

Recent Nature of Child Homicide in Bangladesh: A Content Analysis on Daily Newspapers

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Abstract:

Child homicide is a remarkable issue in the present context of Bangladesh. The aim of this study is to reveal the socio-economic characteristics and reasons for child homicide. The researcher also tried to unveil those crimes which happened with child homicide and to show in which area these incidents mostly occurred. This study was mainly based on secondary data and content analysis method was used to analyse the data. Researchers collected data from January 2019 to December 2022 and a total of 110 cases were found in this time span. Among the founded cases, around 77 per cent victims were from lower income families and 29 per cent were killed due to family conflict. Whether any other crimes had occurred or not with child homicide was unknown for 38 per cent cases. Among around 62 percent known cases no crimes were occurred with 65 percent cases, and rape was major crime happened with this kind of homicide. Children were mostly become victims not only by their beloved parents but also by their relatives and neighbors. Around 64 percent of cases were found in rural areas.

Keywords: Child homicide, content analysis, Bangladesh.

1. Introduction

In human civilization, the tendency of committed different types of crimes among human beings is not a new incident rather various kinds of crimes have been occurring from beginning to present. Among those, homicide is the gravest crime and if it is child homicide, it will be the most heinous one. According to United Nation Office on Drug and Crimes “Child homicide is the most extreme form of violence against children and a tragic event with serious effects on families and the community.” Children are considered as the next generation and ensuring a secure environment for children is essential for bright future of a nation. Despite that, almost all over the world children become victims of unscrupulous crime like murder. “An estimated total of 205,153 children aged 0 to 14 years lost their lives worldwide as a result of homicide during the ten-year period 2008–2017” (Stöckl, et. al. (2017). In Bangladesh, 28.7 per cent of total population are aged between 0 to 14 years. Children of Bangladesh also face this brutal crime and this tragic phenomenon has gained alarming prominence in recent times. According to monthly data on violence against children by the Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF), 418 children were murdered in 2018 after one year this number increased to 448. Although all over the country was under lockdown situation, during the covid 19 pandemic, this number was reduced to 164 in 2020.

This research delves into the evolving landscape of such heinous crimes, aiming to unravel the intricate socio cultural, economic, and other factors that have contributed to the distressing upsurge in child homicides.

2. Literature Review:

'Homicide is generally considered the most serious of all crimes, with obviously the most serious consequences for the victim' (Smit, P. R., et al. 2012). "The definition of "homicide" appears straightforward: a homicide occurs when there is a dead person and the cause of death can be attributed to another person" (Smit, P. R., et al. 2012) Smithey, M. (1997) examined infant homicide by mothers from a sociological perspective by using intensive interviews of 15 mothers who were legally responsible for their infants' deaths. Their findings showed that mothers killed their infants due to economic deprivation and lack of interpersonal support.

By collecting data from 26 underemployed, undereducated fathers with criminal records and extensive prison case files of men serving life sentences for child murder Cavanagh, K. et. al. (2007) found that most of the child homicides occurred by their stepfathers and only four were birth fathers for the intolerance of normal childhood behavior and outrage of their intimate partners.

In another study Liem, M., & Koenraadt, F. (2008) found that men and women who attempted or committed filicide had differences regarding age, methods, and motivation of killing. Their study compared the maternal and paternal filicide in terms of socio-demographic, environmental and psychopathological factors in the Netherlands for the period 1953–2004.

There were many studies about child homicide which are based on medical and psychological perspective. We also found few studies on child abuse and homicides, but no direct study has been found about nature of child homicide neither in Bangladesh nor in abroad.

3. Objectives of Study

The objectives of this research are given as following:

- a. To reveal the socio-economic characteristics of child homicide.
- b. To know the major factors of being murdered according to deposition of police
- c. To explore whether other crimes are committed or not with every case of child homicide.
- d. To show the propensity of child homicide both in rural and urban areas.

4. Research Question

- a. What are the socio- economic characteristics of child homicide?
- b. Why child homicide is being committed according to deposition of police?
- c. Is any other crime happened with child homicide?
- d. Is there any variation of child homicide cases in different regions in Bangladesh?

5. Method

This study will employ content analysis as a research method. Content analysis is a research technique which studies the systematic analysis of documents, secondary sources, such as: print media and electronic media, books, published articles, and so on. According to Bailey (1987), "Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest of communication."⁶ Since child homicide is a very sensitive and unscrupulous issue of human society, we select this method as our research technique to find out the nature of child homicide in Bangladesh. For our research, we will collect data from "the Prothom Alo" a renowned Bengali daily newspaper in Bangladesh.

