

Analysis of the Characteristics of the Dismemberment Cases in China

Jia Zhenjun*, Ni Xingtao*, Song Shanshan*,**

Abstract: At present, the occurrence of dismemberment cases is frequent and the means are cruel. The causes are various. For one thing, more and more people are in the state of sub-health due to high pressures in work and life, irregular work schedules and no outlets for expressing emotions; for another, they are involved in emotional disputes and conflicts of interests. Although the proportion of such cases among national criminal cases is relatively low, the severity of the situation and the seriousness of the consequences are obviously not optimistic. Hence, we should raise the concern, step up efforts and understand the general characteristics of such cases by systematically summarizing the cases so that we can give the most fundamental and effective blow once the case occurs. Based on the knowledge points of forensic science and crime scene investigation, by counting, inducting and analyzing the 200 dismemberment cases collected in China in the past three years, this paper summarizes the characteristics and laws of the cases and the key points of detecting the case, etc., so as to offer advice for site disposal, investigation and fighting crime about the cases. Because of the incomplete details, only a rough analysis is made, aiming to provide theoretical references for grassroots public security technicians, make recommendations for on-the-spot investigation, improve the quality and efficiency of public security work, and provide references for other personnel who study dismemberment cases at the same time.

Key words: Dismemberment Case, Crime Scene Investigation, Postmortem Examination

* The college of crime investigating and forensic science, People's Public Security University of China, Beijing, 100038, China.

** Law college, Peking University, Beijing, 100871, China

Introduction

To provide theoretical references for grassroots public security technicians, make recommendations for on-the-spot investigation, improve the quality and efficiency of public security work, and provide reference for other personnel who study dismemberment cases at the same time by means of using the results of statistical analysis to summarize the general characteristics of the current dismemberment cases. This study randomly sampled 200 dismemberment cases registered in one city in China from 2012 to 2014. Among them, 38 cases happened in 2012, 89 in 2013, and 73 in 2014. After classifying the collected cases that have been solved and registered and then make corresponding Excel forms based on actual information characteristic index. Compared to a series of unsolved cases, the solved cases have more specific information, more comprehensive content, more accurate data and other characteristics, which has a good reference for studying the law and characteristics of the dismemberment cases.

Combined with the data intuition of the statistical analysis method, the data connection of classification analysis method, the data accuracy of the quantification analysis method, the data difference of the contrast analysis method and other merits, this paper classifies the collected information, and queries Chinese and foreign related databases, books and other resources based on particular facts of each case, so as to thoroughly analyze the overall characteristics of the current dismemberment cases.

The Analysis of The Overall Characteristics of The Dismemberment Cases

The characteristics of the dismemberment cases can only be reflected by the overall characteristics. Like homicide cases, the characteristics of dismemberment cases can only be reflected by the overall characteristics, which are decided by the fact that the characteristics of classified homicide cases and specific homicide cases are not representative of overall characteristics, that is, to some extent, the characteristics of overall homicide cases are the characteristics of homicide cases (Ning, 2019, ss. 115-120). Although the proportion of the dismemberment cases in the criminal cases registered in the public security organs is rare, even less than 1%, they are more serious than most cases.

Regional Characteristics of The Dismemberment Cases

According to the statistical analysis of 200 cases, from the aspect of the proportion of urban cases, the proportion of such cases in the county and rural areas is as high as 70.5%, including more in the county, accounting for 48%. According to the incomplete statistical analysis of such cases in recent years, it is largely

derived from the development of commodity economy and the large outflow of rural population into the city. In addition, with the further implementation of rural urbanization reform, the people's work and life pressures are increasing, and the public do not have a smooth channel to vent etc., which together with emotional contradictions and pecuniary benefit further aggravates the public mental health sub-health. All of these have led to the frequent occurrence of dismemberment cases and cruel and violent means.

From the perspective of the site characteristics, the site should be a place where the suspect is very familiar and able to be alone with the victim. There is enough time for the suspect to kill the victim, dismember and pack the body (Xiaoyu, *vd.*, 2017, ss. 79-81). There are far more dismemberment cases that occur indoors than outdoors. The further analysis and comparison of most indoor scenes show that most of the cases are found in the apartments and individual houses, where criminals tend to choose for crimes because of their closure and concealment.

