

## Necrophilia: An Understanding

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### ABSTRACT

Necrophilia's is not clearly defined anywhere. It is a very old illness but not identify easily. In the recent scenario also the term could not be explored widely. There is few research has been conducted in that area. On the basis of previous history and some case studies depict that this is very harmful not only for the person with disorder even for society also. It can describe an individual's arousal and attraction to fantasies or actual sexual contact with dead people. The necrophile may indulge with the corpse in many ways such as oral sex, penile-vaginal intercourse to anal intercourse, or masturbation in the presence of a body.

The lawmakers and experts consider necrophilia nonconsensual as the deceased individuals cannot give consent. Cognitive Therapy, use of sex-drive reducing medications, assistance to improving social and sexual relations can be helpful in the management for the person suffering from the necrophilia.

**Keywords:** *Necrophilia, Illness, Body, Disorder*

Necrophilia, is often addressed as necrolagnia, necrocoitus, necrochlesis, and thenatophilia (Aggrawal, 2016), is a sexual attraction or sexual act involving corpses. Most necrophiles identify as heterosexual males and fall between the ages of twenty and fifty, but there are also cases of homosexual and/or female necrophiles. Necrophilia is a fairly rare paraphilia but has been practiced all over the world for centuries (Ramsland, 2007). Some necrophiles seek jobs at mortuaries or coroners' offices where they have easy access to dead bodies and are able to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them (Crooks & Karla, 2005). It is classified as a paraphilia by ICD10 and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) (Robin & Duncan, 2002).

### **Historical Background**

In the ancient world, sailors returning corpses to their home country were often accused of necrophilia. In the history, singular accounts of necrophilia have been sporadic. However, written records have highlighted that the practice was present in Ancient Egypt.

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Received: April 29, 2019; Revision Received: June 28, 2019; Accepted: June 28, 2019

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Herodotus has written in 'The Histories' that, to discourage intercourse with a corpse, ancient Egyptians left deceased beautiful women to decay for "three or four days" before giving them to the embalmer (Aggrawal, 2016). He also suggested that Greek tyrant Periander had defiled the corpse of his wife, employing a metaphor: "Periander baked his bread in a cold oven. In the Moche culture, acts of necrophilia have been depicted on ceramics, which reigned in northern Peru from the first to the eighth century. A common idea in these artifacts was masturbation of a male skeleton by a sentient woman. The Hittite law from the 16th century BC through to the 13th century BC explicitly allowed sex with the dead.

The ethnic Xianbei emperor Murong Xi (385–407) of what is now Northeast China, the Later Yan state had intercourse with the corpse of his beloved empress Fu Xunying, after the latter was already cold and put into the coffin (Steve, 2014).

In Renaissance Italy, following the reputed moral collapse brought about by the Black Death and before the Roman Inquisition of the Counter-Reformation, the literature was replete with sexual references; these include necrophilia, in the case of the epic poem Orlando Innamorato by Matteo Maria Boiardo, first published in 1483 (Weismantel, 2004). In a notorious modern example, American serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer was a necrophiliac. Dahmer wanted to create a sex slave that would mindlessly consent to whatever he wanted. When his attempts failed, and his male victim died, he would keep the corpse until it decomposed beyond recognition, continuously masturbating and performing sexual intercourse on the body. In order to be aroused, he had to murder his male victims before performing sexual intercourse with them. Dahmer pointed out that he killed his victims because they would leave after having sex, and also be angry with him for drugging them. Dennis Nilsen, a British serial killer is also considered to have been a necrophiliac (Roland, 2014).

Although necrophilia was mentioned for the first time by name in 1850 by Belgian psychiatrist Joseph Guislain. The term *necrophilia* was not broadly used until Richard von Krafft-Ebing published his 1894 work **Psychopathia Sexualis**, which called necrophilia a "horrible manifestation of sadism." His misunderstanding continued through 1941 when Abraham A. Brill stated that necrophiliacs were psychotic, mentally deficient, and incapable of finding a consenting partner<sup>1</sup>.