6. Result

The findings show that most child homicide occur with the children who are from lower income families it means that lower class people are unable to ensure proper safe environment for their children. Although the children from upper income families are not risk free.

This research has been revealed following outcomes:

Generally, most of the victims of child homicide are from low-income families, though the children from other income families are not risk free. It is an alarming issue that children are at risk not only to their close relatives but also to neighbors. Most of the cases the child homicide is occurred by victims' close relatives and familiar persons. Out of these close relatives a significant number of them are mothers. Predominantly children are killed because of conflict among family members and another noticeable cause is economy related cause like, ransom, unable to repay loan, dowry, etc. In the case of newborn child homicide, a remarkable cause is gender issue, which means a girl has been murdered for not being a boy. Although both rural and urban areas have experienced this heinous crime, the tendency of child homicide is higher in rural areas.

7. Findings

7.1. Location of child homicide occurrence

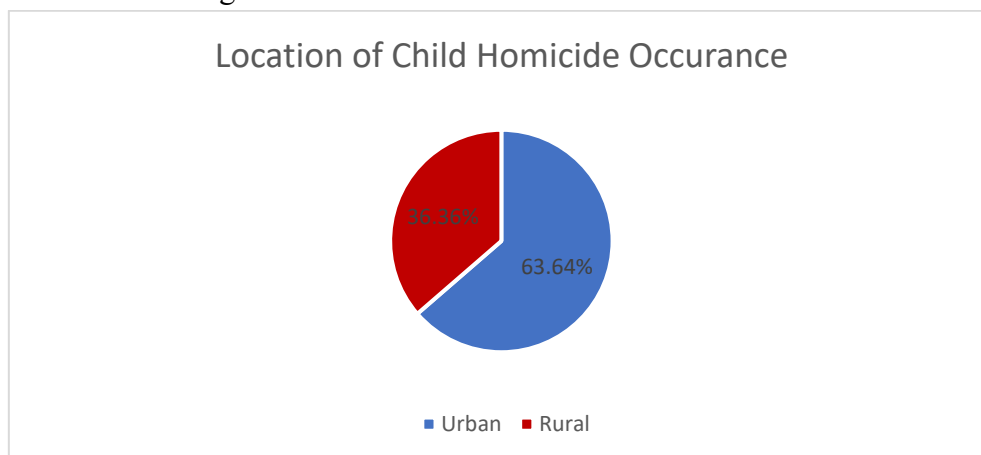
The researchers tried to unveil in which area the tendency of occurrence of this crime is higher. Table 1 revealed that among 110 cases 70 incidents occurred in rural areas, where the rest 40 had taken place either in city corporation or district sadar areas.

Table :1 Location of child homicide occurrence

Location	Number
Urban	40
Rural	70

Sources: Authors own calculation.

Figure 1: Location of child homicide occurrence



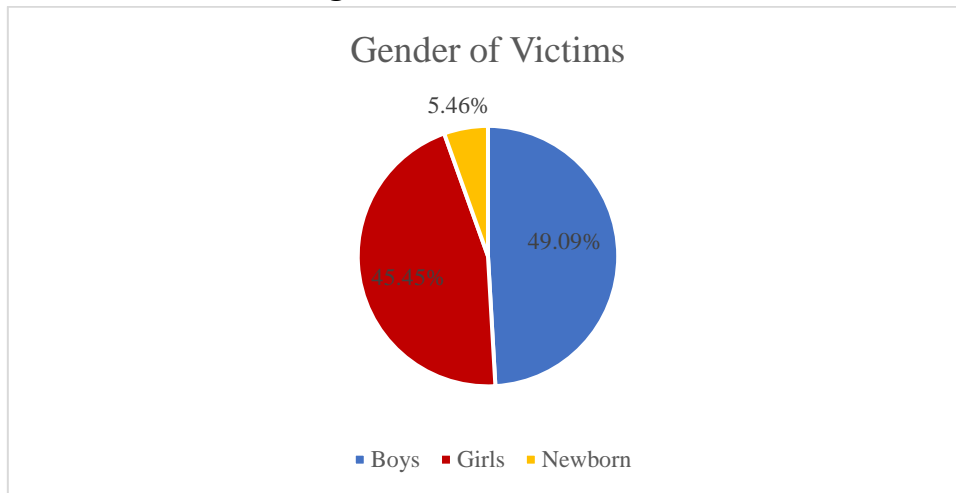
Source: Compiled by the authors

Figure 1 shows that around 64 per cent of cases were committed in rural areas and around 36 per cent happened in urban areas. This data indicates that urban children are more vulnerable to this crime compared to urban areas.