More concealed spaces are generally chosen as places for killing and dismembering, thereby concealing the means of committing crimes and providing the best criminal conditions. Cases occasionally occurred in woods, caves, reeds, etc., and also in open fields. The vast majority of cases occur within places that criminals acquaint with, including places where criminals live, work, often wonder or have probed for a crime.

Victim's Age Characteristics of The Dismemberment Cases

In the dismemberment cases, female victim are more than male victims, accounting for 62%. Cases of a woman being the victim are largely caused by amours, patronizing prostitutes, cyber love, emotional entanglements, etc.; while cases of a man being the victim are mostly due to economic debt, family disputes, personal grievances and other factors.

In terms of the age composition of the victims, 66% of the victims are between 20 and 40 years old without considering gender differences. Among them, victims between 20 and 30 years old are the most, more than twice as much victims between 30 and 40 years old and much more than other age groups. The law that the victim's age is between 20 and 40 is basically the same as that of the general homicide cases. Although there are no children under the age of 10 being victims in the collected cases (see Figure 1 for details), the cases of children or the elderly being victims cannot be ignored for those cases occur from time to time in real life.

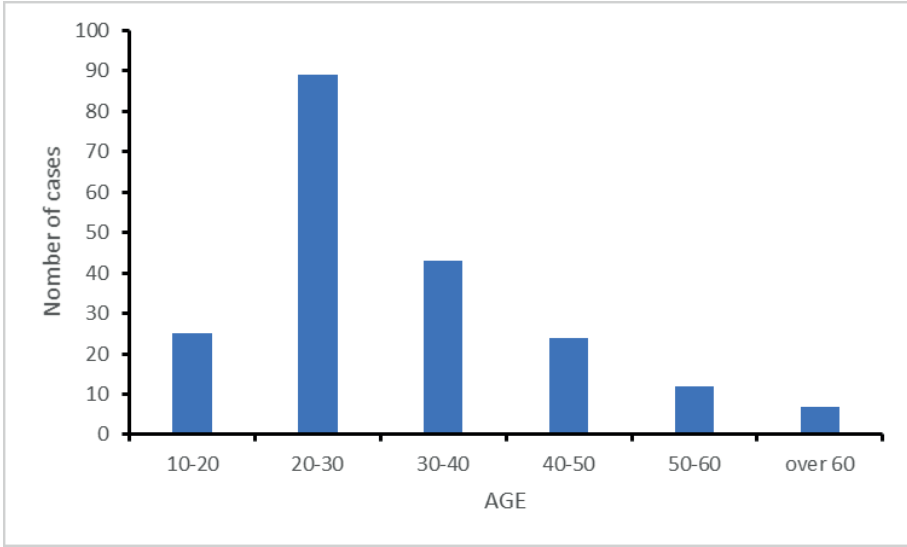


Figure 1. Age distribution of victims in the dismemberment cases

Characteristics of Criminal Motives In The Dismemberment Cases

Most of the dismembered homicide cases were caused by emotional entanglements, including contradictions between husband and wife, traitorous murder and conflicts between family members. Among them, traitorous murder is the main cause of these cases, accounting for 38% of the total number of cases, which is mainly caused by the jealousy of the rivals, the resistance to rape, and fear of exposure of amour. The family conflict is also the main reason, including the contradictions between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law and between father-in-law and daughter-in-law, the disagreement between husband and wife and the incomprehension between parents and children, mainly for the purpose of venting hatred. Cases induced by murder for money and vengeance are not uncommon, mainly to obliterate the traces (Jinlong ve Zhixiang, 2013).

After the murder, the criminals dismember the corpse usually for erasing the traces, escaping conviction and discarding the corpse more easily, or they perform the dismemberment for the abomination and other reasons. Focusing on the two major motives of criminals in dismemberment cases is a good mean to analyze and judge the cases. Of course, we should not just limit ourselves to these two motives, and cases caused by superstitions, mental illnesses and other reasons need to be specifically analyzed.

Analysis of The Causes of Death In The Dismemberment Cases

The main cause of dismemberment cases is mechanical injury, accounting for 66%. Among them, most of the victims die from fatal blows on the head and face, and the typical feature is brain injury, which indicates that the suspect often attacks the head and face in order to instantly stun or kill the victim.^[4] (Guangfeng, The death is partly caused by the stab wounds of chest and neck, which implies that attacking the instant vitals of the victim is an widespread means for criminals. Mechanical asphyxia is also one of the main causes of death in dismemberment cases, accounting for 28.5%. The main methods are stifling, strangling and smothering. The victims are mainly thin women and elderly people. Some cases are also caused by the combination of the above two reasons. The cause of death in the dismemberment cases may also be poisoning, violence, electric shock or fear of exposure after killing someone accidentally, which are all rare. Blood, stomach contents, urine, etc. should be extracted from the poisoned body pieces as much as possible and tissue pieces should also be tested and identified.

