

Homicide–Suicides in 2016–2024 in the City of Poznań and Poznań County

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Abstract

This article examines the phenomenon of homicide–suicide, outlining its defining features and situating it within the context of general suicide statistics. The main focus is the identification of homicide–suicide cases in the city of Poznań and Poznań County over a nine-year period, along with an assessment of the frequency of such incidents and a discussion of research prospects and limitations.

Keywords: suicide, homicide–suicide, motivation for homicide–suicide

Introduction

This study seeks to verify data on homicide–suicide in Poznań and Poznań County between 2016 and 2024, based on an analysis of media reports and information obtained through public records requests. In Poland, official statistics on such cases are not compiled, as they are isolated events; nevertheless, when they do occur, they attract considerable public attention. The only means of identifying these cases is by cross-referencing deaths and homicides occurring at the same place and time, which makes it possible to establish the nature of the incident. Although the number of cases is low and does not typically warrant statistical analysis, they are a fascinating subject of sociological research.

Study Objective

The aim of this study is to document the occurrence of homicide–suicide in Poznań and Poznań County over a nine-year period, to verify the frequency of such incidents, and to identify both the limitations of current research and the prospects for its further development.

Methods and Research Material

The source material for this article consists of information on homicide–suicides in the city of Poznań and Poznań County, obtained through public records requests under Article 2(1) of the Act on Access to Public Information of 6 September 2001 (Journal of Laws No. 112, item 1198). This constitutes the author’s original dataset. These data were then cross-checked against media reports, which proved to be consistent. The study is therefore an original work based on these materials, supplemented by statistical data from Poland’s Central Statistical Office (GUS), discussed in the analysis.

Definition

Homicide–suicide, in its simplest definition, occurs when a perpetrator kills individuals known to them before taking their own life (Liem et al., 2011; Shields et al., 2015; Skowronek et al., 2016). It is often referred to as “extended suicide” due to the emotional ties between the perpetrator and the victims (Barraclough, 2002; Czabański, 2011). However, there is a fundamental difference between these two concepts. Stukan and Staszak (2018) proposed the following criteria to distinguish homicide–suicide from extended suicide:

- the use of a firearm or bladed weapon,
- the secondary role of suicide in relation to the homicide,
- personal motives, most often fueled by resentment or grievance,
- psychopathology limited to personality disorders and/or alcohol dependence,
- frequent conflicts preceding the act,
- negative or ambivalent relationships between perpetrator and victim,
- repeated episodes of violence prior to the crime,
- secondary aims, such as preventing a partner from leaving or punishing them,
- violent, sometimes brutal acts committed against the victim,
- the absence of victim consent,
- the presence of incidental victims, including guests or even pets.

Extended Suicide and Homicide–Suicide

Extended suicide is an act in which the perpetrator, in a disturbed psychological state, projects their own suffering onto close family members and seeks release by killing them. Such acts are most often associated with psychotic episodes occurring in the course of severe depression (Araszkiewicz & Pilecka, 2006). In light of this, scholars have also discussed cases in which women kill their children in an attempt to spare them from suffering or from the perceived evils of the world (Byard, 2005). In these instances, death is usually caused by poisoning, carbon monoxide, or suffocation. Men, by contrast, more often kill their children through stabbing or shooting. Friedman et al. (2005) found that up to 90% of perpetrators of extended suicide suffered from psychotic disorders, which led courts to conclude that they acted with diminished responsibility. Such acts were thus interpreted as the product of altered states of consciousness, ostensibly motivated by concern for the children.

Homicide–suicide is a broader and more neutral term, which indicates that an aggressive act precedes the perpetrator's own suicide. Extended suicide, in contrast, suggests the death of multiple victims and describes more specifically an act determined by the perpetrator's mental state, usually directed toward those closest to them (Stukan & Staszak, 2018). Homicide–suicides are often associated with personality disorders, alcohol dependence (Friedman et al., 2005; Kaliszczak, 2002), Othello syndrome, and conflicts between the perpetrator and the victim (Byard, 2005). Each case requires at least two distinct legal assessments: one concerning the homicide (classified under Article 148 §1 or §3 of the Polish Penal Code) and another concerning the perpetrator's suicide (classified under Article 155 §1). Although one act precedes the other, both demand careful analysis and separate procedural steps.

Although closely related, the two terms differ in emphasis. Extended suicide encapsulates the concept that the perpetrator's mental illness shapes their decision to end not only their own life, but also the lives of others. In contrast, homicide–suicide comprises any case in which suicidal behavior emerges in connection with – and following – the decision to commit homicide. The motives most often cited include compassion (Byard, 2005), when a partner or family member is terminally ill and the act is intended to end their suffering; jealousy (Liem & Koenraadt, 2007), typically involving male perpetrators with alcohol dependence and/or Othello syndrome; and revenge or rejection (Byard, 2005), where the perpetrator (most often a man) kills a partner and sometimes the children to prevent them from leaving. Research also shows that in more than half of cases (53.9%), escalating conflicts and arguments constitute the immediate trigger (Logan et al., 2008), with rising tension culminating in homicide followed by suicide.