### CAUSES OF NECROPHILIA

- 1) The desire to have sex with corpse usually arises from an **intense fear of interacting** with potential living partners. Necrophiles view corpses as emotionally or physically non-threatening, therefore presenting an easier outlet for expression, sexual attraction, and sexual acts.
- 2) **Corpses cannot reject, disagree, manipulate**, or abuse them. They may also enjoy the feeling of being completely in control.
- 3) **Lack of sexual inhibitions:** Necrophiles who suffer from a lack of sexual inhibitions, recognition of social boundaries, or general remorse for the consequences of their actions.
- 4) **Psychological conditions:** such as psychopathy or sociopathy, include an inability to experience remorse or feelings of empathy. Necrophiles who commit murder in order to obtain corpses -- or who mutilate or eat the corpses after sexual intercourse -- are likely to suffer from psychological conditions. Having intercourse with the

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departed loved one may also be symptomatic of a romantic obsession, or an extreme denial that the loved one has deceased. In this situation, the surviving individual attempts to use sexual activities to maintain an imagined relationship with the departed. The necrophile may view sexual actions as loving and affectionate, and as a link to what may have been. Such individuals compare their actions to circumstances like the scene in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, where Juliet kisses Romeo after he kills himself with poison (Ramsland, 2007).

However, the specific idea of having sex with a deceased partner, especially a while after death, is similar to the romantic delusions exhibited by some stalkers who obsessively pursue their previous partners long after the relationship has ended. As with stalking, there are cases where the obsessed individual has had no previous, romantic connection with their object of desire. Furthermore, sex with a dead, non-consenting spouse or partner can be considered a form of domestic rape (Robert & Karla, 2005).

### CLASSIFICATION

In the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition (DSM-5), recurrent, intense sexual interest in corpses can be diagnosed under Other Specified Paraphilic Disorder (necrophilia) when it causes marked distress or impairment in important areas of functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

A ten-tier classification of necrophilia exists (Aggrawal, 2009):-

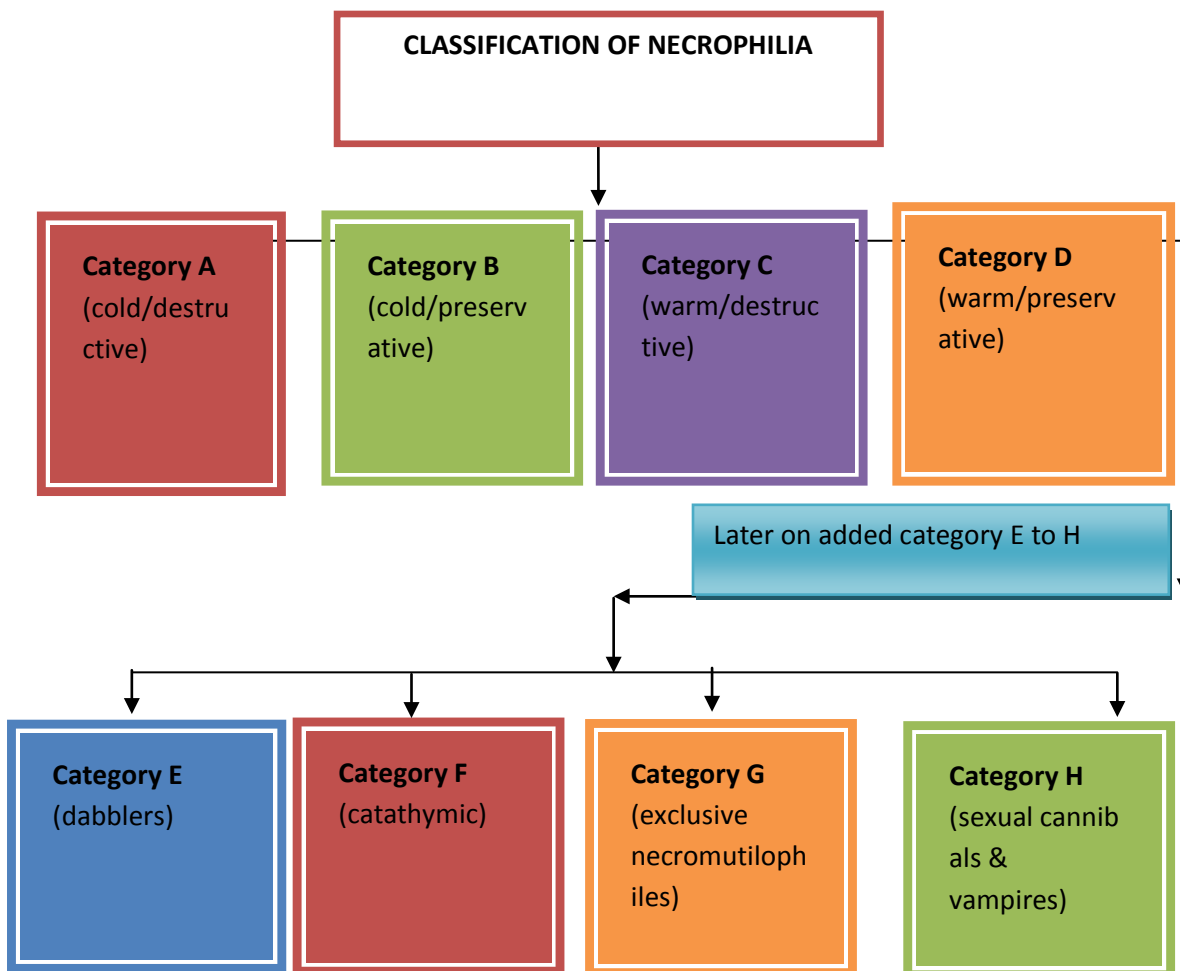
- (i) **Role players:** People who get aroused from pretending their life partner is dead during sexual activity.
- (ii) **Romantic necrophiliacs:** Bereaved people who remain attached to their dead lover's body.
- (iii) **Necrophilic fantasizers:** People who fantasize about necrophilia, but never actually have sex with a corpse.
- (iv) **Tactile necrophiliacs:** People who are aroused by touching or stroking a corpse, without engaging in intercourse.
- (v) **Fetishistic necrophiliacs:** People who remove objects (e.g., panties or a tampon) or body parts (e.g., a finger or genitalia) from a corpse for sexual purposes, without engaging in intercourse.
- (vi) **Necromutilomaniacs:** People who derive pleasure from mutilating a corpse while masturbating, without engaging in intercourse.
- (vii) **Opportunistic necrophiliacs:** who normally have no interest in necrophilia, but take the opportunity when it arises.
- (viii) **Regular necrophiliacs:** People who preferentially have intercourse with the dead.
- (ix) **Homicidal necrophiliacs:** Necrosadists, people who commit murder in order to have sex with the victim.
- (x) **Exclusive necrophiliacs:** who have an exclusive interest in sex with the dead, and cannot perform at all for a living partner.

