

Research Journal of Pharmaceutical, Biological and Chemical Sciences

Suicidal activity of the population of St. Petersburg in the second half of the nineteenth century: sources and history of the study.

Sergej V. Bogdanov^{1*}, Nikolaj N. Olejnik¹, Ivan T. Shatokhin¹, and Elena S. Kravtsova².

¹Belgorod State University, Russia, 308015, Belgorod, Pobeda Street, 85.

²Kursk State Medical University, Russia, 305041, Kursk, K. Marx Street, 3.

ABSTRACT

The article discusses the sources for the study of dynamics of mortality of the population of the capital of the Russian Empire from suicide in the period after the abolition of serfdom up to the end of the XIX century. The characteristic of the history of the study of suicidal manifestations in Saint-Petersburg is given. suicide statistics in Saint-Petersburg according to the Moscow Mayor and the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs is compared.

Keywords: reforms, suicide, underreporting of violent deaths, the Saint-Petersburg city administration, Ministry of Internal Affairs.

**Corresponding author*

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of suicide in the Russian society of the XIX century have been studied by sociologists, philosophers, doctors, lawyers, teachers. However, among the numerous researchers of the phenomenon, historians are quite a rare matter. Meanwhile, the sustainable reproduction of suicides is one of the indicators, denoting the presence of systemic deformations in the diversity of social relations, especially in terms of increased mortality. Deformations become particularly acute in the periods of large-scale transformations, which causes the increase of suicidal activity of the population. Therefore, to recreate a complete picture of certain time periods, it is crucial to consider the totality of phenomena, processes, tendencies, both creative and destructive. One of these destructive phenomena is the suicide.

RESEARCH METHOD

The specific of the proposed research is that on the basis of various statistical sources, mortality rates from suicide among the population over 16 years of various parts of the capital of the Russian Empire – Saint-Petersburg – and their dynamics over the years 1873-1897 were first-born. The main causes of the undercount of the facts of violent deaths in the capital of the Russian Empire in the post-reform decade have been also identified.

Also, the State capital is not chosen by chance. The choice was predetermined by two factors. First, the virtual absence of contemporary historical-demographic research of suicides in St. Petersburg in the second half of the nineteenth century. Second, the need to identify the complex of factors, which have predetermined the fluctuations in the level of suicidal activity of the population of the largest city of Russia of that period.

THE MAIN PART

In the study of the phenomenon of suicide among the population of the Russian Empire, we can identify several periods, each characterized by specific approaches, not only due to the positions of the authors, who have studied this issue, but to the influence of the dominant state ideology.

The first period: the beginning – the first half of XIX century. The number of scientific investigations, devoted to suicides in St. Petersburg, was insignificant. Undisputed interest among contemporaries and later researchers called the report of academician K. F. Herman, "Survey on numbers of homicides and suicides in Russia in the years 1819-1820," which was announced in 1823.

Separate data on suicides in the 30-40-ies of the XIX century were published in the various descriptions of the capital, essays "on people's morality", intended for the wide-scale reading public (Bashutsky A. P., 1834; Pushkarev I., 1839). However, a serious analysis of suicide in these works was absent.

The period of public backlash was initiated by Nicholas I, was marked, above all, by the tightening of censorship attack on any printed materials. The theme of violent mortality in Russia, although was not prohibited at all, was still in the list of junk. This circumstance didn't contribute to the deployment of serious research on this issue. With the exception, perhaps, of the work by K. S. Veselovsky "Experiences of moral statistics of Russia", which the reading public was able to see in 1847 (Veselovsky S. K., 1847)

In this study, the problem of underreporting by the police of violent death in the country was first denoted. The fact that the book was printed in the printing house of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, is very revealing in terms of the recognition by the Office of the seriousness of the problems identified.

The second period: the second half of XIX – early XX centuries. It was a natural consequence of the general liberalization in the country after the abolition of serfdom that the social interest for everyday life, which was much more complex, and manifested not only in creative, but also in destructive phenomena – crime, suicide, alcoholism, etc. The impossibility of further use of the surface approach to the study of suicide in Russia, typical for the vast majority of publications in the preceding decades became obvious.