7.2. Gender of victims

Researchers have studied the gender differences of victims. According to the study about 45 per cent of victims were girls and around 49 per cent were boys, where around 5 per cent were newborn (figure 2).

Figure 2: Gender of victims

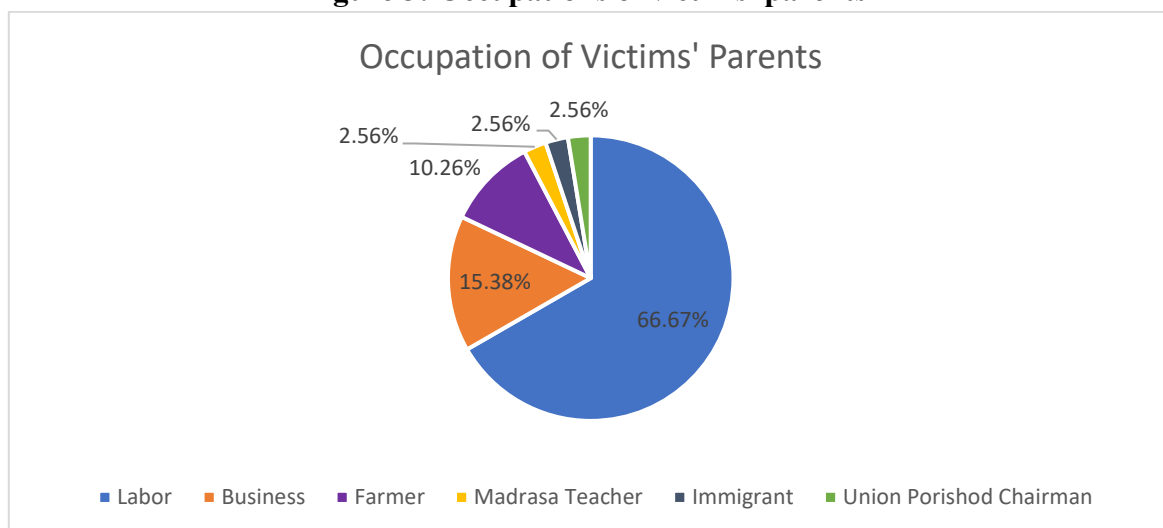


Source: Compiled by the authors

7.3. Occupations of victims' parents'

“Class is a large-scale grouping of people who share common economic resources, which strongly influence the type of life style they are avail to lead.” - G. Anthony, 2013, 350. So, it is necessary to know one’s profession to assume which class he/ she belongs to. Since in this study all victims are children, the profession of their parents indicates their class. Among 110 cases researchers could know about only 39 victims’ parents’ professions and the rest 71 cases were unknown.

Figure 3: Occupations of victims' parents'



Source: Compiled by the authors

From figure 3, we can see that most of the victims’ parents were in labor around 67 percent of 39 cases. The collected data also showed that around 16 percent and 10 per cent of parents’ occupation were business

and farming respectively. Apart from that the madrasa teacher, overseas immigrants, and union parishad chairman were equal in percentage, which is 2.56.

7.4. Causes of Homicide

The causes of murder were not reported for all cases in the selected newspaper. The reasons for child homicide were known for only around 62 percent of cases where for the rest 38 per cent cases were unknown (table 2).

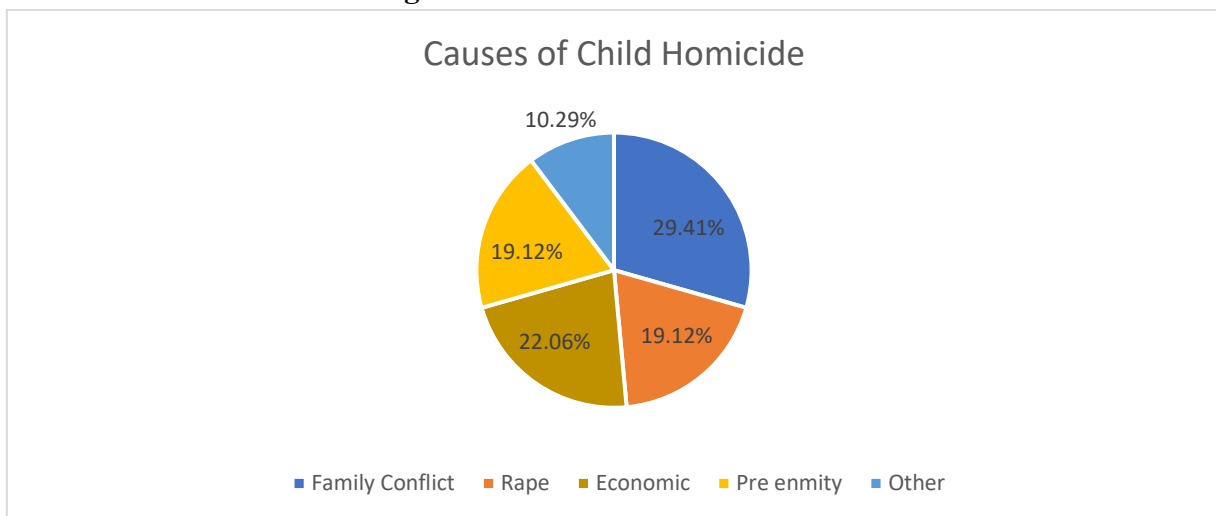
Table 2:

