



PATTERN OF HOMICIDAL DEATHS AUTOPSIED AT RIMS RANCHI- A ONE YEAR STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Homicide is the outrageous and the severest form of violent crime, where one human being divests another human being of the fundamental right to live. Killing of an individual is the highest level of aggression found in all culture. Though the pattern and method of homicide is different in different cultures and geographical regions, the motive and intention behind remain same such as property, dispute, revenge, infidelity, arguments and scuffle. The rate of homicidal deaths is considered the most representative indicator.

The aim of present study is to analyze the recent trend of homicidal deaths and its demographic, social and medicolegal aspects in one of the major city of Jharkhand state. This retrospective study was carried out for a period of one year from 1st July 2012 to 30th June 2013. The cases brought to the department for medico legal autopsy either confirmed or later registered as homicide by investigating police officer were considered for the study. Homicidal deaths constituted 23.7% of the total autopsy done where the majority of victims belong to 3rd and 4th decade of life with male predomination. Maximum victims were assassinated at the street during the afternoon and late evening. The main motive was revenge in 85.73% of cases. Fire arm injury 49.08% was the commonest pattern of death followed by blunt weapon injuries 20.39%.

KEYWORDS : Homicide; Victims; Assassinated; Sharp/blunt Weapon; Revenge; Ranchi

INTRODUCTION:

Homicide is the outrageous and the severest form of violent crime, where one human being divests another human being of the fundamental right to live. Homicide is defined legally as the destruction of human life by the act, agencies, procurement or culpable omission of some other person or persons¹. Social, cultural and economical factors influence the violent criminal activities in concerned areas. Many would agree that the best indicator of the level of violence in a society is the annual homicidal rate which is always come to attention of the Police and Public, and serves as a 'Gold standard' of the level of violent crime. There are two types of homicides i. lawful which includes excusable and justifiable homicide. ii. Unlawful or culpable homicide (Sec. 229 of IPC) which includes culpable homicide amounting to murder (300 of IPC) and culpable homicide not amounting to murder (304 of IPC). Homicide represents one of the leading cause of death caused by expression of aggression in its most extreme form.² To constitute the offence of murder the two elements are i.e. Men's rea means guilty mind or preplanning with aforethought and Actus reus means actual execution of planning are essential. While in offence of culpable homicide not amounting to murder the first component of preplanning i.e. men' rea is absent. The offence of culpable homicide not amounting to murder is often committed by sudden and grave provocation during the scuffle or argument.

Though homicide is present right from the time of old civilization, the motive have seemed to be changing. It is more common in countries with high levels of income inequality. Socioeconomic stability seems to function as an antidote to homicide³. Homicidal behavior is influenced by many factors like stresses faced in life due to financial, emotional and health issues, the negative influence of media and movies etc. other deciding factor for homicidal crime is easy availability of weapon, propagation of religious hatred feeling and terrorism. The peace and consonance in society has been turned down due to rampant rise in murder every day.

Homicide can be considered the 'tip of the violence iceberg' as

all kinds of other violent crimes are not been recorded by the system. The rate of homicidal death is considered the most representative crime indicator. Hence, this study attempts to analyze the recent trend of the homicidal deaths and its demographic, social and medico-legal aspects in one of the major cities of Jharkhand state. The aims and objectives of the present study were to find out the most susceptible age group, sex incidence, motive, and pattern of homicides, place and time of occurrence of crime, and throw light on cases which were initially alleged to be suicidal, accidental or natural deaths but later registered as homicidal deaths by autopsy report and police investigation during the study period.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The present study was conducted in the department of forensic medicine in RIMS Ranchi. The study is retrospective study done for duration of one year (from 1st July 2012 to 30th June 2013). All types of murder cases described in section 302 of IPC were included in this study. The cases brought to the department for medico-legal autopsy either confirmed or later registered as homicide by investigating police officer were considered for the study. Any cases subjected for autopsy with an alleged or suspected history of homicide but which were later registered as non- homicidal based on the autopsy findings, circumstantial evidence and investigation by the police and any cases where data was incomplete were excluded. The autopsy cases conducted at RIMS, Ranchi includes cases from different region of Ranchi as well as referral cases from the different rural and urban regions of Jharkhand.