Aggrawal (2009) only captures homicide in one category "Homicidal Necrophiles," and he lists these people as capable of having intercourse with the living, but would be willing to kill to satisfy their need for sex with a corpse. This classification seems strange in that but it has linked with homicide only with those who able to have sex with the living, but also enjoy sex with corpses. However, there are six other categories in his list (classes IV-VII, and X) in which homicide could be used to create access to a corpse. The need to identify possible acts of necrophilia and necrophilic desires and intentions is crucial, not just for law enforcement,

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but academically, too, to see if it has entered into a person's pathology. Given the cultural taboo on this subject, it is unlikely that those favoring necrophilic behavior would share this information publicly. As difficult as this is, I believe there could be methods of possible identification.

Additionally, criminologist Lee Mellor's (2016) typology of homicidal necrophiles consists of eight categories (A–H), and is based on the combination of two behavioral axes: destructive (offender mutilates the corpse for sexual reasons)-preservative (offender does not), and cold (offender used the corpse sexually two hours after death) – warm (offender used the corpse sexually earlier than two hours after death).



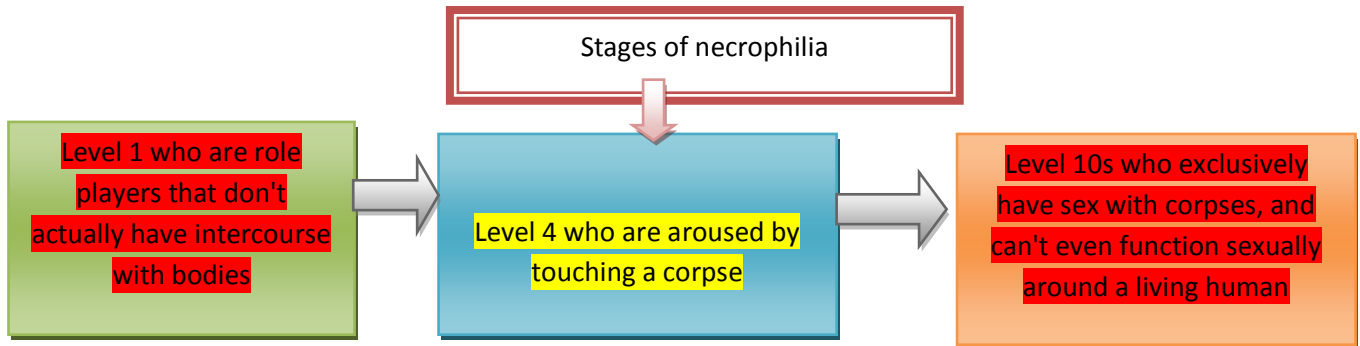
Dabblers have transitory opportunistic sexual relations with corpses, but this is not their preference. The Category F homicidal necrophiles indulge in postmortem sex acts only when they are in a catathymic state. Exclusive mutilophiles get aroused purely from mutilating the corpse, while sexual cannibals and vampires are often sexually aroused by eating human body parts. Category A, C, and F offenders may also cannibalize or drink the blood of their victims.