Characteristics of The Criminal Tools In The Dismemberment Cases

The criminal tools of the dismembered homicide cases have certain characteristics in both killing and splitting stages. Each type of tool is different in wound, wound surface and other aspects formed in the corpse, and the separation features formed by different means of the same tool are also different. But in general, the wound formed by the kitchen knife is characterized by a long fishtail-shaped knife mark on the skin of the wound, the broken muscles, the bones left with a line-like cut and sometimes metal fragments of the blade detected in the cleft of the bones; the characteristics of the dagger are fewer flaps of the wound edge, often being disconnected from the arthrosis, no cut marks on the bone, and strip-shaped incisions and triangle-like scratches visible on the articular fossa and articular head; the features of the axe are that the fishtails drag and cut marks on the wound skin are less, and shorter, the muscles break very neatly, and the bone damage is serious, which obviously reflects light cut and heavy chop; saw is mainly used to cut off large bones, when sawing bones, the soft tissue attached to the bone is unevenly sectioned, and a certain scale of undulating jagged marks can be seen in the cross section of the bone, and the soft tissue around the bone saw is often sawn into strips, spheres, and irregular small pieces (Ge Yan-Chang *vd.*, 2013, ss. 190-192).

Most criminals use blunt objects or the means of stifling, strangling and smothering. The former accounts for 49% and the latter for 26%. Common blunt instruments mainly include axe, hammer, steel pipe, brick, etc. Sharp tools also take up a large proportion as 19.5%. Among them, most are knives, which are dominated by kitchen knives, accounting for 42% of sharp tools. In other cases, daggers, axes, scissors, etc. are also used. Few crimes are committed with poisons, electric shocks and other methods.

When criminals choose criminal tools, most of them take local materials, and for the convenience of dismemberment, they usually use a variety of tools. In the case of multi-person crimes, several criminals will use different tools to dismemberment, and there are differences in the dismemberment traces and dismemberment characteristics.

Time Characteristics In The Dismemberment Cases

According to a cursory judgment, the criminals chose to commit crimes by night, which is the peak period from 8:00 pm to 7:00 am the next day. It indicates that criminals usually choose to take action at night to hide crimes, especially the proportion of discarding the corpse at night is as high as 89%, because of less staff activities and weak warning, which is the best time for criminals to carry out a series of crimes (Enbao, 1983, ss. 368-392).

Dismembering the corpses in the daytime also accounts for a large proportion, as 37%. Many criminals choose to perform dismemberment during the day because of the relatively quiet night, and in order to cover up their dismembering with the high decibel of the sound during the day. What's more, daytime is working time, and most people are not at home, which makes it a good time for criminals to commit crimes. The time of discarding the corpse shows a typical characteristic that discarding at night obviously accounts for a large proportion, and daytime only for 11%. Criminals generally carry out rigorous packaging to disguise before discarding the corpse. Common camouflage packages include garbage bags, luggage, handbags, etc.

Characteristics of The Number of Postmortem Body Parts

The number of postmortem body parts is commonly 8, accounting for 31%, and 2 also for a large proportion, reaching 18.5% (see Figure 2 for details). The dismembered parts are mainly broken ends, broken shoulders, broken double hips, broken waist and broken knees, rarely broken elbows, broken double jaws, broken femurs and so on.) Most of the separated parts are arthrosis areas, avoiding the bones; there are also some body pieces particularly fragmented, using bone-cutting knives, meat grinders and other tools. Sometimes the tactics and positions of dismemberment can reflect indirectly the job characteristics of the criminals. Under normal circumstances, medical staff, slaughter personnel or the personnel with relevant knowledge are universally skillful when dismembering. The section of the incision is smooth and flat, and the positions are accurate. Today's killings are slashing, jabs and other means. There are no cluttered flaps at the end of the corpse. Some of the corpse parts see a complete circular cutting, and the wound edge does not see the slightest flap. The organ of the position, these all suggest that the action is skillful (Huixin ve Zhenlai, 2007). Sometimes, psychological features of the criminals can also be reflected from the tactics and positions of

dismembering. Some criminals will dig the eyes, cut the nose, cut the nipple, cut the genitals, and chop the fingers, dig the heart, disfigure and a series of abnormal behaviors on the corpse due to psychological illness and other reasons. Some criminals also remove the uterus from the pregnant corpse and discard the fetus in order to eliminate the evidence. Pouring sulfuric acid, burning, and cooking the body may also be performed (Kovačević vd., 2008).

