

Medicolegal Profile of Homicidal Deaths: A Two Years Retrospective Study

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Abstract

Homicide is one of the heinous crimes executed by human beings. It may be a consequence of argument between acquaintances, robbery, sexual assault, financial conflict, property disputes, infidelity and other causes and results in innumerable deaths reverberating across every levels of society. In this study we have analysed data of autopsied homicidal deaths between January 2015 to December 2016. We found that males were common victims (56.52% cases) and the age group of 21-30 years was most commonly affected. We have found an increasing trend of homicide in this area. Most cases homicides were executed by sharp weapons followed by blunt.

Keywords: Homicide; Rural; Method.

Introduction

Homicide is defined as killing of one human being by another human being [1]. It is one of the oldest crimes which dates back to the dawn of civilization. Culpable homicide may be amounting to murder or not amounting to murder (Sec 304 IPC). Murder is defined under Sec 300 IPC and its punishment is given under Sec 302 IPC [2].

Homicidal deaths may be a consequence of argument between acquaintances, robbery, sexual assault, financial conflict, property disputes, infidelity and other causes. The incidence of homicide is rising rapidly day by day due to increase in population, unemployment, depression, stress and strain, drug and substance abuse, terroristic activities and easy availability of weapon of offence.

Homicides results in innumerable deaths reverberating across every levels of society. The global average of homicidal deaths is 6.9 per 100,000 population [3].

Various medicolegal information like time and place of assault, method used for homicide, motive, etc plays a critical role in reconstruction, analysis and adjudication of homicidal deaths, particularly in the absence of reliable witnesses [4]. This study has been undertaken to study the different medicolegal aspects associated with homicidal deaths in and around Loni, a rural region of Western Maharashtra, India.

Material and Methods

A retrospective research was conducted on the cases of homicide over a period of two years extending from January 2015 to December 2016. The material for the present study comprise 23 victims of homicide, out of a total of 628 autopsies conducted at the mortuary of Pravara Rural Hospital, affiliated to Rural Medical College of Pravara Institute of Medical Sciences (Deemed University), Loni. All files including complete post mortem report, police inquests, lab reports, etc were reviewed. The data so procured were compiled and analysed. Present study include only homicidal deaths as a result of mechanical injuries and asphyxia.

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Received on 15.06.2017, Accepted on 28.06.2017

Results

Out of 628 autopsied cases in our study period, homicidal deaths constitute 23 cases, (3.66%) [Table 1]. The male to female victim ratio was 1.3:1. Majority of the cases (39.12%) were amongst the age group of 21-30 years. Only one case (4.34%) of infanticide was noted [Table 2]. Sharp weapons were used for homicide in majority of cases (34.78%), followed by hard and blunt type of weapon (21.73%) and ligature strangulation (17.39%) [Table 3]. In our study we found that 14 cases (60.87%) were fresh and remaining 9 (39.13%) were decomposed [Table 4].

Most of the homicidal incidents took place at the victim's home (39.12%), 7 bodies (30.43%) were found in the street while 5 (21.75%) were discovered in a remote area [Table 5]. In our study majority of the cases were seen in summer season (47.82%) followed by monsoon (34.79%) and winter (17.39%). The motive behind most of the homicides were robbery (26.09%), followed by argument, revenge and property gain (13.04% each) [Table 6]. In our study majority of the cases were seen in summer season (47.82%) followed by monsoon (34.79%) and winter (17.39%) [Table 7]. Maximum number of the homicides took place in the evening (39.12%), followed by night (30.43%) and afternoon (26.09%) [Table 8].