In the first half of the 1860s the reading public had an opportunity to see the scientific research that are saturated with statistics, they present attempts to present sociological, and psychological reasons for suicide. The most notable were the works of A. V. Likhachev, N. V. Ponomarev, P. F. Bulacel' (Lihachev, A. V., 1882; Ponomarev, N. V., 1880; Bulacel', P. F., 1884). The most interesting works, in which the authors studied the dynamics of suicides in St. Petersburg, were research-works by Yu. Hubner, I. Pasternatsky, P. Zagorsky, A. A., Lipsky, S. A. Belyakov, F. K. Terekhovko (Gyubner, Yu., 1868; Pasternackij, I., 1872-1873; Zagorskij, P., 1880-1881; Lipskij, A. A., 1887; Belyakov, S. A., 1893; Terekhovko, F. K., 1903).

The beginning of the XX century was marked by increasing attention of domestic experts to the problem of suicides. This was due to outbreaks of suicidal activity among pupils of educational institutions of the Russian Empire (Suicides, attempted murders..., 1906-1916; Horoshko, V. K., 1909; Bernackij, V. A., 1911; Levickij, I. I., 1911; Fenomenov, M. Ya., 1914; Florovskij, V. V., 1915), the increase in the number of suicides in the army, including the officer corps (Voenno-statisticheskij..., 1911-1913). The scientific community continued to search for answers to many questions related to the phenomenology of suicide (Bronzov, A. A., 1912; Lebedev, N., 1913), social conditions and factors of its reproduction (Antropov, R. L., 1911; Prozorov, L. A., 1915; Zagorskij, P., 1880-1881).

Special collections of articles, numerous newspaper and magazine publications were devoted to various aspects of suicides in St. Petersburg-Petrograd (Suicide in S.-Petersburg..., 1913).

Of course, this period was the most fruitful in terms of the appearance of numerous and diverse works, devoted to suicides in the Russian society.

The third period falls on 1917-1987. In the frames of this period, the 1920s are out of the rank. Thanks to the efforts of M. N. Garnet, in the structure of the Central statistical office (CSO) of the USSR was formed the Department of moral statistics, that took into account, among other manifestations of antisocial behavior, suicide. Since 1922, in the Soviet Russia, the registration of suicides in the special statistical sheets began, which were quite extensive and informative. In this decade a large number of scientific papers on suicides in the Soviet Union appeared. However, an appeal to the recent past of this social pathology in Russia became uncomfortable for ideological reasons: the level of suicides in the Soviet Russia was higher than in the Russian Empire.

In 1930-70-ies. in the USSR the theme of suicide was closed not only for society as a whole, but also for the scientific community. It was believed that the normal Soviet person is not capable of suicide. During this period the problem of suicide has been studied only in the medical-biological aspect. Publication statistics of suicides for the wide public in the USSR resumed only in 1988.

The fourth period starts from the beginning of liberal reforms in the country and continues nowadays. Unfavorable demographic situation in the country has seriously actualized the problem of mortality from suicide. As a result, from 1993 to 2011, INION (Institute of Scientific Information on Social Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences RAN) reported 1,089 publications in this or that way, dealing with the problems of suicide. However, in modern Russian studies there are still very little research works, specifically focused on suicide in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Official statistical data on number of suicides in St.-Petersburg are presented in two groups of sources, published by various departments: the Central Statistical Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (further – CSK MIA) and the St. Petersburg City administration.

In 1897, the edition of CSK MIA – the Annals "Died violently and suddenly in the Russian Empire in the years 1888-1893" was printed out(Annals of Central..., 1897).

In comparison with the previous two statistical collections, dealing with violent and sudden deaths, this publication contained data for the years of 1885-1893 in all provinces and regions of the Russian Empire, except for the areas of the Don Cossacks, the Kara, the Tersk and the Caspian, Zaqatala and the Black sea districts. The "Annals" had another feature – it has first compiled statistics on violent and sudden deaths in ten major cities of European Russia during the period from 1870 to 1893.

The second group of sources - reports of the Saint Petersburg Mayor – has a rather detailed coverage of the various aspects of life in the capital of the Russian Empire. Data on suicides were published in the annexes to the report titled "Statistical table about the different incidents in St. Petersburg for ... year." Titles of reports from 1873 to 1893 was repeatedly changed: Humbly Report of the St. Petersburg Mayor; from 1894 to 1896 – A review of the activities of the St. Petersburg municipal administration and the Metropolitan police; from 1897 - The app to Humbly report on the activities of the St. Petersburg Mayor (Humbly Report..., 1873-1893; A review of the activities..., 1894-1896).

