

## **Investigating Perpetration and Victimization Patterns: Profiling Typologies Associated to Mothers that Poison their Children**

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**Abstract:** The following research study explored the patterns correlating to mothers that participate in the crime of poisoning their children. The data set investigated cases in which the mother was found culpable for participating in the poisoning of their children over the last 50 years throughout the United States; a total of 100 cases were gathered and examined. The objective for study was for the researchers to assess the data from a qualitative lens to ascertain perpetration patterns and plausible typologies that subsist amongst this offender population. The research design utilized to evaluate the cases included a data content analysis for the purpose of identifying perpetration patterns and victimization patterns of criminality. The data collected provided an innovative exploration of profiling and behavioral analysis patterns to employ for the establishment of baseline offender typologies and classifications of injurious behaviors alike.

**Keywords:** Poison, maternal, perpetration, victimization, criminality, profiling, typologies, motive, filicide, suicide.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Children are often succumbed to victimization due to their level of fragility, innocence, and access. When a child is a victim at the hand(s) of their own parent, the level of incredulity astonishes societal expectations, whilst all the principalities and responsibilities associated to parenting are dismissed and the shockwave regarding the offense spreads. One of the predominant areas of concentration is afforded directly to motive; the question that surfaces pertains why would someone do this to their own child and when the perpetrator is found to be the own child's mother, the level of skepticism further increases. Areas of interest in these types of incidents range from assessing the positive or negative behavioral effects in correlation with the amount of time that mothers spend with their children [1] to theoretical implications associated to societal norms and the time that mothers are expected to afford towards their children [2].

Researchers have even explored the association of the presence of a mental illness within mother's and the negative effects towards children that witness such behaviors. The presence of the fear of abandonment, fantasy confusion, and self-control appear to be areas that children are significantly affected when there is maternal mental illness within the home [3]. Researchers Roach and Bryant [4] state

that on average, one child per week falls prey to being the victim of homicide; although this study was conducted in England and Wales, the topic of child-related victimization is an international concern and warrants further concentration both nationally and internationally alike.

In a study concentrating upon the risk-taking disparities that are prevalent amongst the children and their mothers, researchers assert that male children are more inclined to delve into such behaviors, even after warned to refrain from them versus that of their female counterparts [5]. As a result of these findings, it is purported that there are certain attributes amongst children that directly pertain to risk taking behaviors that are elicited, even within the presence of a parent. A study conducted in Jammu, India reveals that acute poisoning incidents among children are the most common pediatric emergency; furthermore, exposure is most often accidental [6]. Another study asserted that children that have adolescent mothers are found to have an increased risk for non-accidental trauma, with the figures reporting a 50% increase in risk [7]. The investigation of homicide-related deaths among children in particular yield inconclusive findings at times, as the presence of misdiagnosis increases [8]. There is not a plethora of literature centered on the patterns associated to the poisoning of children, whether these incidents

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result in death or not; therefore, the following study was considered to be vital to expanding this knowledge base while concentrating upon a particular perpetration characteristic, mothers. For the purpose of this study, the researchers gathered 100 cases throughout the United States over the past 50 years in which mothers were found responsible for the poisoning of their children; the results were astounding and innovative at best. The data was analyzed qualitatively, yielding significant patterns of perpetration and victimization alike.

## DISCUSSION

The methodology employed to analyze the crime scene cases collected was qualitative in nature, with data content analysis utilized as the tool to grid the crime scene documentation (See Appendix A). The data collection process included the investigation of cases that were reported and accessible online. In the exploration of content, the researchers were able to deduce unequivocal items of content that resulted in the establishment of typologies that can be utilized within the investigative process. Although offense patterns and behaviors are unique and subjective, the law enforcement summations of each case were utilized to interpret measures that were deemed applicable to the process of behavioral profiling. The profiling typologies that were established, illustrate a baseline of patterns pertaining to both perpetration and victimization. The poisoning of children is a crime that can most certainly result in death; therefore, for the purpose of this study, the crime of filicide was contemplated throughout the development of the typologies as these actions could result in the death of a child at any time.

### Profiling Typologies

#### Maternal Filicide

In the majority of cases, the mothers who were examined were not successful in accomplishing their goals of actually ending the lives of their children. However, notwithstanding the inability to successfully accomplish their objectives the theoretical aspects of why these mothers desire to and attempt to kill their children are the same and needs to be presented. When examining the phenomenon of attempted or accomplished Filicide it becomes quite obvious that this action is understood to be the deliberate act of a parent attempting to kill or the killing of his or her own child or children. The word filicide derives from the Latin words *filius* meaning "son" or *filia* meaning daughter and the suffix *-cide* meaning to kill, murder, or cause death [9]. The examination of the data collected in this study addressed the presence of Maternal Filicide, which is the murder of a child by the mother. In this study the specific focus is on mothers using poison in an attempt to accomplish the deaths of their children.