Table 1: Incidence of homicidal deaths

Year	Total No of Autopsy	No of Homicides
2015	318	08
2016	310	15
Total	628	23 (3.66%)

Table 2: Distribution of cases based on age and sex of the victims

Sr. No	Age group	No of Male	No of Female	Total no (%)
1	0-10	1	1	2 (8.70%)
2	11-20	1	1	2 (8.70%)
3	21-30	6	3	9 (39.12%)
4	31-40	1	2	3 (13.04%)
5	41-50	2	1	3 (13.04%)
6	51-60	0	2	2 (8.70%)
7	60 & above	2	0	2 (8.70%)
	Total	13	10	23 (100.0%)

Table 3: Distribution of cases according to method of homicide

Sr. No	Pattern of Homicide	No (%)
1	Blunt weapon injury	05 (21.73%)
2	Sharp weapon injury	08 (34.78%)
3	Firearm	02 (8.70%)
4	Ligature strangulation	04 (17.39%)
5	Throttling	02 (8.70%)
6	Smothering	02 (8.70%)

Table 4: Distribution of cases according to condition of body

Sr. no	Condition of body	No (%)
1	Decomposed	09 (39.13%)
2	Fresh	14 (60.87%)

Table 5: Distribution of cases according to place of occurrence of crime

Sr. No	Place of Crime	No (%)
1	Home	09 (39.12%)
2	Street	07 (30.43%)
3	Workplace	02 (8.70%)
4	Remote area	05 (21.75%)

Table 6: Distribution of cases according to motive of homicide

Sr. No	Motive	No (%)
1	Argument	03 (13.04%)
2	Revenge	02 (8.70%)
3	Financial conflict	03 (13.04%)
4	Property gain	03 (13.04%)
5	Infidelity	02 (8.70%)
6	Robbery	06 (26.09%)
7	Others	04 (17.39%)

Table 7: Distribution of cases according to season of occurrence of crime

Sr. No	Season	No (%)
1	Summer	11 (47.82%)
2	Monsoon	08 (34.79%)
3	Winter	04 (17.39%)

Table 8: Distribution of cases according to time of commission of crime

Sr. No	Time	No (%)
1	Morning	01 (4.35%)
2	Afternoon	06 (26.09%)
3	Evening	09 (39.12%)
4	Night	07 (30.43%)

Discussion

During the study period, from January 2015 to December 2016, 628 medico-legal autopsies were conducted, of which homicidal deaths constituted 23 cases (3.66%). Majority of the cases were seen in the age-group of 21-30 years, which is the most active phase of life. This may be due to various reasons like marital disputes and infidelity, unemployment, arguments, revenge and financial conflicts. This is in accordance with the study conducted by Gupta A [5] and Mohanty MK [4], but in contrast to the observation made by Kominato Y [6] and by Saint Martin P [7]. In our study the male to female ratio was 1.3:1 which is in accordance with the study conducted by Kominato Y [6]. But studies of other researchers have shown a relatively high male predominance [8,9].

Deaths due to sharp weapon injuries (34.78%) were the commonest method of homicide followed by blunt weapon injuries (21.73%) and ligature strangulation (17.39%), which suggest that in the vicinity of crime scene, easily available weapon was sharp followed by blunt. This is in accordance with the study conducted by Gupta A [5], Hugar BS [10], P. Wahlsten [11]. Maximum number of victim (39.12%) were murdered at their residence only, which highlights that the perpetrators were familiar to victim's whereabouts, while 07 bodies (30.43%) were found on the street. The motive behind most of the homicides were robbery, followed by argument, revenge and

property gain (13.04% each). As this is a rural area and most of the people are farmers who reside in their farms. Also this particular region is occupied by various main highways of Maharashtra. This is in contrast with the study conducted by Mohanty MK [4], where revenge followed by argument were the most common reasons behind homicide.

In our study majority of the cases were seen in summer season (47.82%) followed by monsoon (34.79%) and winter (17.39%). In a rural region, usually the labor-class are unemployed as there is no any farming work available during this season. Maximum number of the homicides took place in the evening (39.12%) and night (30.43%) which highlights that most crimes are committed in darkness which reduces the chance of the assailant being recognized. Also, after a days work, the rural people consume alcohol and other substances of abuse which increase the chances of arguments or taking revenge.

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