Also a valuable source for statistics of suicides in the country's largest city are "Statistical yearbooks of St. Petersburg", the publication of which was initiated by the Head of the statistical Department at the St. Petersburg city administration Yu. E. Yanson. The first issue was published in 1882.

Mapping the information of CSK MIA and St. Petersburg Mayor reveals a discrepancy of indicators, presented in the various documents. So, according to the calculations of CSK MIA, 1870-1893. (data on number of suicides in Ministry reports for 1875, are missing) 2869 people died from the suicide in the capital of the state (Annals of Central..., 1897).

At the same time, under Humbly reports of the St. Petersburg Mayor during the 1873-1893. (without 1880 and 1881 – the report were not prepared), the number of suicides in the city is significantly different – 2 505 cases.

Thus, in the Internal Ministry reports the number of deaths from suicide in St. Petersburg, is for 364 more than in the reports of the city Mayor. Apparently, these statistical differences are attributable to different timing of reception of information about the number of suicides to the Departments mentioned. This in turn led to the statistical discrepancies.

However, considering the steady increase of the Metropolitan population, which number has passed the one million mark by the end of the nineteenth century, this difference had no significant effect on calculations of the mortality rate from suicide.

Dynamics of completed suicides in St.-Petersburg in 1873-1897 is presented in table 1 (Humbly reports..., 1873-1893; The app to Humbly report ..., 1897; Statistic annual..., 1889).

Table 1: The number of suicides in St. Petersburg (1873-1897).

Year	Number of suicides	In % to previous year	In % to 1873
1873	91	-	-
1874	71	78.0	78.0
1875	104	146.4	114.2
1876	93	89.4	102.1
1877	82	88.1	90.1
1878	100	121.9	109.8
1879	82	82.0	90.1
1880	91	110.9	100.0
1881	120	131.8	131.8
1882	137	114.1	150.5
1883	106	77.3	116.4
1884	114	107.5	125.2
1885	136	119.2	149.4
1886	190	139.7	208.7
1887	114	60.1	125.2
1888	129	113.1	141.7
1889	131	101.5	143.9
1890	147	112.2	161.5
1891	180	122.4	197.8

1892	175	97.2	192.3
1893	186	106.2	204.3
1894	117	62.9	128.5
1895	153	130.7	168.1
1896	127	83.0	139.5
1897	132	103.9	145.0

CONCLUSION

Thus, during the last quarter of the XIX century in St. Petersburg was an increase in the number of completed suicides. The number of suicides has increased unevenly, but overall, by the end of the 1890s in comparison with the beginning of the 1870s the annual number of died from suicide of St. Petersburg citizens has increased almost twice. Since the 1870-ies in the Russian capital the average annual number of completed suicides was on the increase. In 1873-1877 it was accounted for 88.2 people, in 1878-1882 it was 106.2 people, in 1883-1887 – 132 people, in 1888-1892 it was 152 people. Only in 1893-1897 this index had a downward trend, relative to the previous period, of 143 people.

Insights

During the period of 1873-1897, the years of ups and downs in recorded suicides were observed. However, any patterns in their alternation is not revealed. A kind of boundary, from which the number of suicides in the capital of the Russian state became evident, was the late 1870 – early 1880-ies. Apparently, this was due to the intensification of law enforcement and bureaucracy caused serious aggravation of the socio-political situation in the country, the change of leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the coming to power of a new Russian Tsar Alexander III, an outspoken supporter of strict government discipline and order. These circumstances contributed to the tightening of registration discipline of various incidents, including suicides.