Dismembering the corpse is undoubtedly a means by which criminals can easily discard the bodies and conceal the evidence. Under the control of fear, criminals are always in an insurmountable state of contradiction: the slower the body is dealt and the further the body dumps are cast, the more the blood stains are, which means the harder to deal with. And at the same time, the greater the possibility of being perceived by neighbors and acquaintances is in the process of moving the corpse. In view of the contradictory psychology, the criminals will not dismember too carefully in the actual operation and the distance of dumping the corpse is also being considered repeatedly, mainly close.

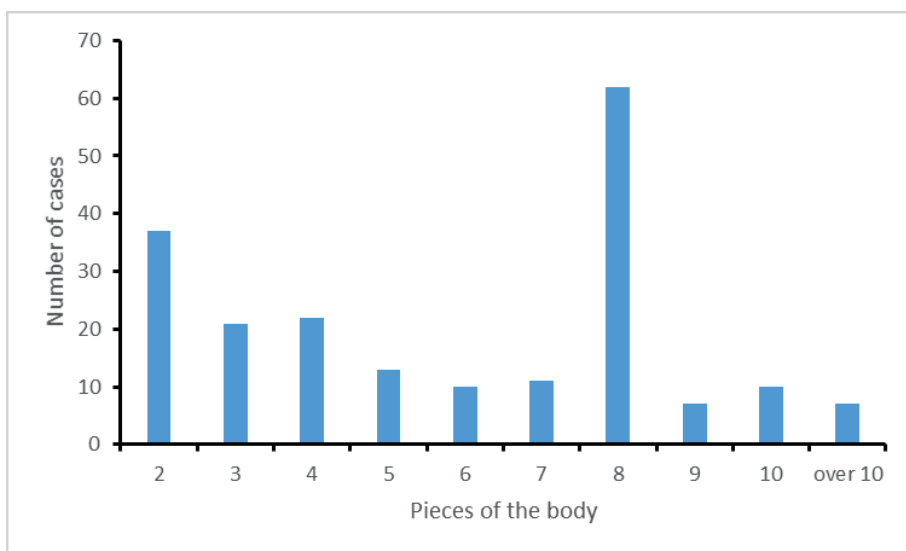


Figure 2. Statistics on the number of postmortem body parts in the dismemberment cases

The Number of Dumping The Corpse And Location Characteristics of The Dismemberment Cases

In most cases, criminals discard the corpse twice, accounting for 58%, three times for 18%, four times for 14.5% and five times which is quite rare, only for 2% (see Figure 3 for details). The number of discarding the corpse is closely related to the

criminal environment, criminal objects and criminal psychology. The exposure of the criminal environment and the human flow directly affect criminals determine concealing measures of criminality. By contrast, criminals located in remote reservoirs, forests, rivers, lakes and seas are more causal to discard the bodies, while criminals located in lively urban areas, towns and other places package more meticulously, camouflage better and discard more scattered.

According to the statistical results, from the perspective of the site of dumping the corpse, the distribution is concentrated, roughly including rivers, lakes, seas, ditches, reservoirs, sewers, garbage heaps, woods, hawthorns, and underground. It's rare to use the express delivery, shipping and other methods to throw the body. Discarding the corpse in rivers, lakes and seas accounts for the largest proportion, reaching 64.5%. In that case, the corpse will drift away with the water, and it will easily make new marks on the pieces and destroy the original traces under the action of water soaking and scouring, which have made it more difficult for the public security organs to investigate and handle the case. Therefore, it is a common means for criminals. Ditch, reservoir, sewer and other places also take up a large proportion. These places are inaccessible and are good places to conceal evidence. So they are also places where criminals prefer to dump the corpse. Some criminals deal with the corpse by means of burying it, hiding it in the woods or mountain ridges, etc., and quite few criminals even store the corpse frozen to avoid being discovered.

