

Homicidal deaths pattern in an around Guwahati

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Abstract

The present study was done in the Dept of Forensic Medicine, Gauhati Medical College, Guwahati from 1st January 2017 to 31st December 2017 for a period of 1 year. Out of total 3215 post-mortem examination conducted in the year 2017, 112 cases were of alleged homicide. This revealed that homicidal deaths were accounted for 3.48% of autopsies. The purpose of this study was to know the age and gender distribution, seasonal distribution, cause of death, pattern of weapon used for homicidal death. In this study males i.e. 81 cases (72.32%) predominates females i.e. 31 cases (27.68%). Maximum numbers of victims were in the age group of 21-30 years, 55 cases (49.11%) were found in this age group. Maximum homicides took place at victim's residence i.e. 38 cases (33.93%) followed by at street 30 cases (26.79%). Acquaintances or known peoples were involved in 55 cases (49.11%). The main motive found was revenge in 24 cases (21.43%). Sharp weapon injuries found in 36 cases (32.14%) which were the commonest pattern followed by blunt weapon injuries found in 34 cases (30.36%) and 95 numbers of cases (84.82%) were found died on the spot.

Key Word: Homicidal Death, Pattern, Motive, Time and place of occurrence

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Received Date: 02/03/2019 Revised Date: 23/04/2019 Accepted Date: 14/06/2019

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26611/10181111>

Access this article online

Quick Response Code:



Website:

www.medpulse.in

Accessed Date:

02 July 2019

motive for these killings has remained almost the same since early times i.e. mainly lust for money, property, women and revenge etc. The incidence of homicide is increasing day by day and the pattern of homicide is also changing. These are because of population explosion, change of life style, human needs and easy availability dangerous of weapons. In view of the increasing incidence of homicidal deaths this study is undertaken to find out the most vulnerable sex and age group, reason behind, pattern of homicide, time and place of occurrence, survival period etc.

INTRODUCTION

Crime is an act of moment, result of which is beyond expression in any ways. Worst and the cruellest crime that can be committed by a human being upon a human being is homicide. Homicide is as old as human civilization and it is also reported in the Bible.¹ One of the leading causes of unnatural deaths is homicide.² Preplanning and the actual execution should work together to constitute the homicide.³ Killing of human being is very common but to reveal the mystery and award a sentence to the guilty is a challengeable task for investigating agency and for judiciary. The reason or

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in the Department of Forensic Medicine, Gauhati Medical College Guwahati from 1st January 2017 to 31st December 2017, a period of one year. During this study period, total 3215 autopsies were conducted, of which 112 cases were of homicidal deaths, which were either confirmed by investigating officers before autopsies or found to be homicide at autopsies or declared as homicide during investigation. The cases with alleged history of homicide and also the cases which were later registered as homicide were studied but cases with alleged history of homicide but

which were later registered as non homicidal based on the autopsy findings, evidence of circumstance of crime and police investigation were excluded. A thorough and meticulous history regarding age, sex, religion, education, occupation, economy and social culture related to deceased; motive of incidence, method used for homicide,

etc. were collected from relatives, concerned investigating police officers, eye-witnesses and police-inquest. All the post mortem examination was conducted by routine procedures and with routine autopsy instruments.

RESULTS

In Table No 1 it was seen that majority of cases are found in the age group of 21-30 years, 55cases (49.11%), out of which 41 cases (36.61%) were male and 14 cases (12.5%) were females. Second commonest age group was 31 - 40 years. Where 16 cases (14.29%) were males and 8 cases (7.14%) were females. Lowest incidence seen is 0-10 year's age group with 4 cases (3.57%) in total.