The killing of one's own child by a mother is a multifaceted phenomenon with various causes and characteristics. This review of the existing literature delineates the present state of knowledge regarding filicide and illustrates similarities and differences between offenses perpetrated by both mothers and fathers. The importance of numerous reports of an association between filicide and pre-existing parental psychiatric disorders is compounded by indications that a significant number of homicidal parents surface to the attention of psychiatrists or other health professionals before the offense occurs; in addition, if the mental illness is recognized, there is the potentiation for the crime to be thwarted. However, in some instances the motivation to engage in this action is undetectable [10].

An examination of the crime of filicide is associated with various characteristics involving both the victim(s) and perpetrator. The very first year of life appears to represent a critical period, with the greatest risk to the infant being on the first day of life [11]. An examination of neonaticides demonstrate that these acts are almost always committed by mothers. While mothers are overrepresented in cases of infanticide, which are filicides that occur after the first week of life, these acts are often committed by the father or stepfather, with fathers being the most frequent perpetrators of filicide in later childhood [12].

Research by Resnick [9] regarding the world psychiatric literature on maternal filicide found filicidal mothers to have frequent depression, psychosis, prior mental health treatment, and suicidal thoughts. The majority of these women tend to be married and they report that they experience high levels of stress and a lack of support and resources at the time that they committed the offense. There also appears to be multiple psychosocial stressors which assist in being the motivating factors for maternal filicide [13]. Some of the motivating factors have been identified to include being the primary caregiver for at least one child, with the added stressors of them being unemployed with some critical financial problems. These mothers also experience ongoing abusive adult relationships along with serious conflict with family members, and limited social support in their lives. In addition, there is the issue of social isolation which has been noted as being another common factor experienced in women who killed their children, in addition to them having experienced a history of childhood abuse. In a study by Lucas, Wezner, Milner, McCanne, and Harris [14], asserts that the probability of homicide or suicide increased as the age of the victim increased. In another study information was presented that 50% of incidents involving older children between the ages of 4 and 15 years of age ended in the parent committing suicide. In addition, women who were under 27 were more likely to commit filicide, and the majority of victims were infants [11].

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Resnick [9] and Sidebotham [10] have both identified and discussed five categories into which these mothers have been grouped by the motives they possess which drives them to take the lives of their children: a) in an *altruistic filicide*, a mother kills her child out of love where she believes death to be in the child's best interest such as not wanting to leave her child alone in a cruel world without a mother and she is ill and is subsequently preparing to die or she is preventing her child from a fate that would be worse than the child living in this world, b) an *acutely psychotic filicide*, in this category there is a mother who is either psychotic or possibly delirious and she decides to kill her child without any understandable or coherent reason or motivation, such as her following orders from a command to kill her child emanating from some form of delusion, c) when discussing the event of a *fatal maltreatment filicide* the death is one that usually occurs in an unanticipated manner and it usually results from accumulative and ongoing abuse of a child or neglect of the child or this can include the very common Munchausen by proxy syndrome, d) in an *unwanted child filicide*, there is a mother who truly thinks and feels that her child is a hindrance, e) the most rare, *spouse revenge filicide*, occurs when a mother kills her child specifically to emotionally harm that child's father which is an extreme form of pure revenge and a completely expressive type of criminal act [9, 10]. Studies have been conducted in the United States and also in other countries regarding filicide which are in line with aforementioned studies and within this study.

Research conducted in Italy by D'Argenio, Catania and Marchetti [15], where they examined 36 cases which occurred in Italy between 1992 and 2010 involving filicide-suicide and the results showed that in 40–50% of the cases of homicides-suicides involving children under the age of 10 mothers were the person committing these offenses. In these 36 cases of filicide-suicide involving mothers as the perpetrator the researchers focused on factors such as the mothers and children's age, the place of residence, the date and place of the murder, the number and gender of the murdered children, and the modality of the homicide-suicide. This study indicated that at the time of the homicide-suicide, the average age of mothers was 35.4. The number of children killed by each mother was one, except in seven cases. In keeping with and supporting Resnick's 1969 study, this study indicated that all of the women in this study had underestimated psychopathological disorders and only six women were regularly treated for these disorders.

Another international study, by Mckee and Egan [16], which was conducted in the United Kingdom, presented information from a case-series study of 21 women who were convicted of the murder or manslaughter of their child, maternal filicide. The study indicated that these mothers could be categorized

as being emotionally driven and in despair within their existing situations, or rejecting their children due to perceiving them as a threat. This study also supports the listings of the categories contained in the studies by Resnick [9] and Sidebotham [10] and are in line with categories in this study.

#### **Annihilator Mass murderers.**

This study examined five cases out of 100 in which the mother killed more than 4 children. When any person takes the life of four or more people at one particular event this person is known as a mass killer. The typical mass murderer is one who kills, looking for their fifteen minutes of fame and recent events demonstrates this aspect even further in the occurrence of the community college mass killing in Oregon; furthermore, mass killers are usually males and the act is accomplished against non-familial members of society where the killer is usually killed by law enforcement[17].

#### **Overkill.**

The data in this study demonstrated that in 12 of the 100 cases examined, the mothers perpetrating the act of killing their children via the use of poison were done in an over killing manner. When examining over killing, the individual is committing a crime of expression which is driven by emotion and not by instrumentality [17].