REFERENCES

- [1] Antropov, R. L. (1911) Why the youth commits suicide: a socio-writer. essays of sexual and other psychoses posteriors. period. Saint-Petersburg. (In Russian).
- [2] The Bashutsky, A. P. (1834) Panorama Of St. Petersburg. Part 2. Saint-Petersburg.
- [3] Belyakov, S. A. (1893) Of suicide, accidents, and psychiatric institutions: report of St. Petersburg. about-Woo psychiatrists in meeting, on 14 November 1892 in Saint Petersburg. (In Russian).
- [4] Bernatsky, V. A. (1911) Suicide among pupils of military educational institutions. Saint-Petersburg.(In Russian).
- [5] Bronze, A. A. (1912) Suicide. Saint-Petersburg. (In Russian).
- [6] Belacel, P. F. (1884) Suicide from ancient times to the present day: ist. essay philosophy. attitudes and legislation about suicide. Revel. (In Russian).
- [7] Phenomena, M. J. (1914) Causes of suicides in Russian schools. Moscow. (In Russian).
- [8] Florovsky, Vladimir (1915) Suicide of children in Odessa for 10 years. 1903-1913: from materials of odes. of emergency med. pomoschi: experience issled.: Soobshch. in a meeting Honey. Islands in Novoros. University 7.05.1914 Odessa. (In Russian).
- [9] Hubner, J. (1868) Suicide in St. Petersburg. Saint-Petersburg. (In Russian).
- [10] Horoshko, V. K. (1909) The Suicide of children. Moscow. (In Russian).
- [11] Korovin, A. M. (1916) Suicide and vodka consumption in European Russia from 1903 to 1912, the first year. Moscow. (In Russian).
- [12] Lebedev, N. (1913) Suicide as a socio-ethics evil. Moscow. (In Russian).
- [13] Levitsky, I. (1911) The Fight against suicide of students: proc. the Senate. Garin and Min. Nar. provs. Irkutsk. (In Russian).
- [14] Lipsky, A. A. (1887) The Suicide of children in St. Petersburg. Saint-Petersburg. (In Russian).
- [15] Likhachev, A. V. (1882) Suicide in Western Europe and European Russia: a Comparative statistical study. Saint-Petersburg. (In Russian).
- [16] The related activities of the St. Petersburg municipal administration and the Metropolitan police. (1894-1896). Saint-Petersburg.(In Russian).

- [17] Pasternacki, I. (1872-1873) A statistical study of suicides in St. Petersburg in 1870, 1871 and 1872 years. Medical Bulletin, № 34, 36, 38, 41. (In Russian).
- [18] Ponomarev, N. In. (1880) Suicide in Western Europe and in Russia in connection with the development of insanity: stat. issled. Saint-Petersburg. (In Russian).
- [19] Annex K - Report on the activities of the St. Petersburg municipal administration, 1897. (In Russian).
- [20] Prozorov, L. A. (1915) The Suicide of the mentally ill in hospitals. Modern psychiatry, 3. (In Russian).
- [21] Pushkarev, I. (1839) Description of St. Petersburg and the County towns of St. Petersburg province. Saint-Petersburg. In Russian.
- [22] Rechercheable nombre des suicides et des homicides commis Yong Russie pendant Les Annees 1819 et 1820 pairs H-Th. Herrmann // Memoires de l'Academic Imperiale des Sciences de St. Petersburg. (1832). St. Petersburg. 6 ser., vol.1.
- [23] Suicide, attempted suicide and accidents among pupils of educational institutions of the Ministry of national Prosveshcheniya / M-Nar. pros. Medical.-San. h. proc. institutions. (1906-1916). Petrograd. In Russian.
- [24] Suicide in St. Petersburg 1911-1912: causes and measures to counter them]. Dr. Prozorov. (1913). Saint-Petersburg. In Russian.
- [25] Statistical Yearbook of St. Petersburg.1888. The year of the eighth. (1889). Saint-Petersburg. In Russian.
- [26] Terekhovka, F. K. (1903) On the issue of suicide in St. Petersburg for 20 years (1881-1900) : dis. on a step. Dr. med. Gatchina. In Russian.
- [27] Veselovsky, K. S. (1847) Experiences of moral statistics in Russia. Saint-Petersburg. In Russian.
- [28] Military-statistical Yearbook of the army for 1910, 1911 (1911-1913). Saint-Petersburg. In Russian.
- [29] Annals of the Central Statistical Committee of the Ministry of internal Affairs No. 41 "Died violently and suddenly in European Russia in 1888-1893". / CSK MIA. (1897). Saint-Petersburg. In Russian.
- [30] Reports The St. Petersburg mayor. (1873-1893). Saint-Petersburg. In Russian.
- [31] Zagorsky, P. (1880-1881) Mortality in P. S. B. for 1878, St. Petersburg. In Russian.