

Homicide with Post-Mortem Dismemberment: The Relationship Between Psychiatric Disease of the Killer, Crime Scene Organization, and Corpse Concealment.¹

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Abstract

Homicides involving post-mortem corpse dismemberment are uncommon and present unique difficulties for criminologists and investigators. Mental health issues, their associated legal defenses, and persistent stigma usually become the focus in court hearings in these cases. If overlooked during investigations, these factors can markedly sway sentencing outcomes. A deeper scientific understanding of the connections between post-mortem dismemberment, crime scene, and corpse concealment could transform investigative methods and inspire new legal perspectives. It could also provide guidance for jurors during sentencing. This study aims to explore how a killer's mental health, corpse concealment, and crime scene characteristics (based on the FBI's organized/disorganized model) interrelate in cases of post-mortem dismemberment homicides. We analyzed 11 homicide cases using information available in public resources and legal databases. This data included information about the homicides themselves, the subsequent court proceedings, and any psychiatric evaluations conducted. Our goal was to investigate the correlation between a killer's mental illness, crime scene organization level, and corpse concealment. Kendall's tau correlation and linear regression were performed to verify any possible association. The following study suggests that post-mortem dismemberment homicide, in combination with disorganized crime scenes and no corpse concealment, is linked to the mental illness of the killer. These findings can be contextualized within scientific discussions about criminal profiling or psychopathological profiling and prompt a re-evaluation of the unconscious bias in court sentencing, where motivations and extenuating circumstances such as mental health problems are often dismissed due to the gruesome nature of the crime scene.

Keywords: *Homicide, corpse dismemberment, criminal profiling, crime scene organization, insanity defence, mental illness, criminology*

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Homicide with Post-Mortem Dismemberment: The Relationship Between Psychiatric Disease of the Killer, Crime Scene Organization, and Corpse Concealment.

Human mutilation is defined as “the act of depriving an individual of a limb, member or other important part of the body” and includes the term “dismemberment” (Newman Dorland, 2007).

However, a distinction must be made between mutilation and dismemberment. In their work, Stone & Brucato (2019) offered clear criteria to differentiate “dismemberment” from “mutilation,” terms which are commonly used interchangeably. They proposed that dismemberment refers to the entire removal of a significant section of the body, such as the head, arms, hands, torso, pelvic area, legs, or feet, by any means. In contrast, mutilation refers to the removal or significant disfigurement of a smaller part of these larger sections, whether the person is alive or deceased. Example

s might include castration (removal of the testes), disembowelment (removal of internal organs), and flaying (removal of the skin). By this definition, decapitation of a complete head would be classified as dismemberment, while removing or damaging a part of the face would be considered mutilation. This study delves into the concept of dismemberment within these established parameters. Cases of homicide with post-mortem corpse dismemberment are still rare, both in Italy and abroad. Several studies have dealt with the topic under different aspects (Chopin & Beauregard 2021; Konopka et al., 2016; Pointon & Wright 2023; Tidrick et al., 2020; Wilke-Schalhorst et al., 2019).

Konopka et al. argue that homicides with corpse dismemberment usually are committed by offenders who are in close relationship with the victim (family or friend), and dismemberment is almost always performed in the same place as the murder – home of perpetrator (2016). This type of homicide usually is not planned. According to Wilke-Schalhorst et al. (2019), corpse dismemberment is concentrated in densely built-up areas; multi-storey apartment buildings make the disposal of an entire corpse difficult. The most frequently used instrument for dismemberment was a knife. Even older or slender persons are capable of dismembering a corpse.

Often, in cases of post-mortem dismemberment, the insanity defense is used assuming the presence of a psychopathology in the killer. However, there are few published studies on the relationship between homicide with post-mortem dismemberment and the mental state of the murderer. In a 2020 study by Tidrick et al. (2020), only 52.6% of insanity defense cases in homicides with post-mortem dismemberment were successful. In comparison, only 33.3% of cases in which the defendant pleads insanity were successful among the non-dismemberment group. Another study by Guggenheimer et al. (2021) showed that out of the known offenders in cases with corpse dismemberment, only 13% were sentenced to forensic psychiatric care, while 87% were sentenced to prison.