#### **Serial murderer.**

There was one case in which the mother who killed her child by using poison, did this to several of her children over a long period of time and during the non-killing times she assumed a normal role in her familial environment as to not draw attention to herself. Her actions were exactly as would be expected of a serial killer where they kill to satisfy the psychological urges and then they lie dormant living a normal life until the urge becomes strong and needs to be satisfied [17].

#### **Monetarist Financial gain.**

There were four cases of mothers killing their children for monetary gains, which resulted in the death of their children. The individual who commits these types of crimes are not expressive of emotion but commits the crimes as an instrument used to achieve financial gain at the expense of their own child. These individuals are not delusional or suffering from a malady or disorder they are suffering from greed which makes their actions more heinous when the victim is considered.

#### **Accidental**

There were seven cases where the mother killed the child using poisons that were done in an accidental manner. Accidental filicide is described as being the unintentional death of a child which is caused

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by a parent, and in this study it would be the mother of the child, and it is usually due to child abuse, generally following battered child syndrome and also with the presence of Munchausen by Proxy Syndrome. With this filicide, the death is not the original intent of the parent; however, it is a result of the actions taken to accomplish some other action [18].

#### **Commissioner Mission-oriented.**

Mercy filicide is also committed with a specific intent to kill and occurs when the child has a severe, debilitating illness. The parent does not suffer from the presence of psychosis, and the event is not better accounted for by any other category. When examining mission-oriented offenders, which is also known as altruistic filicide, the motive driving the actions of the mother is initiated from a benevolent mindset of actually trying to relieve the child of both an imagined or real suffering and this activity also includes the act of suicide which is associated with the murder. The intention of the mother is a compassionate one in her mind and the need to be satisfied pertains to providing protection for the child with aim at making their life better for them; accomplishing this becomes the mission or objective. This type of filicide is one of the most common and also one that the person uses Rational Choice Theory; however, it is from their own self-serving perspective [11].

#### **Honor-oriented.**

In some cultures, killing a daughter who is deemed to have disgraced the family is a common occurrence. A more insidious form of filicide has become more widely reported in recent years, in the form of an honor killing. Often perpetrated by members of Asian or Middle Eastern families, this frequently involves male members of a family murdering a female member because of her refusal to enter an arranged marriage, although homosexual family members have also been killed under the practice of an honor killing. Many cases of a father killing his own daughter in cold blood because of her desire to make her own choices, have sadly occurred. An honor killing or honour killing is the homicide of a member of a family or social group by other members, due to the belief of the perpetrators that the victim has brought dishonor upon the family or community. If a family member deviates from this code of behavior, the family's reputation is sullied. The only way they can redeem themselves is by murdering the relative – again, usually the daughter – who has dishonored them. Honor killings are directed mostly against women and girls, but have been extended to men; however, in this study the killings were accomplished by mothers against their children for the same reasons as the overall purpose and reasons for honor killings. Honor killings are sacred acts. When fathers, brothers, sons, cousins, and uncles kill their own wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters, it is a ritual murder that functions as sacrifice and expiation. The

beloved daughters or wives are the sacrificial victims that must be killed to remove the stain of sin and restore honor and purity to the family. It is a moral imperative to remove the polluting evil that infected the weak female before it corrupts the entire family and subsequently the community [19].

#### **Munchausen by Proxy Syndrome**

In this study, 16 of the cases were reviewed that involved Munchausen by Proxy Syndrome; which is considered to be a mental illness. The person who suffers from this illness acts as if a person they are caring for has an actual physical or mental illness when in reality they are not really sick. The adult perpetrator has the diagnosis and directly produces or lies about illness in another person under his or her care, usually a child under 6 years of age. It is considered a form of abuse by the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children [18]. These individuals have an inner need for the other person (often his or her child) to be seen as ill or injured. It is not done to achieve a concrete benefit, such as financial gain, but for attention which would be more expressive in nature. These individuals are even willing to have the child or patient undergo painful or risky tests and operations in order to get the sympathy and special attention given to people who are truly ill and their families. Factitious disorders are considered mental illnesses because they are associated with severe emotional difficulties [20]. There is a need here for attention, for the mother to be focused upon and also to validate herself; she accomplishes this via the maltreatment of her child.

#### **Abusive mother.**

More filicides occur due to fatal maltreatment than because of maternal psychiatric illness. Many cases of fatal maltreatment filicide never come to psychiatric attention. Mothers may kill their children who fail to respond to demands such as to stop crying [21].

#### **Unwanted filicide.**

In unwanted-child filicide, the victim was never or is no longer desired by the parents. These filicides are usually committed due to illegitimacy or uncertain paternity or the child just simply getting in the way of the mother's life and she sees no alternative but to permanently get rid of the child and burdens that are associated with being a parent [22].