Table 1: Age and Sex wise distribution of victims

Sr. No	Age group (yrs)	No. of Males (%)	No. of Female (%)	Total No. (%)
1	0-10	2 (1.79%)	2 (1.79%)	4 (3.57%)
2	11-20	4 (3.57%)	1 (0.89%)	5 (4.46%)
3	21-30	41 (36.61%)	14 (12.5%)	55 (49.11%)
4	31-40	16 (14.29%)	8 (7.14%)	24 (21.43%)
5	41-50	6 (5.35%)	2 (1.79%)	8 (7.14%)
6	51-60	7 (6.25%)	3 (2.68%)	10 (8.93%)
7	>60	5 (4.46%)	1 (0.89%)	6 (5.35%)
Total		81 (72.32%)	31 (27.68%)	112 (100%)

Table 2: According to the alleged history distribution of homicides

Sr. No.	Alleged History	No. of cases (%)
1	Death due to Homicide	85 (75.89%)
2	Death due to Accident	7(6.25%)
3	Death due to Natural disease	5(4.46%)
4	Death due to Suicide	0(0.0)
5	Death in Suspicious conditions	15 (13.39%)
Total		112 (100%)

In the above Table No 2 it was seen that according to alleged history of death 85 cases (75.89%) were found homicidal from the onset. While in 15 cases (13.39%) alleged history was suspicious. History of accidental death and natural death was 7 cases and 5 cases respectively.

Table 3: Distribution of homicides according to place of occurrence of crime

Sl. No.	Occurrence site	No. (%)
1	House of Victim	38(33.93%)
2	House of Assaulter	2(1.79%)
3	Common residence of Victim and Assaulter	14(12.5%)
4	At place of work	5(4.46%)
5	On the road	30(26.79%)
6	At countryside, hilly area (Remote)	2(1.79)
7	Others places	9(8.04)
8	Not known	12(10.71)
Total		112(100)

It was seen from the Table no-3 that according to place of occurrence of most of the crime took place at victim's own house, a total of 38 cases (33.93%), second commonest place of occurrence is on the road, where 30 cases (26.79%) were found. While Common residence of Victim and Assaulter was the place of occurrence in 14 cases (12.5%). In 12 cases (10.71%) place of occurrence was not found.

Table 4: Distribution of homicides according to time of occurrence of crime

Sl. No	Time of Occurrence	No. (%)
1	Morning (6 am to 12 Noon)	10 (8.93%)
2	Afternoon (12 Noon to 6 pm)	15 (13.39%)
3	Evening (6pm to 12 midnight)	51 (45.53%)
4	Late Night (12 Midnight to 6 am)	34 (30.36%)
5	Not Known	2 (1.79%)
	Total	112(100%)

From Table No 4 it was seen that most of the crime happened in the evening i.e. between 6pm to 12 midnight, a total of 51 cases (45.53%). Next most common time of occurrence was late night i.e. between 12 midnight to 6am where 34 cases (30.36%) occurred. Least cases happened in the morning time between 6am to 12 noon, where only 10 cases found. In 2 cases time of occurrence could not be ascertained properly.

Table 5: Distribution of Homicides cases based on Relationship of Victim and accused

SI No	Relationship Victim and Accused	Number of cases (%)
1	Acquaintance*	55 (49.11%)
2	Parents	4 (3.57%)
3	Spouse	15 (13.39%)
4	Relatives	18 (16.07%)
5	Strangers	4 (3.57%)
6	Not known	16 (14.29%)
	Total	112(100%)

* Acquaintance means Both victim and accused are known to each other From the above table it was seen that in 55 (49.11%) number of cases victims and accused were known to each other. Where in 18 cases (16.07%) accused was relatives of victims and in 15 cases (13.39%) victims were the spouse of the accused. But in 16 number cases (14.29%) relationship between victim and accused could not be ascertained. (Table No: 5)

Table 6: Distribution of homicidal cases according to motive of accused

Sr. No.	Motive of accused	Number of cases (%)
1	Argument between victim and assaulter	15 (13.39)
2	Old revenge related	24 (21.43)
3	Financial disputes	23 (20.54)
4	Property related issues	10 (8.93)
6	Adultery	5 (4.46)
7	Others	20 (17.86)
8	Unknown	15 (13.39)
	Total	112 (100)

