

HOMICIDAL DEATHS IN VARANASI REGION

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ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken in the Department of Forensic Medicine, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi to find out the incidence of homicide and aftermaths of incidence with reference to crime investigation in terms of time and place of incidence, information to police and their arrival, medical aid, dying declaration and other criminological aspects.

INTRODUCTION

Killing of a human being is a major crime. Since very long time laws were framed by different judicial authorities in a bit to prevent its further occurrence. In spite of all these, there has been a phenomenal rise in the incidence of homicide all over the world and also in India. Perhaps due to highly intensified struggle for survival in the face of fast industrialization and urbanization. The incidence of homicide involving different weapons and social factors are virtually endemic in India, Varanasi area may be cited as a good example.

Theory and researches on homicide rates-

Durkheim's (1983) theory of organic solidarity suggests a general reason for a positive effect of rurality on the homicide rate. Findings by Messner (1982) indicate that the homicide rate tends to be high where organic solidarity is low. Cohen and Felson (1979) argue that homicide rate is a function of the opportunities for victimization which is defined as the convergence of motivated offenders and suitable targets in the absence of capable guardians. The theoretical orientation of recent research on covariates of homicide rates are also often informed by one or both perspectives is based on the long standing observation of a greater propensity for teenager and young adults to commit more crimes than individuals of other ages and is more recently articulated by Hirschi and Gottfredson (1983). The second perspective is articulated by Cohen and Land (1987) who noted that teenagers and young adults not only commit crimes more frequently than those of other age group but also are more likely to be victim. Messner (1989) argue that economic discrimination should have an appreciable effect on national homicide rate. Fanslow et.al (1995) observed that homicide were most likely to occur on Friday or Saturday between the hours of 6 P.M. and 6 A.M.

METHOD

The sample of the study comprised of 250 homicidal victims brought for medico legal postmortem examination in the Department of forensic Medicine, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, during the period from Jan. 1995 to Dec. 1996. Those homicidal cases were selected for study without bias in which most of the information pertaining to homicide as designed in the interview schedule of study were most likely to be procured such as presence and willingness of sufficient number of relevant person e.g. parents/spouse, relatives, friends, neighbours, police officers and other secondary sources including the mortuary staff and doctors conducting the postmortem examination on the body of homicidal victims.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It was observed (Table-1) that about half of the murder (48.8%) were done either in the evening (24.0%) or night (24.8%) hours between 4 pm. to 4 am. perhaps due to the reasons that culprits could more safely execute the crime and escape. Our findings are in accordance with finding of wolfgang (1958), pokorny (1965), Asuni (1969), Fatteh et. al (1974) and muscut et.al (1991). Over two third (173 or 69.2%) murder were done at outdoor location (Table-2). At outdoor places victims could provide less resistance by himself or by other near and dears who are generally not present at outdoor places as compared to indoor places. Similar observation were in the study of Naba-chandra (1984), Roy (1987), Roy (1994), However wolfgang(1958), Voss (1968) and Gupta et.al (1979) in their studies reported that indoor were the more frequent location for homicide. A large number of murders were perpetrated using firearm (42.4) followed by blunt weapon (13.6), (Table 3). It may be said now a days firearm fatalities are assuming epidemic proportion due to various reason like commission of crime and violence such as murder and dacoits using firearm.

It was also found (Table 4) that there was no previous knowledge of commission of homicide in over majority of cases (157% or 62.8%). This speaks about the premeditation, planning and maintaining the secrecy of the plan for committing murder. In over three fourth (76.8%) cases no apparent attempt was made by assailants to conceal crime. It shows daring attitudes of assailants (Table 5) so far as duration between information and arrival of police are concern, in over majority of the cases (82.8%) police reached within an hour (Table 6) and most of the victims (80.4%) could not received any medical care (Table 7). Our finding shows that over two third of the victims (192 or 76.8%) were recorded dead by police as against 58 (23.2%) cases where victims were alive when police arrived at the scene (Table 8) In only 21 (36.2%) victims dying declaration/statement were recorded (Table 9).

CONCLUSIONS

It may be concluded that the incidence of homicide were commonly done in the dark hours of evening and night at out door places by firearm without any notice to victim as well as any attempt to concealment of crime. In most of the cases more often the motive were firm and well designed to firm intention of removing their victims.

Table-1 Time of Incidence

Time of incidence	No.	%
1. Morning 4 A.M. to 10 A.M.	42	16.8
2. Mid-day 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.	39	15.6
3. Evening 4 P.M. to 10 A.M.	60	24.0
4. Night 10 P.M. to 4 A.M.	62	24.8
5. Could not be known	47	18.8
Total	250	100.0

Table-2 Place of Incidence

Indoor Place			Out door Place		
	No.	%		No.	%
1. Bed Room	31	12.4	Road Side	71	28.4
2. Roof Carridor	2	0.8	Field	32	12.8
3. Courtyard	10	4.0	Just out of his house	12	4.8
4. Kitchen	20	8.0	Any other	27	10.8
5. On the gate	1	0.4	Only dead body was recovered	31	12.4
6. Any other	7	2.8			
7. Only dead body was recovered	6	2.4	Total	173	69.2
8. Total	77	30.8			

Table-3 Method of Homicide

Weapon	No.	%
1. Blunt weapon	34	13.6
2. Sharp weapon	24	9.6
3. Fire arm	106	42.4
4. Explosive & Burning	29	11.6
5. Strangulation & suffocation	18	7.6
6. Drowning	3	1.2

7.	Poisoning	4	1.6
8.	Multipal	25	10.0
9.	Any other	6	2.4
10.	Unknown	1	0.4
Total		250	100.0

Table-4 whether there was any notice to the victim about incidence

Response	No	%
Yes	78	31.2
No	157	62.8
Not Known	15	6.0

Table-5 Whether attempt to conceal crime was made by assailants ?

1.	Attempted Made to conceal	58	23.2
2.	Not Attempt	192	76.8

Table-6 Duration between information and arrival of police.

Duration	No.	%
0-30 min.	108	43.2
31-1 hrs.	99	39.6
1-5 hrs.	27	10.8
5-10 hrs.	1	0.4
police in-counter	15	6.0
Total	250	100.0

Table-7 Status of Medical aid to the Victims

	No.	%
Receive medical care	49	19.6
Could not received any medical aid	201	80.4
Total	250	100.0

Table-8 Condition (status) of victim on arrival of police.

Condition	No.	%
Alive	58	23.2
Dead	192	76.8
Total	250	100.0

Table-9 If alive whether dying declaration/statement was recorded ?

Response	No.	%
Recorded	21	36.2
Not recorded	37	63.7
Total	58	100.0

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