#### **Vindicator Revenge.**

In this study, 18 cases were discovered where mothers who tried to kill or killed their children as a revenge action against the father of the child. This particular act is considered to be another type of filicide specifically known as spousal revenge filicide. Here, the woman has the specific intent of wanting to retaliate against or to punish their ex-mate and the parent of the child. The mother is using the child or children as an

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instrument against the ex-spouse and completely ignores the fact that the child is a live human being and disregards her motherly instincts to satisfy her overpowering need to do whatever she can to wreak revenge on her ex-spouse. Satisfaction of the need becomes the only concern and is overpowering. Spouse revenge filicide is difficult to prevent, because there is usually little warning. This behavior most often occurs after learning of spousal infidelity or in the course of child custody disputes. At times, a mother can become so convinced that her child will be sexually abused, that if permanent custody is awarded to her ex-husband she may decide that the child is better off in heaven. This has the potential to place this event into the revenge and mission-oriented categories. Evaluators of child custody disputes should be alert for this potential [23].

In these cases, the actions go completely against maternal instinct to satisfy a narcissistic need using an off-centered rationalization or decision-making process to justify their actions. The majority of the decisions to take these heinous actions against children are most times driven by a mental disorder; economic issues or an overload of stress, frustration, or reaching an emotional breaking point and seeking to eliminate the source of what is perceived to be the problem. In those rarer cases of financial gain or when the parent just does not want the child there is the satisfaction of a need possessed by a narcissistic and self-centered individual with no regard for anyone then themselves.

These studies support the fact that there exists a serious detriment to children by individuals who are supposed to be the most supporting and protective person in their lives. It is critical that the actions of these mothers are better understood via studies similar to the ones done domestically and internationally so as to allow for the possibility of preventing these acts of filicide. The major issue to be focused on, when examining this type of phenomenon, needs to be placed on the person and their motive for their action. There must be specific concentration on such issues as altruism, acute psychosis, unwanted child, as well as accidental or spousal revenge being the motivating factors involving need satisfaction for these killings [10]. Understanding the various categories of filicide is very important in that the various categories of filicide are the catalyst that spawn the contraindicated illegal and horrific actions of these females.

### **Theoretical Application**

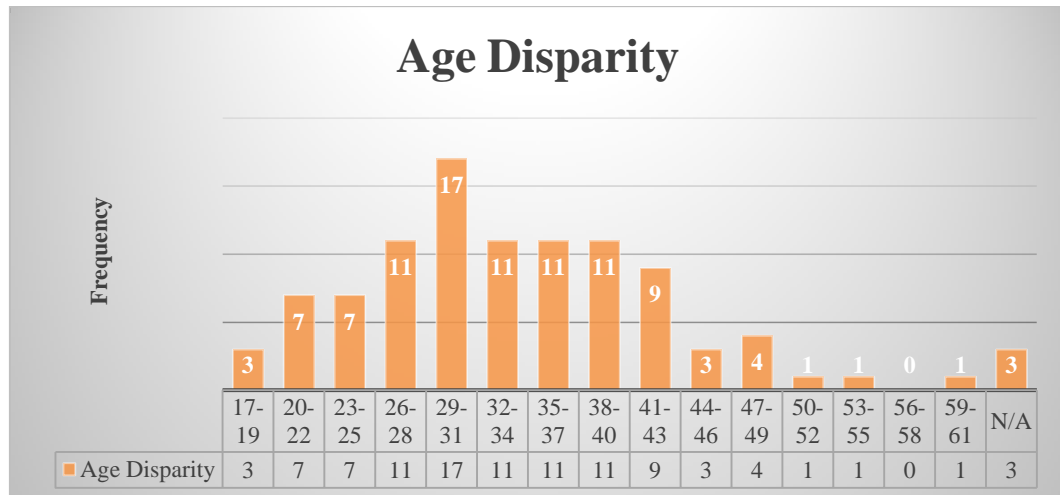
There are two criminological theories that are applicable to the study in regards to the exploration of motive, causation of crime, and criminality; these two theories are the Rational Choice Theory and Social Control Theory. Rational Choice Theory [24] purports that criminal behavior is the result of the assessment of

choices that are made by the perpetrator with effort afforded to the overall rationalization and justification of one's actions. The sociological exchange in the rationalization process encompasses the social phenomena of individualism [25]. In other words, individuals contemplate the interaction(s) that take place between themselves and others and base their decisions on specific constraints and conditions that must meet the goals that they have obtained. The tenets associated to this theory purport that individuals make choices based upon what strategy will lead to their greatest level satisfaction. With that being said, the population explored within this study is mothers that poison their children and this theory proffers to explain that their crime(s) was rationalized and even justified and measures were employed and taken to purposefully in crime commission.

Social Control Theory encompasses a sociological lens in the investigation of development, social order, and functionality. On a rudimentary level, social control pertains to the ability of a society to control itself in regards to acceptable principalities and overall values alike [26]. Social dysfunction subsists throughout homes in the United States on an unmeasurable level; furthermore, social scientists aim to address and summarize the applicable factors that infects the occurrence of family-related violence by addressing the underlying issues regarding these behaviors. There are several factors applicable to why violence occurs within families; however, two variables in particular that are considered to be causative family violence pertains to social learning and social psychological stressors [28]. The centralized concept that is prevalent to this study is that mothers elect to poison their children because they have the opportunity to do so and this is where the general exchange theory meets social control theory, the social controls bond behavior(s) within a negative or stressful manner when violence is present in the home [27]. Moreover, there are certain social controls that reduce the presence of family-related violence; likewise, there are social controls that increase the presence of violence within the familial environment.

