

“Hanging: Facts and Reasons in Present Perspective”

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Hanging is one of the most important cause for unnatural deaths commonly encountered in the professional life of forensic expert during day to day autopsy. Death due to hanging is one of the most complex and controversial areas of asphyxial deaths. To ascertain cause and manner of death in cases of hanging, meticulous examination of ligature mark, neck structure findings and other autopsy findings are much helpful.¹ Also visit to the scene of crime is very much helpful to ascertain circumstances and manner of hanging. All cases of hanging are considered to be suicidal until the contrary is proved.² Global suicide rates have increased 60% in the past 45 years. Its incidence is also high in Bangladesh.

Nowadays Suicide has become a daily occurrence event in Bangladesh. About 10,000 persons are dying by suicide per year in the country³ [World Health Organization 2014; Mashreky et al., 2013; Shahnaz et al., 2017; Begum et al., 2017] which was reported by WHO. Due to population explosion and increasing stress in our daily life, we frequently come across cases of suicides. Many people get stressed in this hard life. Some get overcome from that and some cannot. So they find easy way to come out of it and choose the way of suicide. Suicide is a self directed having fatal outcome. There are many methods for committing suicide like hanging, poisoning, self-immolation, fall from height, drowning etc. The mode of suicide is hanging in majority of cases. The term hanging also applied as method of capital punishment adopted by Bangladesh legislature.⁴

Passion, disappointments, loss of property, misfortune, financial losses, poverty, disgust with life, physical and mental sufferings, disappointed love, failures in

many aspects, marital problems, jealous, unbearable fear and pain are some of the common known reasons for hanging. These will vary widely from country to country, between religions and socio-economic classless. Marital problems is the leading cause in developing countries like Bangladesh.⁵

Hanging is a form of violent asphyxial death produced by suspending the body with a ligature around neck and the constricting force being the weight or part of the body weight.⁶ Anything available at hand may used as ligature. In short, the material can be anything handy and available near the place of occurrence as the suicide is an impulse mediated act.⁷ Hanging is known as a painless mode of death with a very less failure rate. In typical hanging three possible mechanisms of death have been proposed by compression or closure of the blood vessels of the neck; compression of the air passages; and vagal inhibition by pressure on the baro receptors in the carotid sinus and the carotid body.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that of the nearly 900,000 people who die of suicide globally every year, According to WHO data, highest incidence of hanging was found to be 90.6 % in Kuwait (1995–2001) and 83.1% in Lithuania (1998–2004) among the total number of suicide cases.^{8,9} According to police statistics, from 2002 to 2009, 73,389 people committed suicide in Bangladesh. Of these 73,389 people, 31,857 people hanged themselves and 41,532 swallowed poison to commit suicide.¹⁰ Population-based surveillance in a rural community in southwest Bangladesh revealed that suicide is a major cause of mortality, especially in young females. Mortality from suicide occurred at a

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rate of 39.6 per 100,000 populations per year from 1983-2002.¹¹ Majority of hanging deaths was contributed by males. This does not mean that males commit suicide more than females. It only signifies that, men prefer to commit suicide by hanging than women who prefer to commit suicide by other means like burning, drowning and poisoning¹² but in some extent it contradict with some local study.¹³ High incidence of hanging in middle age group and minimal incidence in extremes of age was also reported by many researchers with varying percentage. The age group of 21-40 years is the most active phase in life wherein exposure to anxiety, stress, strain and various adverse circumstances occur.

Hanging incidence is raising, but developing measures to prevent suicide by this method is particularly challenging. To overcome this problem, prior information and knowledge about suicidal behaviour of persons, risk factors associated with it and early diagnosis of psychiatric disorders is required at familial and societal level. In addition, grooming of children at home to build a healthy child and make them mentally strong to face the harsh realities of life. Investigating agencies, media persons, social workers, health personnel, psychiatrists, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), political leaders, Governments and even the general man should play their role in identifying the underlying factors in people around the society to prevent the precious loss of life from the family as well as society.

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