Statistics

Homicide–suicide is extremely rare when compared to the overall number of suicides in Poland or worldwide. Research by Liem and Oberwittler (2011), covering the period 1990–2005, indicated that the highest homicide–suicide rates per 100,000 population were recorded in Finland (0.163) and Germany (0.093), while Poland reported a rate of 0.044. Analyses by Araszkiewicz and Pilecka (2006), conducted over more than a decade, identified only 13 such cases. The main reason for this low figure is arguably the lack of reliable data that would allow the scale of the issue to be accurately estimated (Czabański, 2011; Gierowski & Dudek, 2012). In the United Kingdom, studies found a homicide–suicide rate of 1% (Barracrough & Harris, 2002). Liem et al. (2011) also documented increases in the proportion of homicide–suicides relative to all homicides: by 4% in both the United States and the Netherlands, and by 11% in Switzerland.

Findings

This article estimates the scale of homicide–suicide in the city of Poznań and Poznań County between 2016 and 2024, based on both media reports and the author's own source material. Typically, such incidents command widespread social attention and trigger intense moral and emotional reactions. By cross-referencing data obtained through public records requests with media accounts, this study identifies cases of homicide–suicide in the region during the nine-year period. The following brief case summaries illustrate the general characteristics and scope of the trend. Certain details cannot be disclosed due to ongoing legal proceedings.

Case Summaries

1. March 23, 2016 – Żerniki, Kórnik municipality
Monika G. was attacked by her former partner, Sławomir B., outside a printing plant where she worked the night shift. Forcing open her car door, he stabbed her approximately 20 times in the chest. Her mother, who was also in the vehicle, was stunned with a taser. Sławomir B. then fled the scene and later hanged himself at a relative's home. The couple's relationship had previously ended due to his violence toward Monika G., following frequent quarrels (Żytnicki, 2016).
2. March 29, 2020 – Dębogóra, near Poznań
Andrzej T. fatally shot Jakub S., the half-brother of his partner, and attempted to kill his partner, Magdalena P., using a Walther pistol. He then turned the

weapon on himself, inflicting a critical head injury. Both he and his partner were transported to the hospital, where Andrzej T. later died. The attack was linked to the couple's recent breakup (Kowalski, 2020).

3. April 4, 2022 – Swarzędz
The bodies of a man and his young daughter were discovered in an apartment. The man was in the process of divorcing his wife and had previously been convicted of domestic abuse. The cause of the child's death was asphyxiation, while the perpetrator died by suicide through hanging (Piasecka, 2022).
4. Night of October 10–11, 2023 – Zalasewo
Sixty-one-year-old Marian S. murdered his 55-year-old wife, his 14-year-old daughter, and his 9-year-old son. In an attempt to cover up his crime, he doused the bodies of his wife and daughter with gasoline and set them on fire, causing the building to burn. He then killed himself by placing a plastic bag over his head and sealing it with tape. The victims died from blunt-force trauma to the head inflicted with a hammer (Ługawiak, 2024).
5. July 16, 2023 – Poznań (Św. Marcin Street)
At a restaurant garden outside a hotel, a man approached a couple seated at a table, drew a Glock-19, and shot the male victim. He then turned the weapon on himself. The shooter died at the scene; the victim succumbed to his injuries in hospital. The two men were 29 and 30 years old. The crime was likely motivated by jealousy: the victim's fiancée, who witnessed the attack, had previously been in a relationship with the perpetrator (Żytnicki, 2023).
6. September 1, 2024 – Będlewo
The decomposed bodies of 33-year-old Paulina L., a former *Top Model* contestant, and her 47-year-old husband, Sławomir L., known in the criminal underworld as "Klakson," were discovered alongside a revolver. Due to the advanced decomposition, the cause of death was initially unclear, as no gunshot wounds were visible. X-rays later revealed two bullets lodged in Paulina L.'s neck. Toxicology reports showed high levels of amphetamine in both bodies. Evidence suggested that both had ingested large amounts of the drug before Sławomir L. fired two shots at his wife. The involvement of third parties was ruled out (Żytnicki, 2024).

Discussion

Over the nine-year period from 2016 to 2024, six cases of homicide–suicide were identified in the city of Poznań and Poznań County. This is a very small number compared with the 7,344 suicides recorded in the Greater Poland Voivodeship between 2016 and 2023, according to police statistics (Statystyka Policja, 2023). Nevertheless, the precise scale of homicide–suicide is difficult to establish, as no systematic or detailed statistical records are maintained. Given that six cases were documented in Poznań and its surrounding county over nine years, it is reasonable to extrapolate that the nationwide total is substantially higher. According to the Central Statistical Office (GUS, 2025), the population of Poznań is about 538,000, with another 445,000 living in Poznań County, while Poland as a whole has 37,437,000 inhabitants. During 2016–2024, police statistics reported 46,670 suicides across Poland. However, these figures provide only a partial context for understanding the issue. The scope of homicide–suicide in Poland has not yet been thoroughly examined. The reasons may lie in limited scholarly interest in the subject, as well as the lack of comprehensive data linking homicides and suicides.

Conclusions

This article demonstrates that such an analysis is feasible, at least for Poznań and Poznań County. It may therefore be concluded that extending this research nationwide would be of significant value. Homicide–suicide is an important, underexplored area of sociological inquiry that clearly warrants far greater research attention.

Data obtained through public records requests regarding deaths and suicides in the city of Poznań and Poznań County, 2016–2024.

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