### **Psychological Associations of Motive**

When researching cases, many patterns formed within the data that suggested the goals of the mothers were similar. Some committed these crimes for selfish reasons such as revenge against their children's fathers, for attention, or so that they could commit suicide without feeling guilty, while others committed these crimes because they believed a higher power was guiding them or that they were saving their children from the world. In regards to the age of the perpetrators, Fig-1 illustrates that the most prevalent age grouping to commit the poisoning of a child is between the ages of 29-31 years old.



**Fig-1: Perpetrator Age Disparity**

Thirty cases in this study had a suicidal component to them. The mothers in these cases poisoned their children and themselves in order to end all of their lives. These mothers did not want to leave their children in this world without them, but at the same time, they struggled to overcome their own suicidal tendencies. These cases had many aspects and many of them overlapped with other motives. Some of the mothers wanted their suffering to end and could not stand the thought of leaving their children alone in the world. Other mothers were suicidal because they were going through a disordered divorce or custody battle and did not want their exes to get their children. Finally, some mothers simply felt they could not commit suicide while their children were around because they were responsible for the children's care. Many of the cases in this study had a suicidal component because these mothers felt there was no other way for them to kill themselves without first killing their children.

In eighteen cases, mothers poisoned their children out of fear of losing them to their exes, either through divorce or custody battles, or as revenge against the father of their children for some perceived slight. These cases had a few components in them that demonstrate similar motives. The mothers in these cases were angry with their children's fathers. They felt betrayed and angry and they used their children lives as a way to punish the fathers. Many of the mothers were in the middle of either a divorce or a custody battle for their child. These mothers wanted to kill their children to ensure that the fathers could not take the children away from them. They could not stand the thought of losing their children to their exes and went to extreme measures to deny the fathers the joy of having the children to themselves. Other mothers were angry with the father of their children for personal reasons such as the fathers did not pay enough attention to the family or the fathers did something to upset them.

In sixteen cases, the motive that appeared was clear attention seeking behavior, often referred to as Munchausen by Proxy Syndrome[29] These mothers poisoned their children for one of three reasons. They either wanted to get attention from the father of their children, from friends or family for having sick children, or from hospital staff and doctors. The mothers in these cases intentionally poisoned their children to make them sick enough to go to the hospital. Once the children began feeling better, the mothers would poison them again to keep them sick. This behavior continued in the mothers until either hospital staff caught them or the children died from the poisons.

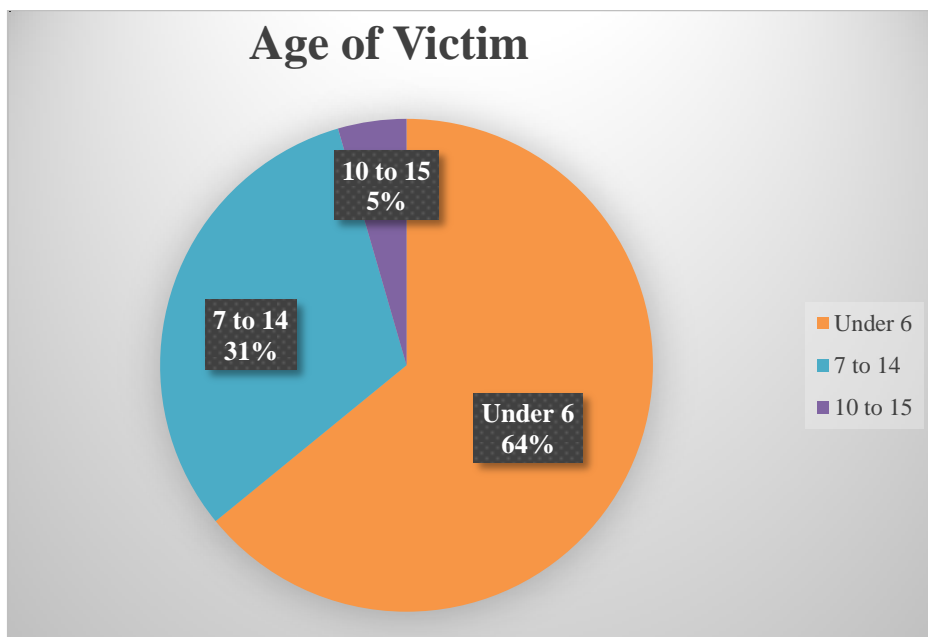
Finally, the last pattern of motive became clear in seven cases. These cases had a focused and goal oriented motive in that the mothers believed they were doing God's work. These mothers poisoned their children so that they could ascend to heaven together. They believed they were saving the children from this world and that their family would be brought together in heaven. Many of these mothers were not in their right state of mind saying that they heard voices telling them to hurt their children or that they wanted to send their children to meet God.