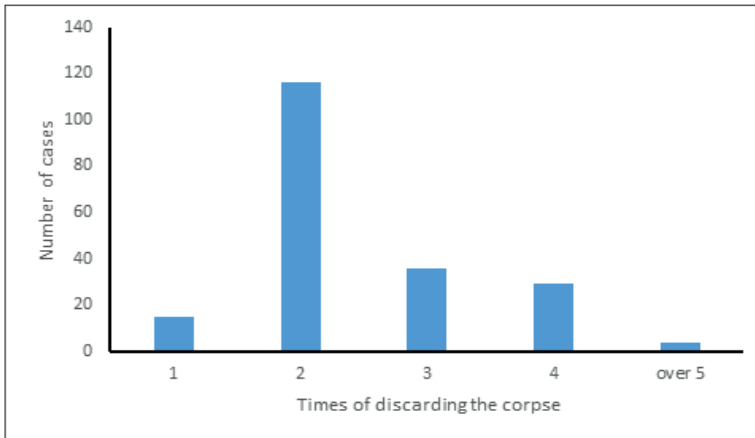


Figure 3. Statistics on the time of discarding the corpse in the dismemberment cases

The Packages of The Body Pieces And The Tool Characteristics Of Discarding In The Dismemberment Cases

Criminals generally choose to camouflage the body pieces after mutilation, 84% of which use the packages to package the pieces, and only 16% choose to deal

directly with the pieces. In the cases of using packages, most criminals choose woven bags, black plastic bags, suitcases, etc. They can easily escape from the sight of others, and easy to obtain and carry, which makes them become the most convenient camouflage package for criminals to transport the death.

Most of the criminals prefer to throw the body parts nearby, accounting for 46.5% of the total. Criminals who choose to transport the body parts to the distance by vehicles also take up a great proportion of 40.5%. Walking to dump the parts uses the methods of lifting, squatting, carrying, etc., and corpses are usually thrown in garbage heaps near the dismemberment site, sewers, ditches, ground and other places; with the help of motor vehicles, corpses are commonly dumped in rivers, lakes, seas, reservoirs, forests, etc.; currently, cases dumping the corpse by bicycles are rare, generally used to reduce the time of dumping the corpses, commonly occurred before and after the 1990s; criminals rarely discard by trains, ships, express delivery, etc.

Characteristics of The Distance From Homicide Scene

The distance from homicide scene largely depends on the tools of discarding body parts. The distance explains the geographical location where the criminals will discard body parts, without considering the displacement of the body parts due to other factors such as water transportation. Most distances are concentrated within 6 kilometers. The distance of discarding body pieces by walking are generally within 2 kilometers, accounting for 54%, mostly only within 1 kilometer, taking up 37.5%. Criminals choose to transport the pieces 8 kilometers away, which accounts for a large proportion, as 20%, mainly relying on motor cycles, which is generally because of the fact that personnel are too dense or people are familiar with each other in the surrounding environment.

Gender, Age and Job Characteristics of The Offenders

Among criminals of the cases collected, male criminals account for 89%, which was significantly higher than that of female criminals. According to further research and analysis of cases in some areas, there was indeed a case that the proportion of male offenders was usually larger than female offenders in dismemberment cases. In terms of age, it appears to be relatively homogeneous, mainly concentrated between the ages of 20 and 60, basically similar to the age of the victim, which is closely related to the contradictions and relationships between the criminals and the victims.

Most criminals are workers, farmers, self-employed and unemployed businessmen with lower education level. The proportion of doctors, teachers and public officials with high education level is relatively low. People who are engaged in the service industry or receiving reformation and reeducation through labor also take up a certain proportion.

Analysis of The Relationships Between The Criminals and The Victims In The Dismemberment Cases

The cases in which the criminal and the victim know each other account for a large proportion of the total number, reaching 93.5%, while only 6.5% cases in which they are strangers. Among the cases in which they know each other, the proportion of cases in which they are acquainted is particularly prominent. Generally speaking, it is easy to cause such cases between people with prominent contradictions and deep grievances, while people in general relationships do not involve too much hatred. Therefore, most of the dismemberment cases occur among people who know each other, even between acquaintances.

Among the acquaintances involved, most of them are couples, taking up 23% of the total number of cases. Among them, the most cases occur between couples aged 50 or so. Cases between lovers also take proportion greatly, reaching 18.5% of the total number of cases. The probabilities between brothers and sisters, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law and parents and children are almost equal, accounting for between 12% and 13%.

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