. Accumulation of pent-up rage over-time.

**Jealousy.** Igniting feelings of jealousy. If not dealt with, appropriately it will span out of control. Jealousy is usually not seen as a problem, unless it is acted upon. People often harbor feelings of inadequacy or inferiority and tend to compare themselves to others, if they are prone to intense jealousy or possessiveness. Jealousy is a byproduct of fear, fear of loss, fear of being abandoned, or fear of not being good enough. At its peak, it becomes impossible to distinguish between natural feelings of protectiveness and irrational suspicion. Jealousy eventually, displays early warning signs of unhealthy behaviour that can lead to other forms of abuse. Unhealthy relationships begin with suspicion and hunting for cheating evidence, breaking down the jealous partner's self-esteem with accusations, name-calling and threats before progressing onto emotional and physical abuse.

**Emotional and physical abuse.** Experience of gender-based violence. The victims choose to stay in the abusive relationships and abuse piled up on them causes the psychological damage causing them to seek revenge on their attack.

**Drugs and Alcohol.** Any substance that affects the brain's capacity to reason.

There is the need to detect these issues and patterns to prevent from unnecessary deaths from taking place. There are various patterns of attachments people develop or form in their early stages of life that lays the foundation for further attachments and relationships in the future. Identifying those patterns is necessary in all walks of life: in college, university, workplace, in marriages. Looking out for early signs and red flags in the partners or anyone close will eventually reduce the occurrences of gruesome crimes of passion if not curb the those completely.

Recognizing the patterns of offenses, abusive behaviour and modus operandi can aid in developing profiles in nabbing the accused. Most of the rejection and jealousy cases involve the accused inflicting pain in the partner and self (Douglas & Munn, 1992).

Aggression is defined as behaviors or actions that are intended to hurt, harm or injure another person, varying in form (Dodge, Coie, & Lyman, 2006). Physical forms of aggression involve engaging in behaviors such as hitting, pushing, punching and kicking, that causes harm via a physical force or a threat of a physical force (Dodge, Coie, & Lyman, 2006; Murray-Close et al., 2010). Relational aggression includes spreading malicious rumors, lies, gossips or secrets, as well as intentionally ignoring or excluding a person a from an activity or group interactions (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Murray-Close et al., 2010). Research findings of a study conducted by Crick and Grotpeter (1995) discussed that girls

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are significantly more overtly aggressive than boys and boys were found to be significantly more overtly aggressive than girls. Relational aggression is found to be significantly related to social-psychological maladjustments (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Aggression is an action that is intentionally carried out with a proximate goal to cause harm to another person who is motivated to avoid that harm. There are three characteristics of aggression. First, aggression is an observable behaviour. Any thoughts associated to cause harm or feelings of anger is not aggression. Second, the act has to be intentional. Accidentally, bumping into a person is not considered aggression due to lack of intentionality, whatever harm may occur or giving a flu shot to child cannot be regarded as aggression since the intent is to protect and not cause harm. Third, the victim must be motivated to avoid harm. In case of masochism, where the individual desires pleasure from being harmed, will not be considered as aggression. Instances of aggression will also not include suicide that is assisted by a loved one.

Violence is aggression that involves a serious physical harm (e.g., an injury that requires medical attention or causes death) as its ultimate goal. To be considered violent an actual harm need not take place. For example, shooting a gun at someone while missing the target person, is still considered a violent behaviour (Allen & Anderson, 2017).

The multidimensional classification approach in studying aggression will bring out several distinctions, many dichotomous, derived from General Aggression Model (GAM). The ambiguity of the dichotomous approach to understanding aggression has led to a model that distinguishes between proximate and ultimate goals of aggression (Allen & Anderson, 2017).

Categorizing aggression into dichotomies is incredibly difficult. Aggression may be reactive or proactive. Reactive aggression is considered affectively 'hot', that is retaliatory, impulsive, angry and hostile behavior, whereas, proactive aggression is considered affectively 'cold', that is, planned, thoughtful, instrumental aggressive behaviour. The primary motive of reactive aggression is causing harm to another, while proactive aggression is primarily motivated by a goal other than harm (e.g., to gain money). However, in practice the two categories are highly correlated and the motives are often mixed. For example, a woman who had been abused by her partner may be feeling the 'heat' of anger and hatred. Instead of reacting impulsively and immediately she may 'coolly' plan a torturous, slow and planned death for her abuser. Much proactive aggression has a 'hot' emotional element similar to reactive aggression. Moreover, acts of reactive aggression may respond to the cues in the environment, such as when the targeted person who just insulted you has held a handgun, reactive aggression will become acts of proactive aggression, that is thoughtful and planned aggression (Allen & Anderson, 2017). Therefore, acts of aggression can have both the elements of reactive as well as proactive aggression.