As data was collected, these motives appeared that clearly show seemingly unrelated cases had similar goals and motives. The mothers in these cases committed these crimes for reasons that made sense to them. Some wanted to end the suffering of themselves and their children. Some believed they were protecting their children from the evils around them. While the motive in other cases were deemed to be more selfish, they wanted attention or revenge, and they used their children as tools to achieve this goal. The patterns in the data show that the mothers in these cases had similar motives to one another that lead to the poisoning of their children.

### Assessment of Victimization Patterns

When determining what made these children victims of these horrendous crimes, some patterns emerge throughout the data that suggests other factors may have played a role in the commission of these crimes. While the gender of the victims are pretty even, some factors such as the victim's age, location of the crime, and the time of year seem to play a role in why these specific children became victims.

When comparing the ages of the victims, a clear pattern develops that shows age of the children do matter as illustrated below in Fig-2. In 100 case there are a total of 156 victims between the ages birth to 19 years old. Out of these 156 children, 100 of the victims was under the age of six, comprising approximately 64% of the grouping. This proves that children under six are the most likely to be poisoned by their mother. This is probably because they are unable to communicate well with others and spend the majority of their time by their mother's side.

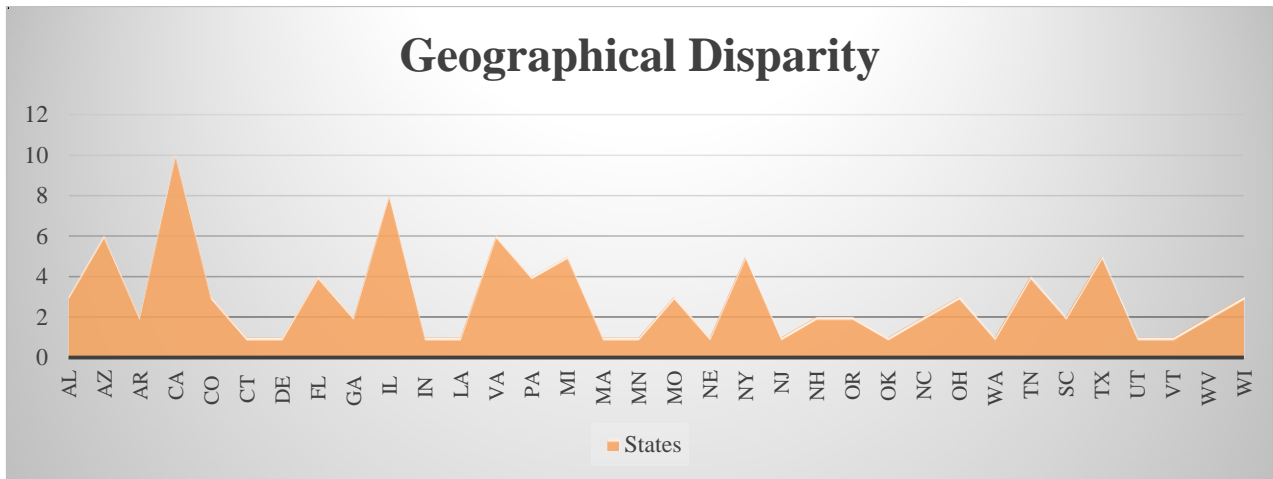


**Fig-2: Age of Victim Disparity**

Out of the remaining 56 victims, 49 of them are between the ages of 7 and 14, which comprises approximately 31% of the population assessed. This is still a significant number that shows victimization can occur throughout childhood and into young teens. However, after the age of fourteen, the likelihood of victimization is rare, with placement being 5% of the time.

The next factor that seems to play a role in victimization is location of the crime as purposed below in Fig-3. In the United States, the likelihood of victimization decreases when moving from east to the west. There are some states in the data that have more