Causes	Percentage
Not found	38.18
Found	61.82

Source: authors own calculation.

The information revealed that most of the child homicide occurred due to family conflict, 29.41 per cent, whereas around 19 per cent children had been killed after rape. Around 22 per cent of children had been murdered for financial reasons. Pre- enmity was another significant cause of this unscrupulous murder and about 10.29 percent of children became victim for other reasons (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Causes of child homicide.



Source: Compiled by the authors

7.5. Other Crimes Happened with Child Homicide

The researchers tried to find whether any other crime happened with child homicide or not and in the collected 110 case researchers could not find other crimes occur with around 62 cases and this information were known only 39 percent cases (table -3).

Table 3:

Other crimes	Percentage
Known	38.87
Unknown	61.82

Source: Authors own calculation.

Table 4 shows that among the known cases there were no other crimes occur with around 65 percents cases and in 35 percent cases there were other crimes also happened with child homicide.

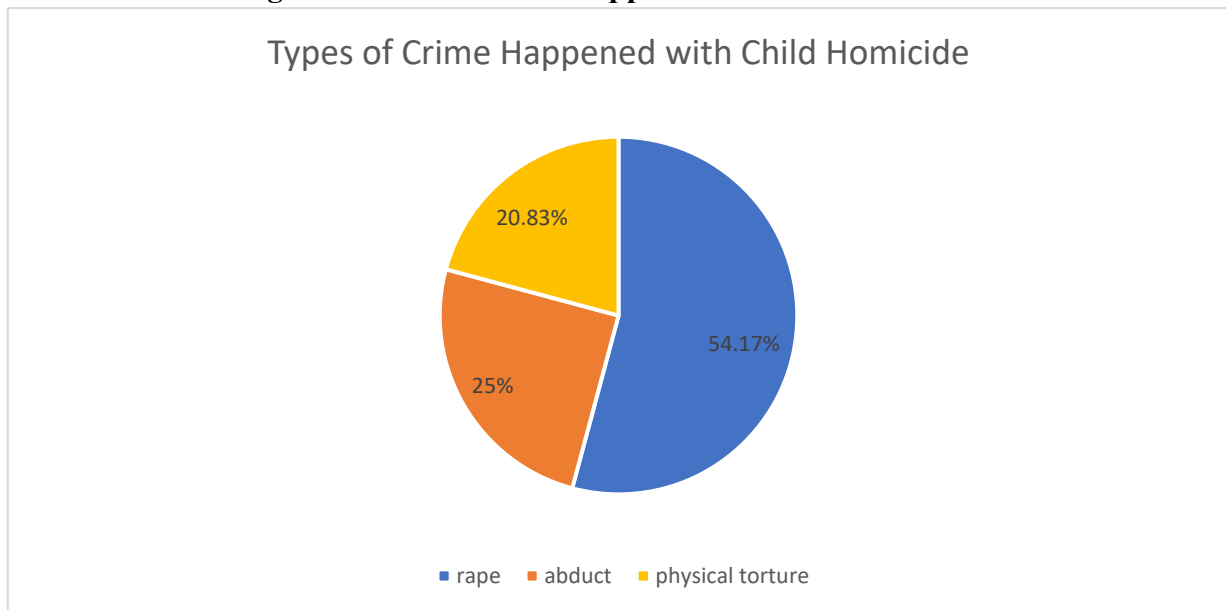
Table 4:

Other crimes	Percentage
No crimes occurred	64.71
crimes occurred	35.29

Source: Authors own calculation.