However, even this system of classification comes with limitations. Each of these categories can only be viewed as temporal at best. A person's needs and desires over the course of their life can evolve and fluctuate, or even go dormant or vanish entirely. For this reason, it is easy

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to see that a necrophile in custody could fit more than one of these categories when examining their history and one cannot rule out how their necrophilic behavior could have escalated, not just from thoughts to actions, but from lawful to unlawful behavior.

According to the DSM-5, there are ten different types of necrophiliacs. According to DSM necrophilia disorder varied from 1<sup>st</sup> level to 10<sup>th</sup> level in term of severity. The description of stages given below:



Necrophiliacs seek their version of love from corpses because they are afraid of rejection. Rossman and Resnick (1989) highlighted "the most common motive of the true necrophiles was to possess an unresisting and unrejecting partner".

### RESEARCH ON NECROPHILIA

Necrophilia is often assumed to be rare, but no data for its prevalence in the general population exists (Milner, Dopke & Crouch, 2008). Experts debate the prevalence of necrophilia, but the current figures remain between 0- 5% of the total population (Aggrawal, 2016). Rosman and Resnick (1989) reviewed 122 cases of necrophilia and found that 92% were male and 8% were female. With morgue attendant, hospital orderly, and cemetery employee being the most common jobs 57% of the genuine necrophiles had occupational access to corpses. The researchers theorized that either of the following situations could be antecedents to necrophilia: The necrophile develops poor self-esteem, perhaps due in part to a significant loss; (a) They are very fearful of rejection by others and they desire a sexual partner who is incapable of rejecting them; (b) They are fearful of the dead, and transform their fear—by means of reaction formation—into a desire. Necrophiles develop an exciting fantasy of intercourse with a corpse, sometimes after exposure to a corpse. It was highlighted that in a sample of genuine necrophiles: 68% were motivated by a desire for an unresisting and unrejecting partner; 21% by a want for reunion with a lost partner; 15% by a desire for comfort or to overcome feelings of isolation; 15% by sexual attraction to dead people; and 12% by a desire to satiate low self-esteem by expressing power over a corpse.

In the psychopathy or psychological conditions, the IQ related data was limited, but not abnormally low. Nearly half of the true Necrophiles had a personality disorder, and 11% of them were psychotic. Rosman and Resnick (1989) concluded that the data challenged the conventional view of necrophiles as generally psychotic, mentally deficient, or unable to obtain a consenting partner.

### NECROPHILIA AND MEDICOLEGAL ASPECT OF INDIA

Laws, especially in India, stay away from explicitly defining it or classifying it as a crime. Most cases of necrophilia get filed under Section 297 of the Indian Penal Code which says:

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Whoever, with the intention of wounding the feelings of any person, or of insulting the religion of any person, or with the knowledge that the feelings of any person are likely to be wounded, or that the religion of any person is likely to be insulted thereby, commits any trespass in any place of worship or on any place of sculpture, or any place set apart from the performance of funeral rites or as a depository for the remains of the dead, or offers any indignity to any human corpse, or causes disturbance to any persons assembled for the performance of funeral ceremonies, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both. In certain cases, necrophilia can also be punished under Section 377, which criminalizes 'unnatural sex.' This is the same section of the Indian Penal Code which criminalizes sexual intercourse between people of the same sex. No section of Indian law criminalizes or punishes necrophilia as a separate crime.