RESULTS:

The total number of cases autopsied in the year time period 1st July 2012 to 30th June 2013 was 2540. Death due to homicide was 603(23.78%). Our study exhibits preponderous of male 507(84.07%) over female victims 96(15.92%). The majority of the victim belonged to the age group 30-39 years 215 cases (35.65%) followed by 20-29 years age group with 184 cases(30.51%) as shown on table:1

Table 1: Distribution Of Victim Based On Age And Sex

Age group	Males	Females
0 to 9	07	17
10 to 19	12	4
20 to 29	163	21
30 to 39	187	28
40 to 49	64	9
50 to 59	36	8
≥60	38	9
total	507	96

Most of the cases (95.8%) were brought to the department with alleged history as homicidal deaths while 17 cases was alleged to be an accidental death and another 10 as natural death (table 2)

Table2: Distribution Of Number Of Death According To Alleged History

Alleged history	N (%)
Homicidal death	576(95.5%)
Accidental death	17(2.81%)
Natural death	10(1.65%)
Total	603(100%)

Revenge was motive for killing the majority of cases (85.73%) followed by Arguments, financial conflicts and infidelity (table 3)

Table 3: Distribution Of Homicide Based On Motive

Motive	N (%)
Argument	34(5.63%)
Infidelity	14(2.35%)
Revenge	517(85.73%)
Property	26(4.33%)
Financial conflicts	12(1.99%)
Total	603(100%)

Maximum number of victims were killed at street/road (74.95%) followed by hotel/bar/Restaurant (12.60%) as shown in table 4.

Distribution of homicidal death according to the time of occurrence as depicted on table 5.

The majority of the homicidal offences occurred in the urban region (63.3%) of the city followed by rural areas (29.5%). In 114 cases (4.48%), only sharp cutting weapons while in 123 cases (4.84%) only hard and blunt substances were used to inflict injuries. The firearms were used for homicide in 296 cases and homicidal burn and explosives were reported in 39 cases. Homicidal asphyxiates was found in 11.25% of the victims (table 6).

Table 4: Distribution Of Place Occurrence

Place of occurrence	N (%)
Street/Road	452(74.95%)
Victim's resident	22(3.64%)
Hotel/Bar/Restaurant	76(12.60%)
Others	53(8.78%)
Total	603(100%)

Table : 5 Distribution Of Homicide According To Time Of Occurrence

Time of occurrence	N(%)
Morning (6am-12pm)	166(27.52%)
Afternoon(12pm-6pm)	219(36.31%)
Evening(6pm-12am)	202(33.49%)
Late night(12am-6am)	16(2.65%)
Total	603(100%)

Table-6 Method Employed In Homicide During July 2012 To June 2013

SI. No.	Methods	Number	PC. of the total Autopsies*	PC. of the total Homicides**
1	By fire arm	296	11.65%	49.08%
2	By sharp weapon	114	4.48%	18.90%
3	By blunt weapon	123	4.84%	20.39%
4	By asphyxia	31	1.22%	5.14%
5	By other means (Explosives, burning etc.)	39	1.53%	6.46%

DISCUSSION:

Homicidal crimes are one of the most common Offences present in the society. Financial conflicts, infidelity, poverty, stress, lack of proper educational and recreational facilities, migratory population, and easy accessibility to addictive drugs and weapon of violence, poor temperament, unemployment, substance abuse are some of the provoking factors for such kind of violent offences. Our study showed an overall percentage of homicide cases to be 23.78% out of 2540 medico-legal autopsies conducted in the forensic department of RIMS, Ranchi. These results are higher than global homicide rate of 6.9% and a homicide rate of Asia, Europe and America which is 3%, 4% and 6% respectively.³ These findings are also higher than the earlier observations made by Sheikh⁴, Prajapati et al.⁵, and Basappa et al.⁶ The present study holds up the fact that homicidal crimes have increased recently which correlates with the global trend. Our study exhibits a preponderance of male victims (84.07%) over female victims (15.93%) with a male to female ratio of 5.28:1 which may be attributed to aggressive nature, involvement in more outdoor activities, indulging in violent behaviour and their risk-taking behaviour in the male gender. The lower incidence in females may be due to custom, social values and preference of females to stay indoors. These results are higher than observations made by Basappa et al.⁶, Parmar et al.⁸ and Ghambhir et al.⁹, while it is in clear contrast with the study of Kominato et al.¹⁰ Where male to female ratio was of 1:1.