The study unveiled some crimes which had occurred with child homicide. The researchers found some cases (42) whose motive behind the child homicide were unknown and whether any other crimes had occurred or not with those incidents is obscure. Among the rest 68 cases no other crimes were committed with about 65 percent cases and crimes occurred with around 35 percent victims. Many types of crimes had been happened with child murder where rape was the most alarming one, more than half of the crimes whereas abduction and physical torture were 25 per cent and 21 percent respectively (figure 5).

Figure 5: Other Crimes Happened with Child Homicide



Source: Compiled by the authors

7.6. Relationship between victims and perpetrators:

One of the objectives of this research was to reveal the relationship between victims and perpetrators. In approximately 15 percent of collected cases researchers could not find any relationship between victims and offenders (table 5).

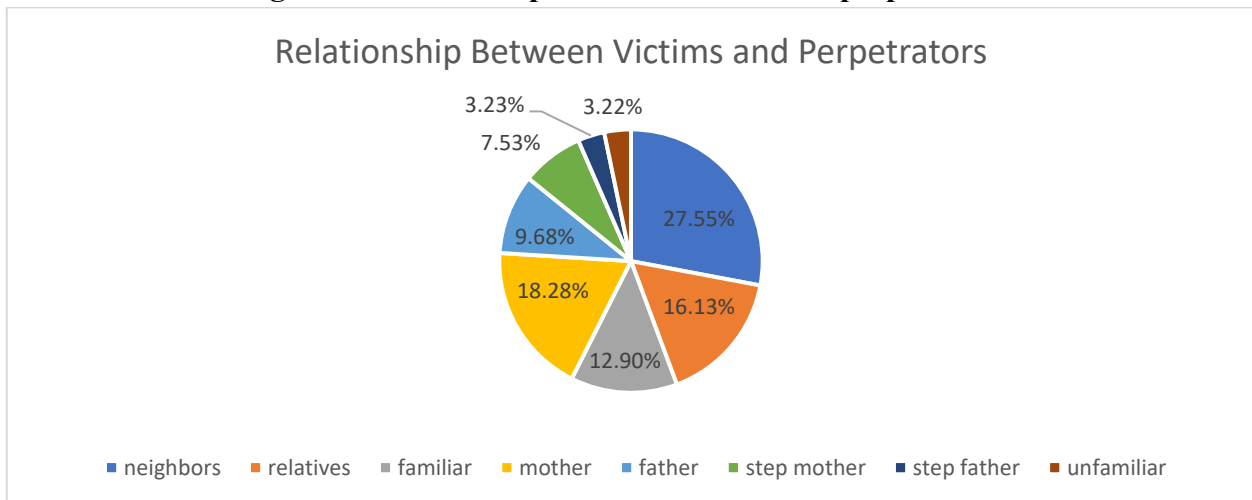
Table: 5:

Relation with victims	percentage
not found	15.45
found	84.55

Source: Authors own calculation.

Most of the child homicides have been committed by relatives or familiar with the victims, around 85 percent. Despite 15 percent offenders had no relation or familiar to the victims. The study revealed that majority of children, 28 percent were killed by their neighbors. Mother had been found as an offenders of 18 percent victims, although many of them were mentally unstable according to the report and about 10 percent children were killed by their fathers whereas around 8 perpetrators were stepmothers and 3 percent were stepfathers. Apart from the parents, relatives also killed 16 percent children according to the collected data. The researchers found that 13 per cent of total perpetrators were familiar where 3 percent were stranger to the victims (figure 6).

Figure 6: Relationship between victims and perpetrators.



Source: Compiled by the authors.

8. Conclusion

Child homicide is one of the gruesome crimes in human civilization. This study examined the socio-economic pattern of child homicide in Bangladesh by using content analysis method. The study found that most of the children experience this contemptible crime through their nearest people, like parents, stepparents, uncles, neighbors, and familiar person due to family conflict, financial conflict, and some other issues that are not related to them. Familiar people often engage themselves in heinous crime, like torture and/or kill, with children by taking advantage of trust on him/her. Appropriate action taken by the government, proper implementation of the law, and community awareness can reduce the tendency of child homicide in Bangladesh.

Limitation of study

One of the limitations of this study is the data collected from the online version of only one popular daily newspaper because online archive of any other newspapers could not be found. Apart from this, the intended data for conducting this study was very insufficient in the printed version of any newspaper. Another limitation was since the researchers collected data directly from reported cases which was not possible to verify directly in the field by the researchers.

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