There were some cases of necrophilia has been found in India. In 2006, 19 dismembered bodies, of women and children, were found in a house in Noida's Nithari area. The owner of the house, Moninder Singh Pandher, and his helper, Surinder Koli, were arrested after neighbors discovered the remains of eight children from the drain of the house. Later investigations revealed more skeletons in and around the house. During questioning, in March 2007, Koli admitted to sexual assault, murder, and necrophilia. But because of a lack of legislation around it, and because there was no trespassing of a burial site, in this case, Koli was never charged with necrophilia. In October 2015, a 26-year-old woman's body was dug out of a grave and raped by three men in Ghaziabad. Her body was found 20 feet away from the grave. Earlier this month, a man was arrested in Delhi for raping the body of a girl, which was later found abandoned.

### ***Distorted Facts about Necrophilia***

- (i) **It's Hardly a Mental Disorder:** According to The American DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition), necrophilia doesn't get its own spot as a tried-and-true mental illness. It belongs to a broader category called paraphilias, which is sexual attraction or practices with people or objects other than genital stimulation between consenting adults. The only reason that necrophilia is on the list is that the dead cannot consent. Surprisingly, nailing down exactly what makes necrophilia a mental disorder has proven rather challenging. According to Martin Kafka (2009) in the paper "The DSM Diagnostic Criteria for Paraphilia Not Otherwise Specified," there really isn't many new data on necrophilia besides a 1989 study by Rosman and Resnick (1989).

In the aforementioned paper by Kafka, he writes: *Necrophilia could be considered as a fetish variant as the sexualized object of desire is "non-living". Necrophilia can be followed by "sadistic acts" and sexually motivated murder, certainly not behaviors associated with Fetishism as it has been currently defining* (Kafka 2009). This means that the only real reason that necrophilia "may be" a sexual fetish is that a dead person cannot consent.

- (ii) **It is A Paraphilia:** Paraphilias become mental disorders when they significantly impact someone's life in a meaningful way, much like alcohol isn't alcoholism until it becomes a real pain for someone. Paraphilias can either involve objects (e.g., shoes, household appliances, foods, clothing) or acts (e.g., exposing one's self to an unwilling party, being whipped, being bound). This is important because not everyone who enjoys a spanking or leather is "mentally ill." On the other side of that coin, however, the main factor in necrophilia being a mental disorder is the fact that it's illegal.

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- (iii) **Psychopathia Sexualis:** An abnormal and decidedly perverse sensuality is required to overcome the natural repugnance which man has for a corpse, and permit a feeling of pleasure to be experienced with a cadaver”. Unfortunately, in the majority of the cases reported, the mental condition was not examined; so that the question of whether necrophilia is compatible with mental soundness must remain open. But anyone having knowledge of the horrible aberrations of the sexual instinct would not venture, without further consideration, to answer the question in the negative (Krafft-Ebing, 1886).
- (iv) **There Are Four Types:** a) Homicidal necrophiles, b) Regular necrophiles, c) Fantasizers, d) Pseudo-necrophiles (or pseudo-necrophilic killers) Rosman and Resnick (1889). All of them are described with some fairly telling data. For example, 68 percent of necrophilia comes from people who express a desire to be with a partner who cannot reject them in any way. Even more disturbing, 42 percent of necrophiles had actually committed homicide to obtain a body with which to act out their desires. This paints a picture in the opposite direction—that many necrophiles go to the extreme of killing another person to act out their urges. However, we can be somewhat sympathetic to the 21% of necrophiles studied who desired a “union with a lost love. Strangely, only 15% are individuals who simply have a sexual attraction to dead people, a number you would expect to be higher among a group of people defined by the fact that they do the deed with the dead.
- (v) **It is a guy thing:** Necrophilia is a particularly male thing. According to research data available, necrophilia usually involves males who are driven to dug up freshly buried bodies or often seek employment in morgues or funeral parlours (in fact, in the biggest study of necrophilic behaviour found that 57% of necrophiliacs were employed in a profession that gave them access to dead bodies<sup>18</sup>. Women were only present to any noticeable degree in “regular necrophilia” at 15% of the participants sampled. This may suggest that opportunity comes before motive. Occasionally, there is an emphasis on the extremely rare case of a woman necrophile. One such example occurred in America in 2013 when a woman who was apparently “obsessed with necrophilia” convinced two male partners to aid her in killing two other men. She wanted to have sex with the two live men on top of the two male corpses that had been freshly killed. And she succeeded with both the murders and the sex act. In 2014, 20-year-old Alissa Massaro (some sources spell her name “Alisa”) agreed to a reduced sentence in exchange for testifying against the conspirators who helped to fulfill her necrophilic fantasies. She was released in 2018 after serving less than four years of her sentence<sup>3</sup>.
- (vi) **Necrophilic Homicide:** Necrophilic homicide is the most terrifying of them all. The necrophiliacs act out their fantasies on unwilling participants. The victims are killed so that the perpetrators can satisfy their violent urges. These disturbing cases include serial killers and depraved madmen who murder the victim, dispose of the body, and then retrieve the body to either relive the killing experience or just enjoy sex with it again and again (Stein, Schlesinger & Pinizzotto, 2010).
- (vii) **Regular Necrophilia:** For regular necrophiles, sexual attraction toward or intercourse with corpses is a part of their everyday lives. In fact, necrophilic fantasies are a part of “regular necrophilia.” For a variety of reasons, these people generally are not satisfied with having sex with live people. Sometimes, they just aren’t attracted to living people.
- (viii) **Pseudo-Necrophiles:** Pseudo-necrophiles generally have sex with dead bodies in passing—when a rare moment presents itself at just the right time.