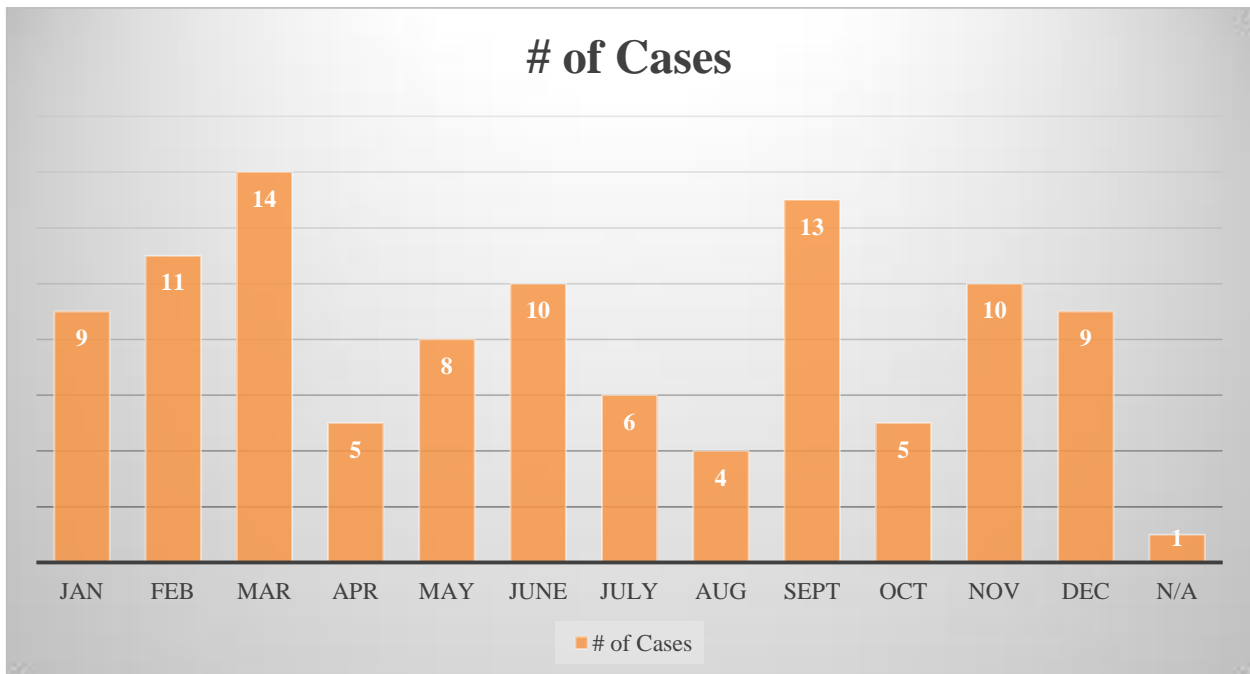
occurrences than others do. California, Arizona, Illinois, Michigan, and Virginia all have at least six individual cases. For some reason, these states seem to have a higher likelihood of this particular crime occurring than any other state. Although California is in the west, the state has the most cases. Around the nation, the states that are along the coastlines tend to have more occurrences than ones in the middle of the country. The eastern side of the country has the majority of cases along the entire eastern coastline, and the Midwest has the second most cases in the states around the Great Lakes. This shows that victimization is higher in states that are alongside a coastline or large body of water.



**Fig-3: Geographical Disparity**

The final pattern among the data suggests that the time of year may have an effect on the pattern of victimization as seen below in Fig-4. Although there is not a huge range in numbers from season to season, winter, fall, and spring, at 29, 28 and 27 cases, have a higher likelihood of occurrence than summer at just twenty. However, the data does show spikes in particular months. February, March, June, September, and November all have at least 10 cases, making up over half of the 100 cases in the study. For some reason, these months tend to have the most cases. This could be

because many of these months lead to significant holidays such as Valentine’s day, Easter, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s, that all promote times in the year that families are supposed to come together. These events are often higher stress times of the year and could account for increase of occurrences. There were 105 cases that were applicable to the disparities of season with 1 case yielding no time frame of event and 4 cases having more than one date of commission.



**Fig-4: Temporal Disparities of Seasons**



**Table A**

Pesticides	Over-the-Counter Drugs/Prescription Drugs	Household Items	Chemicals	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ant Poison</li> <li>• Rat Poison</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narcotic Drugs</li> <li>• Opiates</li> <li>• Phenobarbital</li> <li>• PCP</li> <li>• Diphenhydramine</li> <li>• Diazepam</li> <li>• Valium</li> <li>• Sleeping pills</li> <li>• Vicodin</li> <li>• Tylenol</li> <li>• Ziprasidone</li> <li>• Insulin</li> <li>• Caffeine Pills</li> <li>• Seroquel</li> <li>• Methadone</li> <li>• Clonidine</li> <li>• Fentanyl</li> <li>• Oxycodone</li> <li>• Benadryl</li> <li>• Methanol</li> <li>• Tranquilizers</li> <li>• Prozac</li> <li>• Temazepam</li> <li>• Drug for Animal Euthanization</li> <li>• ZZZ-Quil</li> <li>• Benzodiazepines</li> <li>• Ativan</li> <li>• Cough Medicine</li> <li>• Morphine</li> <li>• Methamphetamine</li> <li>• Xanax</li> <li>• Methadone</li> <li>• Opana</li> <li>• Ipecac</li> <li>• Alcohol</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antifreeze</li> <li>• Bleach</li> <li>• Aquarium Water</li> <li>• Salt</li> <li>• Baking Soda</li> <li>• Antiseptic</li> <li>• Toilet Bowl Cleaner</li> <li>• Cleaning Products</li> <li>• Ammonia</li> <li>• Vinegar</li> <li>• Cayenne Pepper</li> <li>• Olive Oil</li> <li>• Visine Drops</li> <li>• Hand Sanitizer</li> <li>• Rubbing Alcohol</li> <li>• Windshield De-icing Fluid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hydrochloric Acid</li> <li>• Sulfuric Acid</li> <li>• Carbon Monoxide</li> <li>• Potassium Chloride</li> <li>• Lead Nitrate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fecal Matter</li> </ul>

**Poison Modalities**

Various poisons were utilized in crime commission; the results above in Table A reveal the heinous modalities that these perpetrators, the victims' own mother, went to in order to inflict pain, purposefully. The most popular methods include over-the-counter and prescriptions drugs with 36 different substances utilized; the next most prevalent measure is that of household items. Mothers appear to employ items that they have access to and this is unambiguously the case upon reviewing the list of items above. Out of 100 cases, 8 of these involved step-mothers that initiated in the crime; in addition, approximately 14 cases involved a co-offender and most often was found to include: (a) child's father, (b) boyfriend, (c) husband, (d) step-uncle, and (e) grandmother.