On another note, since the late 1960s, police forces have been attempting to develop a new approach for formulating hypotheses about the personal characteristics, character, and psychopathology of criminals. The FBI's Crime Scene Analysis (C.S.A.) theoretical approach has gained recognition, allowing for a comparison between characteristics of real crime scenes and those recorded in a database to create a profile of an unknown criminal (Kocsis & Palermo, 2006). According to Turvey (1999), studying the physical elements of a crime scene (e.g., the position of the corpse, autopsy data, bloodstains) allows for the reconstruction of the offender's behavior. In spite of that, there has been disagreement in the literature regarding which types of crimes are most suitable for this approach (see Crabbé, Decoene, & Vertommen, 2008). Holmes & Holmes suggest that the C.S.A. method is suitable for crime scenes with potentially psychopathological behaviors and elements that can be postulated (1996; 2002), as well as for serial crimes where case linkage analysis can be conducted (Douglas et al., 1986). However, theories that aim to deduce the characteristics of a perpetrator based on crime scene elements have been heavily questioned in the literature. Alison et al. (2002), argue that a major challenge in these cases is the misconception that personality traits are unchanging and consistent across situations. In contrast, existing studies show that it's possible to predict traits linked to personality disorders from sexual violence crime characteristics, leading to the concept of psychopathological profiling (Proulx, St-Yves, Guay, &

Ouimet, 1999). In line with Turvey (1999) and Verde & Nurra (2010), the modern approach to profiling aims to be more “scientific,” and in this regard, it is suggested that deductive reasoning may provide greater guarantees than inductive reasoning (Turvey, 1999). Within this framework, the abductive reasoning process appears to be the appropriate path for criminal profiling (Verde & Nurra, 2010). This approach seems more scientific, bolstering its relevance to the C.S.A method. Despite debate and criticism, this profiling model (Douglas et al., 2006; Ressler & Burgess, 1985; Ressler, Burgess, & Douglas, 1988) remains a crucial tool in criminal profiling (Mjanet et al., 2017). It has influenced numerous globally respected approaches (Fujita et al., 2016; Hicks, 2006; Lee, 2015; Norza et al., 2021; Petherick & Brooks, 2021). Hence, in this study, we’ve opted to use the F.B.I.’s Crime Scene Analysis method, which we see as a spectrum of crime scene organization levels. We find this approach to be essential, particularly when tackling severe cases that involve elements like sexual homicides, mutilation homicides, and post-mortem dismemberment homicides.

Criminal profiling recognizes three types of crime scenes: Organized, Mixed, and Disorganized. Elements at the crime scene, such as the concealment of a dead human body, crime planning, bloodstains, and more, can be used to assess the level of crime scene organization (Douglas et al., 2006; Douglas et al., 2013; Ressler & Burgess, 1985; Ressler, Burgess & Douglas, 1988).

Organized crime scenes often display order, with minimal traces like blood or fingerprints left behind. On the contrary, “disorganized” crime scenes tend to show signs of chaos, suggesting the crime was likely committed on impulse without a clear plan (Ressler & Burgess, 1985). A “mixed” crime scene² exhibits both organized and disorganized characteristics. Several factors can lead to a crime scene being classified as “mixed,” including a well-planned assault spiralling into chaos, multiple offenders with different traits, or a planned attack quickly turning violent. Influences such

² The term “mixed offender” was introduced in 1992 in the Crime Classification Manual (Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, & Ressler, 1992), it refers to a crime scene that reflects both organized and disorganized characteristics.

as drugs, alcohol, external stressors, and the offender's age can all play a role in shaping this type of crime scene (Douglas et al., 2013). The concept of the mixed offender in the *Organized/Disorganized Crime Scene Analysis* method implies it's not a simple binary categorization but more of a spectrum. This perspective informs our approach to crime scene assessment using the F.B.I.'s C.S.A. criteria.

That said, there's a gap in the literature when it comes to understanding the relationship between crime scene organization, corpse concealment, and the mental state of the murderer in cases of post-mortem dismemberment. We've yet to find any published studies on this specific issue.

Aim of the Study

This study delves into cases of homicides with post-mortem dismemberment in Italy over the last 30 years with the aim to examine the correlation between the mental illness of the killer (in a legal sense - N.G.R.I. – Not Guilty for Reason of Insanity), the level of organization at the crime scene (FBI's C.S.A. method), and the corpse concealment (whether the victim's body was discovered at the scene or not). While this topic seems underexplored and lacking in comprehensive scientific debate, the aim is to uncover any links that could help us better understand the connection between corpse dismemberment, crime scene organization, and corpse concealment.