It was seen from the data of this study that main motives behind homicide was revenge in 24 cases (21.43%), Financial disputes in 23 cases (20.54%), others (means marital disputes, sex related issues, low socio-economic status related stress, etc) constituted 20 cases (17.86%), arguments between accused and victims leads to homicidal crime in 15 cases (13.39%), while in 15 cases (13.39%) motive of homicide could not be ascertained.(Table No-6)

Table 7: Distribution of cases according to homicidal pattern

Sr. No.	Homicidal Pattern	No. (%)
1	Injuries due to sharp weapon	36 (32.14)
2	Injuries due to blunt weapon	34 (30.36)
3	Injuries due to both sharp and blunt weapon	11 (9.82)
4	Death due to asphyxia	24 (21.43)
5	Death due to asphyxia and sharp weapon injuries	2 (1.79)
6	Injuries due to firearm	3 (2.68)
7	Injuries due to burns	2 (1.79)
	Total	112 (100)

In the table 7 above it was seen that main pattern of homicidal death was due to injuries from sharp cutting weapon, total 36 cases (32.14%), second most common pattern was injuries was from blunt weapons 34 cases (30.36%) and 3rd commonest pattern was Asphyxial death, total 24 cases (21.43%) out of which death due to strangulation was 13 cases, Throttling 3 cases, Smothering 4 cases and drowning 4 cases)

Table 8: Distribution of homicidal death according to survival time

Sr. No.	Survival Period	No. of Cases (%)
1	Died within half an hour	95 (84.82)
2	Half hour to 24 hours	12(10.71)
3	1 days to 1 week	2(1.79)
4	More than 1 week	3(2.68)
	Total	112(100)

In the Table No.8 it was seen that 95 cases (84.82%) out of total 112 cases of this study died on the spot i.e. within half an hour of incident. Total 12 cases died between half an hour to one day, while only 3 cases live more than one week.

DISCUSSION

Total 3215 medico-legal autopsies were conducted during the study period i.e. from 1st January 2017 to 31st December 2017. Out of which 112 cases (3.48%) were of homicidal deaths. The most common age group was 21-30 years, total 55cases (49.11%) were found in that age group and the major factors which are detected in this group are marital disputes, failed love affairs, and dowry related in females and lack of job, arguments, revenge were the reasons in males.

The victims in the age group 0-10 years were mostly committed by their parents because of lower socio-economic status related stress or other stress of their life. These findings were similar to findings of the studies conducted by the Scott K.W.M.⁵ Gupta Avnesh¹ and Mohanty M.K.'s⁶ where most of the victims belonged to the 21-30 years age group. While in the findings of studies conducted by Wahlsten P.⁷ most of the victims belonged to 31-40 years age group and by Kominato Y's⁸ belonged to 36-45 years, by Henderson J.P.⁹ belonged to 30-39 years and by Saint Martin P¹⁰ belonged to 50-59 years. Out of total 112 cases 81 cases (72.32%) were males (more than 2/3rd of the victims) that may be due to the more aggression of males than females. Studies of Alan Fox¹¹, Rygol K.¹², Mohanty M.K.^{6,13}, shows similar findings. But male female ratio is 1:1 in the observations of study conducted by Kominato Y.⁸ Of the 112 cases in the study, 85 cases (75.89%) were registered as homicides at the time of autopsy, 7 cases (6.25%) were registered as accidental deaths (As the victims were found dead by the road side or by the railway tracks with injuries), in 5 five cases (4.46%) the reasons of death assumed as of natural disease (Absence of external injuries lead them to register it as natural death), in 15 (fifteen) cases (13.39%) the investigating police officer suspected foul play based on the alleged history given by the relatives of the deceased. It was also seen in the study of Wahlsten P.⁷ where investigating officer did not suspect homicide prior to autopsy in 4% of the cases. Out of the 112 cases 38 cases (33.93%) were found dead at their own residence, means that these homicides were pre planned, while 30 cases were found on the road which were due to rivalry, revenge murders and arguments under influence of intoxication, next commonest place

