

## Killing Your Children to Hurt Your Partner: Motivations for Revenge Filicide

**Authors :** Melanie Moen, Christiaan Bezuidenhout

**Abstract :** Cases of parents murdering their offspring are incomprehensible but sadly as old as humanity itself. The act of killing your own child is known as filicide. Revenge filicide is an act where one parent kills their own offspring for retribution for hurting and upsetting the other parent. The true extent of filicide in South Africa is unknown, but in the United States, filicide constitutes more or less 2.5% of all murders. The focus of this contribution is to extend the knowledge of revenge filicide. Data was collected through court documents and newspaper articles. Newspapers that cover murder cases are between 75% to 100% accurate compared to official sources. Often family-related murders are violent in nature, and for this reason, these crimes receive extensive media coverage. The cases of twenty revenge filicide murderers (14 male and 6 female) were qualitatively analyzed to determine the motivations and offense characteristics of revenge filicide offenders. Findings related to a loss of social identity due to rejection; extreme rage-type anger; external locus of control; sadism; a desire to cause pain, and a need to inflict harm. The initial emotional response may escalate from mild anger to a level of narcissistic rage which eventually culminates in the murdering of the child to punish and hurt the other parent and to restore control. To our knowledge, our study is the first to systematically examine the motivations related to revenge filicides from a South African perspective. Filicide is a complex phenomenon with diverse possibilities and reasons why it occurs. However, it was apparent in this study that the motivations for revenge filicides were often linked to complex personal and interpersonal relationship problems. Further research within this field is imperative.

**Keywords :** revenge filicide, child murder, rage, anger, narcissistic rage, parent kills child

**Conference Title :** ICCFP 2023 : International Conference on Criminal and Forensic Psychology

**Conference Location :** Cape Town, South Africa

**Conference Dates :** April 13-14, 2023