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- (ix) **Necrophilia in History:** History is rife with necrophilic descriptions, art, and literature. As can be imagined by their practices of embalming and their religious obsession with the afterlife, the ancient Egyptians had a lot to say about necrophilia. Herodotus, an ancient Greek writer, gives this advice to mourners who want the corpses of their friends and family members to remain safe, secure, and chaste: Often the wives of men of rank were not given to be embalmed immediately after death, nor indeed are any of the more beautiful and valued women. The body is kept for three or four days before being handed over to embalmers. This is done to prevent indignities.
- (x) **Modern Necrophilia:** Modern culture is also filled with references to and artful displays of necrophilia. Heavy metal imagery, particularly in the case of death metal bands such as Cannibal Corpse, often makes necrophilia a dominant lyrical theme throughout their discography.
- (xi) **Is Necrophilia Wrong?:** The dead will not thank us for the coffins made to their specifications, nor compliment us on the choice of flowers or gravestones. However, they cannot do so, since they are, by definition, dead: hence they feel nothing, they cannot communicate and they are no longer living. That is why we should find the concept of *abusing* the dead, specifically necrophilia, a bizarre topic. The fact that people give up their bodies to science, medicine and crematoriums mean we *are* willing to do things that ‘violate’ the deceased. If so, we ought to be willing to say that if someone truly wants to be merely a cadaver with whom another can sexually pleasure himself, then so be it. Why are we willing to chop up, burn and mutilate a body but suddenly turn Puritan when sex steps into the picture? There’s no reason to deny sex with a corpse, by definition. Again, one might oppose it on property violation grounds, but this only highlights the irrelevance of its being a dead *human being*. This need not be said but at least should be mentioned: corpses cannot be physically harmed<sup>4</sup>.

### ***Assessment and Treatment:***

The assessment and treatment of sexual violence and associated disorders of sexual arousal require an understanding of recent research findings. Sexual arousal patterns, hormone levels, substance abuse, and cognitive and social factors are all reviewed. Modification of anomalous arousal patterns, social skills training, modification of cognitive distortions, relapse prevention training, and hormonal sex drive reduction all have a part to play. It is clear, however, that far too little is known about this area and further research must be undertaken to improve knowledge of it (Hucker & Stermac, 1992).

The individual should be assessed for associated psychopathology and treated accordingly. Treatment for necrophilia would be similar to that prescribed for most paraphilias: Cognitive Therapy, use of sex-drive reducing medications, assistance to improving social and sexual relations etc.<sup>5</sup>.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is very difficult to define necrophilia. We can only do our best to classify, but at the same time understand the limitations and usefulness of our classifications when assessing necrophilic case studies. To understand the motivations of the wide array of necrophiles, we need to understand the motivations of loving the living and see under which contexts a person’s preferences might change to focus on the dead. Mental health professionals, researcher and policymaker should address the term aggressively because this is harmful not only for the person, but another human being also either they are alive or dead. It is the area



of mental health as well as a social science that need to more focus, because of the nature of the illness. There is a need to further research in this area for making better policy and reduce the risk of harm due to necrophilia.

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### Footnotes

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### ***Acknowledgment***

The authors profoundly appreciate all the people who have successfully contributed to ensuring this paper in place. Their contributions are acknowledged however their names cannot be mentioned.

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

The authors carefully declare this paper to bear not a conflict of interests

**How to cite this article:** Kumar. P., Rathee. S., & Gupta. R. (2019). Necrophilia: An Understanding. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 7(2), 607-616. DIP:18.01.073/20190702, DOI:10.25215/0702.073