Methods To conduct the study, only post-mortem dismemberment homicides with sentenced killers were selected, of which there were 11 cases across Italy with sufficient evidence. The evidence was gathered through public information³ and legal databases⁴ about the crime, the trial,

³ For example: De Stefano, B. (2023). *I femminicidi che hanno sconvolto l'Italia*. Newton Compton Ed. ISBN: 9788822784353; F. Delicato (2020) *Golfo Insanguinato*, Turisa Ed., ISBN-10: 8890001348 - ISBN-13: 978-8890001345; RAI – Radio Televisione Italiana, www.rai.it / www.raiplay.it; Newspapers: La Stampa, La voce di Napoli; Il Meridiano news.

⁴For example: www.giurisprudenzapenale.com; www.italggiure.giustizia.it; Biblioteca Centrale Giuridica (BCG) - Ministero della Giustizia; www.dejure.it; www.latribunaplus.it, Ius Explorer - Enciclopedia Del Diritto, Corte di Cassazione - www.cortedicassazione.it.

and the psychiatric reports during trials, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation – GDPR (European Union, 2016) and the principles of research ethics.

The level of organization for each crime scene was assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, Applying the C.S.A. Organized/Disorganized method using the following scale: Completely Organized = 5pt, Quite Organized = 4pt, Mixed = 3pt, Quite Disorganized = 2pt, Completely Disorganized = 1pt. A crime scene examiner⁵ with 35 years of experience (Arma Carabinieri, Sezione Investigazioni Scientifiche, Italy) aided with the assessments.

The mental illness of the killer was rated based on psychiatric evaluations conducted during the trials and sentencing. Subjects found N.G.R.I. (Not Guilty for Reason of Insanity) were assigned a value of 1, while convicted subjects with no mental illness were assigned a value of 0. However, it's important to clarify the reason for this choice under Italian penal law. Articles 85 and 88 of the Italian penal code provide for non-punishment in cases of insanity, and punishment in cases of absence of mental illness (art. 85 and 88 Codice penale, in Dolcini & Gatta, 2023). Additionally, article 89 of the Italian penal code, known as “*semi infermità mentale*” allows for the punishment of a crime with a reduced sentence when the perpetrator has a mental illness but is still capable of understanding reality and self-determination, albeit to a reduced degree (art. 89 Codice penale, in Dolcini & Gatta, 2023). Therefore, we have assigned a value of 1 for “*semi infermità mentale*” as per article 89 of the Italian penal code, despite a guilty verdict, due to the presence of mental illness in a legal sense.

We rated the crime concealment variable as follows: If the dead body was found at the crime scene, we labeled it as “*No Dismembered Corpses Concealment*” (Value = 1). If the dead body was not found at the crime scene, we labeled it as “*Dismembered Corpses Concealment*” (Value = 0).

⁵ Thanks to Dr. Pietro Battista, Crime Scene Examiner, Italian police force: Arma Carabinieri (It)

Example Cases:⁶

Case 1 – On January 30th, 2018, the dismembered corpse of 18-year-old girl Pamela Mastropietro was found in two trolley bags in Macerata, Italy. She had been killed by two stab wounds to the liver and later dismembered with a saw. The body was washed with bleach to erase biological evidence. The killer, Innocent Oseghale, was sentenced to life in 2022 for homicide and concealing a dead body. There was no evidence of psychiatric disease (Value = 0). Due to the modus operandi and the elements at the crime scene, the Crime Scene Organization level was rated as High (5 points).
There was no dead body at the crime scene – Dismembered Corpse concealment (Value = 0).

Case 2 – On July 22nd, 2013, Lino Renzi killed his mother, Maria Pia Guariglia, in the bathroom of their home. He dismembered her body, cooked parts of it, and then ate some parts of what he had cooked. Renzi had a history of schizophrenia. Two days after the homicide, Renzi was found in a catatonic state on his bed at home, with his mother's dismembered body still in the bathroom. Renzi was found not guilty by reason of insanity (Value = 1). The Crime Scene Organization level was rated as completely disorganized (1 point) due to the modus operandi and the elements at the crime scene.
The dismembered corpse of the victim was found at the crime scene - No Dismembered Corpse concealment (Value = 1).

The collected data have been processed by using an SPSS v25 software (IBM SPSS 2017); Kendall's tau correlation was performed to verify the association between the variables assuming a monotonic relationship. Moreover, for a better statistical analysis, linear regression was performed

⁶ The comprehensive case list can be found in the Appendix.

to verify if the variables “crime scene organization level” and “No corpse concealment” are good predictor of a psychiatric illness in the killer.

