

Course 6 - topic 1.1

WHAT IS A PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTOPSY

A psychological autopsy is a post-mortem investigative method aimed at reconstructing the psychological and behavioral profile of a deceased person. This tool is often used in cases of suicide, accidental death, homicide, or when the circumstances of death are unclear. The objective is to understand the motivations, thoughts, emotions, and circumstances that led to the person's death.

Psychological Autopsy Model on a Disappearance

1. Introduction

Case Identification: Name of the deceased person, age, gender, date and place of birth, date and place of death.

Objective of the Investigation: Clarify the circumstances of death through the analysis of the deceased's psychological profile.

Psychological Autopsy Model on a Disappearance

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2. Information Gathering

- **Sources of Data:**
- **Interviews:** Conduct interviews with family members, friends, colleagues, and other individuals close to the deceased.
- **Examination of Personal Documents:** Review diaries, letters, emails, social media posts, and other personal documents.
- **Medical Records Review:** Examine medical records and reports.
- **Circumstance and Scene Analysis:** Analyze the circumstances and scene of the disappearance.

Psychological Autopsy Model on a Disappearance

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3. Personal and Psychological History

- **Family Background:** Family structure, family relationships, significant events (divorces, deaths, conflicts).
- **Medical and Psychiatric History:** Previous diagnoses, treatments received, treating doctors.
- **Education and Work History:** Educational level, academic performance, work history, relationships with colleagues and superiors.
- **Interpersonal Relationships:** Friendships, romantic relationships, social life, any conflicts or breakups.

Psychological Autopsy Model on a Disappearance

4. Behaviors and Habits

- **Daily Routine:** Daily activities, hobbies, interests.
- **Substance Use:** Alcohol, drugs, prescribed and non-prescribed medications.
- **Behavioral Patterns:** Recent changes in behavior, signs of depression, anxiety, stress, irritability.

Psychological Autopsy Model on a Disappearance

5. Circumstances of Death

- **Detailed Description:** Date, time, and place of death. Conditions of the death scene (body position, objects present, signs of struggle or self-harm).
- **Testimonies and Reports:** Accounts from witnesses, police reports, forensic autopsy reports.

Psychological Autopsy Model on a Disappearance

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6. Psychological Analysis

- **Mental State Prior to Death:** Recent thoughts, emotions, mood states. Any signs of despair, guilt, suicidal ideation.
- **Triggering Events:** Recent precipitating factors (job loss, end of a relationship, bereavements).
- **Possible Motivations:** Analysis of potential reasons behind the behavior leading to death (suicide, homicide, accident).

Psychological Autopsy Model on a Disappearance

7. Conclusions

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Summary of Findings: Summary of the main discoveries. Interpretation of the behavior and mental state of the deceased.

Determination of the Psychological Cause of Death: Assessment of the motivations and circumstances that led to the death.