Majority of the victims belonged to age group 30 to 39 years- 215 cases(35.66%) followed by 20-29 years age group with 184 cases(30.5%) which together comprises 66.16% of the total victims. The age group 21-39 in the present day and age comprises of highly competitive and ambitious ones, who have on their shoulders responsibility of earning and getting married and settling down by the age of 40 due to societal pressures. This makes them more frustrated and vulnerable to violence. Male victims predominated in all age groups except for 0 to 9 years, where female victims were more prevalent, showing that the society is still unable to ensure the safety of young females. Our results regarding age distribution are in accordance with that of wahlsten et al.¹¹ where most of the victim belong to 31 to 40 years but in contrast with study of Kominato¹⁰ where victims belonged 36 to 45 years and Bassaapa et al⁶ where they belong to 21 to 29 years.

Most of the cases -576 (95.5%) were brought to the department with alleged history of homicidal deaths. 17 cases were alleged to be an accidental death and 10 were alleged to be a natural death. Both the cases were found to be homicide upon autopsy.

Revenge was the motive for killing in majority of the cases (85.7%) which is reasonably a conscious and preplanned crime. Arguments which includes personal and social conflicts was the second most common reason (5.63%). This shows that most of the quarrels start over a trivial reason but gets terminated into the causation of crime due to aggression and provocation. Other motives for murder in our study were infidelity, property and financial conflicts. The present study

correlate with that of mohanti et al.¹², Basappa et al.⁶ where revenge was the common motive but is in contrast to that of Parmar et al.⁸ where an argument was the major motive. According to the author the offenders are influenced by religious and political affairs coupled with aggression, which on circumstances instigates them to commit a crime. Psychological counseling and investigation to look beyond the motive for murder may prove to be beneficial in such instances.

A maximum number of individuals were victimized on the street/road (74.59%) followed by hotel/ bar/ restaurant (12.60%) which were because of revenge and arguments. Studies done by Mohanty et al.¹³ and Shiv Kumar et al.¹⁴ also found outdoors to be the common place of occurrence similar to our study. Our results are in contrast to that of Basappa et al.⁶ and Kominato et al.¹⁰ where the majority of homicides took place indoors.

The maximum number of the homicides took place in the afternoon (36.31%) and evening (33.49%) which is similar to study conducted by Vougiouklakis et al.¹⁵ but is dissimilar with a study by Basappa et al.⁶ where the maximum number of cases occurred in the evening.

Majority of homicidal offences were in Jharkhand urban region (64.6%) followed by Jharkhand rural (35.4%). The high number in the urban region of Jharkhand may be attributed to rapidly growing urbanization, migratory population, relatively easy access to addictive substances, increasing competitiveness, jealousy and difficulties in establishing themselves (survival of fittest) when compared to rural areas of the city.

Fire arm injuries were most common method of homicide (49.08%) followed by injuries by blunt weapon (20.39%). These finding correlate with study done by Ghambhir et al.⁹ and Patel et al.⁷ homicide by sharp weapon occurred in 18.90% of total victims. Sharp weapon uses in homicidal cases may be due to easy availability of such weapon in the city but its exclusive use also hints towards preplanned crime. Use of blunt weapon for homicide could be attributed to an unpremeditated aggressive response. Sudden explosiveness and burn accounts for 6.46% cases of total homicide.

CONCLUSIONS:

The present retrospective analysis of homicidal death was an attempt to unravel various aspects and form a profile of homicidal deaths in the city. Our present study showed that various geographic, cultural, social, political and personal factors were involved in the causation of homicidal death. The common aspect behind homicidal deaths was intolerance and lack of patience. Limitation of the present study was that it was confined to a particular region and was limited to one-year period. Multicenter studies and studies for a longer duration are needed to have an accurate idea of trends of homicidal deaths in our country.

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