In summation, victimization patterns illustrate that there are common themes within the data that suggest certain people are more likely than others to be a victim of this particular crime. The ages of the victims reveal that younger children are at a significantly higher risk of being poisoned by their mothers than that of older children. The location of the crimes show that the states to the east have a much higher risk of this crime occurring than states to the west with a few exceptions along the coastline. While the season has limited weight on the likelihood of occurrence, some months have a much higher rate than others. These factors shows that there are similarities among the data that suggest patterns among the victims in these cases.

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### **Eccentric Patterns of Victimization**

In this study, some cases were distinctive among the data due to the fact that the mothers in these cases went beyond what was necessary to accomplish their goal. These mothers were especially evil in the fact that they did not just poison their children; they went out of their way to ensure that their children were dead. In the first case, a thirty-one year old mother poisoned her twelve year old daughter by forcing her to ingest large amount of bleach and then sitting on the girl and holding her down until she was dead [30]. The mother told police that she did it after her daughter confessed that she was no longer a virgin [30]. The mother forced her nine-year-old son to stand in the corner and watch telling him, "If he shed a tear, she was going to kill him, too" [30]. She seemed to show no remorse for her actions and no concern for the wellbeing of her son.

In the second case, a mother, twenty-five year's old, and grandmother forty-six years old, poisoned a five-year-old girl because they believed she was possessed by demons [31]. The mother had convinced the grandmother that this child was possessed by demons and the only way to expel the demons was to force the girl to drink a mixture of ammonia, pepper, vinegar, and olive oil [31]. The mother admitted to police that she had tied her daughter down and forced her to drink this mixture while performing an exorcism. When the poisonous mixture killed the girl, they disposed of her body in a dumpster outside their apartment[31].

Finally, in this last case, a mother repeatedly tried to kill her eleven-year-old son. This mother attacked her son with an axe, and when he did not die, she drugged him with Temazepam, a sleeping agent, and locked him in his room [32]. She then took her other two children out of the house, disabled the fire alarm, and set two fires within the home. She called 911 and waited on the lawn with the younger children until rescuers arrived to save the boy [32].

### **Limitations & Future Areas of Recommendation**

In regards to the plausible limitations associated to the study, an elementary limitation pertains to the population sample size. There were 100 cases investigated for the purpose of this study and although the cases were pulled nationally to obtain a generalizable spectrum, there may be additional findings that surface upon the elaboration of the sample size. Adding more cases to the current study would only further the innovative goal of comprehending the disparities among cases in which mothers poison their children. In addition, a feature that was not addressed within this study was that of demographics for socioeconomic status. In the future a study could explore and contemplate the role of one's socioeconomic status to criminality patterns of mothers that poison their children. In addressing another

demographic characteristic that would be applicable to assess further, the area of race and ethnicity may reveal certain individualities that are most undoubtedly relevant to the exploration of crime scene patterns amongst the criminality of mothers.

Future recommendations of research include the investigation of gender disparities prevalent amongst fathers that poison their children. The reason that this avenue would be applicable to furthering the body of research is that males and females tend to be incongruent in criminality patterns and assuming that fathers implement similar ideals in methodology and motive, would be highly erroneous. Another aspect that the researchers recommend additional studies to concentrate upon applies to the theoretical tenets of motive. The application of theory is subjective and additional theoretical strategies would be a welcomed conceptualization. The disparities prevalent between national and international occurrences of the poisoning of children and motive would also produce imperative results. Moreover, the current study employed a qualitative lens in the exploration of mothers that poison children and future areas of concentration could concentrate upon the quantitative measures regarding the topic.

### **CONCLUSION**

In summation, the researchers collected and analyzed 100 cases over the past 50 years throughout the United States in which mothers were found culpable for the poisoning of their children. The exploration of this study was grounded in the interest and assessment of motive, perpetration patterns, and victimization associations in regards to methods utilized to execute the poisoning of children. The profiling typologies that were established, illustrate a baseline of patterns pertaining to both perpetration and victimization. The poisoning of children is a crime that can most certainly result in death; therefore, for the purpose of this study, the crime of filicide was contemplated throughout the development of the typologies as these actions could result in the death of a child at any time. The most applicable theories were found to be Rational Choice Theory and Social Control Theory, correlating to this particular type of crime. Moreover, mothers rationalize and justify their modalities in using poisons to elect to harm their children; in addition, the motives associated to crime commission are not controlled within the social arena of the home and bonds that are created and conditioned are deemed to be negative in nature. Overall, the following study provided an innovative data set in which a baseline of perpetration and victimization typologies were established accordingly; overall, the findings were astounding, as the level of detriment created in the lives of these victims was found to ultimately be an unmeasurable concept in comprehending what they actually endured.

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