was shared residence which were mostly pedicide and infidelity related. In this study other places mean railway station, playground etc. Findings of this study is similar to the study conducted by Kominato Y⁸ but is in contrast with Vougiouklakis T.¹⁴, where in deserted area or place close to agricultural side was place of occurrence in majority of homicides accounting for 46.2% and Mohanty M.K.¹³ majority of homicides took place outdoors. In 12 cases (10.71%) the dead body was moved from the scene of the crime and attempts were made by the assailants to obliterate the identity as well as the evidence of crime in the form of burying the body in a drain and covering with the slab, by burning or putting them by the railway tracks. The presence or absence of blood stains, signs of struggle/disturbance at the spot of recovery of body were taken into account for the above inference, observing the spot photographs and information furnished by the police. In a study conducted by Mohanty M.K.¹³, the body was disposed in different spot in 14.7% of cases. Most of the homicides took place in the evening time 51 cases (45.53%) and late night 34 cases (30.36%) that may be due to the fact that in darkness the chances of recognition of the accused is less and the chances of victims and accused engaging in arguments may be high once they meet after a day's hard work. It was also seen that lower socio-economic status and alcohol intoxication also has a major role. The findings of the present study were similar to the findings of studies conducted by Wahlsten P.⁷ and Gupta Avnesh¹ but in study conducted by Vougiouklakis T maximum number of cases (26.9%) occurred during noon.¹⁴ The motive was revenge in most of the homicides 24 cases (21.43%) mainly due to business, real estate related issues etc. In 23 cases (20.54%) of homicides financial conflicts were responsible, mostly were domestic property and dowry related. In the present study other reasons means marital disputes, sex related issues, lower socio-economic status related stress, etc. they all together comprises 20 cases (17.86%). The observations made by Vougiouklakis T.¹⁴ were similar to the present study, where the main motives were revenge (23.1%) and conflicts (23.1%) and Mohanty M.K.¹³, where the commonest motive is the revenge (29.2%) followed by argument (17.1%) but the findings of studies conducted by James Alan Fox¹¹ were different, where the

argument was the most frequent cause. In 55 cases (49.11%) of homicides accused were acquaintance (acquaintance is a person whom one knows or recognizes only but not have intimate relation). Spouse were involved in 15 (fifteen) cases of homicides the. 4 cases (3.57%) of homicides were committed by strangers and parents because of arguments and poor financial conditions respectively. These observations were similar to observations made by Mohanty M.K.¹³ where 87% of the accused were acquaintance of the victims but the strangers committed maximum number of homicides in the study conducted by Wahlsten P.⁷, Henderson J.P.⁹ The commonest pattern of homicidal death was due to sharp weapon injuries, 36 cases (32.14%), followed by blunt weapon injuries 34 cases (30.36%), it may be due to the easy availability of sharp weapons. In this study only 3 cases (2.68%) were due to fire arm injury. These observations were similar to the studies conducted by P. Wahlsten⁷ and Gupta Avnesh,¹ where the most common cause of death were sharp weapon injury 39% and 57.4% respectively but is different to the studies by Preti A¹⁵, Alan Fox¹¹, where Firearms injuries related deaths were the most common pattern. In the present study 95 cases (84.82%) of the victims died on the spot. That may be due to the lethality of weapon used and preplanning of the accused to kill the victim.

CONCLUSION

From the present study it was seen that the maximum victims of this study were in 21-30 years age group. By looking at the problems of this age group it was seen that lack of job is a major factor. So appropriate steps should be taken by the appropriate authority to deal with this problem. Next most provocative factors are marital disputes and family problems which should be dealt with the help of appropriate authorities or counsellor. The common type of injuries which causes homicidal crime is due to sharp cutting weapon. So there should be strict law for possessing such dangerous weapons. It is seen that most of the homicidal crime took place either in evening or late night mostly due to influence of alcohol. So adequate awareness should be created amongst peoples towards the hazards of alcohol. As a whole to solve the problem of crime a team work is very essential amongst police, forensic expert and judiciary systems by sharing their knowledge.

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Source of Support: None Declared
Conflict of Interest: None Declared