Aggression may be direct or indirect. The victim is present in the acts of direct aggression whereas, the victim is absent in the acts of indirect aggression. For example, kicking or hitting a person is direct physical aggression, abusing a person is a direct verbal aggression. Slashing the tires of the victim's car when not around or spreading rumors about the victim are examples of indirect aggression.

Aggression can also be displaced. Displaced aggression is when the aggression is displaced on to a substitute target. Triggered displaced aggression occurs when the substitute target

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triggers the aggression with some minor offence. Target is usually unavailable, or an intangible entity or the potential aggressor fears retaliation from the primary instigator. For example, when woman has been yelled at by a coworker, she will try her best to not retaliate and return home to only pick fights with her husband on trivial issues. Whereas, triggered displaced aggression involves an action or minor offence by the husband (substituting target) sets off or triggers the woman's displaced aggression.

### ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION OF THE CASES

Case	Date/year	Perpetrator's Relationship with the victim	Perpetrator's gender	Victim precipitation	Crime Motive	Verdict
Nanavati murder case	1959	Paramour's husband	Male	unknown	Anger	Declared not guilty and was retired as a bench trial
Tandoor Murder case	1999	Husband	Male	Unknown	Eliminate	Served 23 years in jail. Serving life sentence
Madhumita Murder Case	2007	Paramour	Male	Unknown	Eliminate	Serving life sentence
Neeraj Grover murder case	2008	Alleged friendship with fiancé	Male and female	Unknown	Anger. Motive of the female unknown	Male convicted to life imprisonment Female acquitted
Anupama Gulati Murder	2010	Husband	Male	Unknown	Anger and eliminate	Life term
Acid attack case	2022	Dated on social media (hid the marriage of the perpetrator's marital status)	Female	Unknown	Betrayal & social rejection	Fine. Seeking settlement. Further unknown.
Murder-suicide Case Kothamangalam	2022	Dated on social media	Male	Unknown	Betrayal social rejection	Suicide
Greeshma-Sharon Poisoning case	2023	Dated for few years	Female	Unknown	Eliminate	Last known, under treatment for suicide attempts
Shradha Walker Murder Case	2023	Live-in partner	Male	Unknown	Eliminate	In process

#### **Meta-Analytic Evidence:**

**Aggression tested in labs:** Men are more likely to inflict a physical injury, women are more likely to use one or more acts of physical aggression and are more frequent (Archer, J., 2000).

**Gender Differences in aggression:** Studies have also shown that girls prefer verbal, indirect forms of aggression, and boys use physical, direct aggressive strategies (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992).

Reactive aggression has been found to be predicting future proactive aggression for both boys and girls. It has been explained in terms of different ways of reacting to reactive and

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proactive aggression, different functions they serve, and to different types of aggression (Salmivalli, C. & Helteenvuori, T., 2007).

### CONCLUSION

A review of the reports mentioned above indicates that aggression, threat to one's image, hatred, vengeance, inability to handle social rejection, history of abuse, are some of the factors that may precipitate crimes of passion. Maintenance of relationship, the core features of a pleasant relationship, identifying the red-flags early on relationships should also be the focus of the hour along with the focus on individual growth and development. Starting early on about understanding society, social belongingness, social rejection shall inculcate values that are beyond any elementary education. Valuing oneself should be independent of anything, majorly, independent of others' views on ourselves. This paper opens doors for further research.

There is absolute no one way of curbing or preventing such crimes. The factors precipitating and leading causes differ from cases to case. However, it has been observed that in majority of cases, the perpetrator and the victims have been not in touch with the family. Either they are not allowed to or they chose not to. Empirical evidences suggest that parental supervision and monitoring reduce the likelihood of dating violence or partner violence and that a mother's warmth and caregiver's behaviour moderated the relationship between reactive aggression and dating violence (Brendgen, et al. 2001).

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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