

## Study of Concealed Evidence in Homicidal Deaths

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### Abstract

The present study was carried in the Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, SCB Medical College, Cuttack, Odisha during the year 2010 to 2012 with aim and objective to determine the various method and motive to conceal the evidence of Homicidal cases by the assailants after committing the crime. Total 111 cases of homicidal deaths were subjected to autopsy and various relevant data were taken from history, inquest report and dead body challan. Garment study and post mortem findings are also taken into consideration. Out of it there were 22 cases (19.81%) showed some evidence of concealment and comprises various methods and motives. The assailants tried to hide the identification of victim, manner and place of occurrence to be out of suspicion to escape from the crime and also to maintain reputation. So with careful, systemized and meticulous examination of homicidal cases can lead to a definite conclusion and help the crime investigation agency away from misguide by the assailants and help to uncover the mask on concealment.

**Keywords:** Concealment; Homicide; Meticulous examination.

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### Introduction

Homicide is killing of a human being by another human being.[1] It is a heinous crime against society and is as old as our civilization.[2] In present day society with the help of advanced knowledge which may be acquired from the media like TV, cinema, internet etc. the criminals are adopting various scientific means to execute the crime and wiping out evidences to escape from conviction. Various common methods adopted by the assailants are use of hard and blunt weapon, stabbing, cut throat, chopping, strangulation, firearm etc.[2] After committing the crime they may try to conceal the facts just

to go scot free and to live a life of a respectable person. The role of forensic pathologist is to give all the possible facts to the police.[3] But more difficulties arise when the evidences are destroyed or the body of offence concealed.[4] Assailants are very keen to conceal crime by different methods, so there may be wrong interpretation by inexperienced autopsy surgeon and hence it may lead to miscarriage of justice.[5]

### Aims and Objectives

1. To study the methods used by the assailants to conceal the crime.
2. To study the motives of assailants for concealment.

### Materials and Methods

The present study was carried out on homicidal victims consisting of 111 cases brought for medico-legal post-mortem

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examination to the mortuary of S.C.B. Medical College, Cuttack, Odisha, India during September 2010 to August 2012.

Cases of homicide were selected by history, police inquest, dead body challan, garment examination and autopsy findings. Histological study was done in doubtful cases to know the ante-mortem or postmortem wound. Cases were excluded from the study where there was only allegation of homicide without any circumstantial evidence or corroborative autopsy finding.

The data collected in a preformed Proforma and at the end of the study various observations and results were noted and it further discussed with similar studies and case reports.

## Observation and Results

Out of 111 homicidal cases in this study 22 cases (19.81%) show some clue to conceal the evidences of homicide by the assailants. The various methods and motives of the assailants found in this study are as follows:

1. In one case out of the total study there was a postmortem railway run over with presence of ante-mortem stab wound on chest. The assailant here tried to conceal the identification, manner and place of

**Table 1: Incidence of Homicidal Cases Where Concealment of Evidence Found**

Total cases of Homicide	Concealment cases	Percentage
111	22	19.81

**Table 2: Methods Used for Concealment**

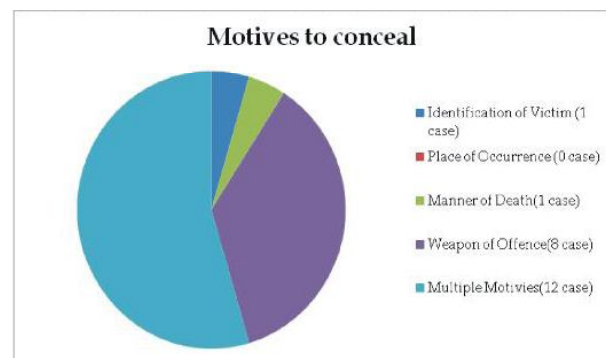
Methods	No. of Cases	Percentage
Hiding the weapon of offence	08	36.36
Keeping the body away form place of occurrence	08	36.36
Postmortem Burning	03	13.63
Disfiguration	02	9.09
Postmortem Suspension	01	4.54

**Table 3: Motives of Assailant**

Motives to Conceal	Number of cases*	Percentage
Identity of victims	13	59.09
Place of occurrence	10	45.45
Manner of death	14	63.63
The weapon of offence	08	36.36

\*A single case may have more than one motives of concealment

**Figure 1: Motive of Assailant**



occurrence.

2. In three numbers of cases there was presence of postmortem burn to conceal the identification and manner after committing homicide. The methods of homicide used in these cases were cut throat involving C3 vertebral body; firearm injury over head with bullet found inside the skull; and a case of ligature strangulation with ligature material present over the neck.
3. In one case there were injuries over the face (contusion, laceration and cut) to disfigure it with presence of other fatal injuries over the body. The motive of assailant is to conceal the identification of victim.
4. There was postmortem suspension of a dead body with a ligature with presence of ante mortem depressed fracture of skull over vertex and brain injury. The assailant

tried to conceal the manner in this case.

5. In one instance a decapitated head was found miles away from its trunk with an intention to conceal the identification of victim and place of occurrence.
6. There was an incident of postmortem submersion of dead body with ectopic disposal having an ante-mortem cut throat injury to conceal manner and place of occurrence.
7. In six different cases the dead bodies were found away from the scene of crime. This may be done to conceal the identity and place of occurrence by the assailant.
8. The weapon of offence which reveals one of the important tools for homicide investigation are usually found absent at the place of crime either by the secret disposal or voluntary destruction by the assailant. In 8 cases (7.2%) in the present series the weapon of offence recovered later by police were concealed by the assailant after committing the crime. The assailants hid the weapon to conceal the manner and trace evidences present over it.

Common methods used by the assailants to conceal the crime in the order are hiding the weapon of offence, keeping the body away from place of occurrence, postmortem burning and disfiguring. The main motives of assailants in the order are to conceal the manner of death, identity of victim and place of occurrence. In most of the cases there are multiple motives to conceal the crime.

## Discussion

Similar studies and cases were found by the following authors.

1. Basappa S. Hugar found in 15.75% cases the dead bodies were moved from the scene of crime and attempts were made by the assailants to obliterate the identity as well

as evidence of crime.[2]

2. Upadhyay P. found in 23.2% cases the assailants attempted to conceal the crime.[6]
3. Mohanty M. K. *et al* found in 14.7% cases the dead bodies were located away from scene of crime.[7]
4. Meshram A. H. *et al* found a case of postmortem burn with ante-mortem strangulation in his case report.[3]
5. Tumar A. R. *et al* studied the postmortem burning of the corpses following homicide.[8]
6. Jambure M. P. *et al* studied case report of electrocution as a method to conceal homicide.[5]
7. Thind A. S. *et al* found a case report on strangulation followed by postmortem electrocution to conceal the manner.[9]
8. Sheikh M.I. studied investigation of concealed homicide and establishment of positive identification.[4]
9. Sadler D. W. presented two cases where the homicidal strangulation first discovered at necropsy without any visible sign of injury. The assailants' motive was to conceal the manner.[10]

## Conclusion

Assailants try to hide the identification of victim, place of occurrence and manner after committing the crime to escape punishment and to save their reputation by using various methods. So with careful, systemized and meticulous examination of the homicide cases with the knowledge of common methods of concealment of crime can lead to a definite conclusion and help the crime investigation for administration of justice.

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