Results

Table 1 and Table 2 display the Kendall's Tau correlation results between the psychiatric illness of the killer and both the crime scene organization level and the absence of corpse concealment.

Table 1
Psychiatric disease of the killer and Crime Scene Organization Level (Kendall's Tau correlation)

		Crime Scene Organization Level
Psychiatric	Kendall's Tau correlation	- ,646*
disease of the	Sign. (Two tails)	,026
killer	N	11

* $p < .05$ level (two tail)

Table 2
Psychiatric disease of the killer and No Dismembered Corpse concealment (Kendall's Tau correlation)

		No Dismembered Corpse concealment
Psychiatric	Kendall's Tau correlation	,770*
disease of the	Sign. (Two tails)	,015
killer	N	11

* $p < .05$ level (two tails)

Table 1 shows a significant negative correlation (sig. $< .05$ two tails) between the crime scene organization level and the psychiatric illness of the killer. On the other hand, Table 2 shows a positive correlation (sig. $< .05$ two tails) between the psychiatric illness of the killer and the victim's dead body found at the crime scene (no corpse concealment).

To better understand the statistical significance of the data, we performed linear regression assuming the crime scene organization level and the absence of corpse concealment as predictors of the psychiatric illness of the killer in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

Table 3**Linear Regression – Crime Scene Organization and Psychiatric Disease of the Killer***

MODEL SUMMARY					
Model	R	R-square	R-square adapt.	St. error ets.	
<i>1</i>	.765	.585**	.539	.3171	
ANOVA					
	Square sum	d.o.f.	Quadr Mean	F	Sig.
<i>Regression</i>	1,277	1	1,277	12,698**	.006**
<i>Res.</i>	.905	9	.101		
<i>Tot.</i>	2,182	10			
COEFFICIENT					
	not St. coef.		St. Coeff.	t	Sign.
	B	St. Err.	Beta		
<i>Const.</i>	1,140	.261		4,360	.002
<i>Crime Scene Organization level</i>	-.265	.074	-.765	- 3,563**	.006**

* *Dependent Var.: Psychiatric disease of the Killer**Model 1: Predictor: (const.), Crime Scene Organization level***** In bold Sig. value****Table 4****Linear Regression – No Dismembered Corpse Concealment and Psychiatric Disease of the Killer***

MODEL SUMMARY					
Model	R	R-square	R-square adapt.	St. error ets.	
<i>1</i>	.770	.593**	.547	.31427	
ANOVA					
	Square sum	d.o.f.	Quadr. Mean	F	Sig.
<i>Regression</i>	1,293	1	1,293	13,091**	.006**
<i>Res.</i>	.889	9	.099		
<i>Tot.</i>	2,182	10			
COEFFICIENT					
	not St. coef.		St. Coeff.	t	Sign.
	B	St. Err.	Beta		
<i>Const.</i>	1,111	.105		1,061	.316
<i>No corpse concealment</i>	.889	.246	.770	3,618**	.006**

* *Dependent Var.: Psychiatric disease of the Killer**Model 1: Predictor: (const.), No corpse concealment***** In bold Sig. value**

The results of linear regression in Table 3 indicate that the crime scene organization level is significantly negatively correlated with the dependent variable, suggesting that a disorganized crime scene is a good predictor of the presence of a psychiatric illness of the killer. Similarly, the results of linear regression in Table 4 show that finding the victim's body at the crime scene is a very good predictor of the psychiatric illness of the killer.

Discussion

Cases of homicide involving post-mortem corpse dismemberment pose significant challenges for criminologists and police investigators due to the rarity of such cases and the difficulties involved in investigating them. Scientific knowledge about this type of homicide can help investigators develop hypotheses and guide their investigations. However, information on the mental health background of killers accused of such homicides is limited, often relying on medicolegal case reports (Di Nunno et al., 2006; Turk et al., 2004) or descriptive studies (Rajs et al., 1998; Watanabe et al., 2001). For instance, Ressler et al. (1986) found that mutilation was significantly associated with childhood and adolescent sexual victimization among a sample of sexual killers. Häkkänen-Nyholm et al. (2009) argue that factors like childhood educational and mental health issues, inpatient mental health contacts, self-harming tendencies, and schizophrenia are notably more prevalent in offenders who commit mutilation. Moreover, they found no significant link between mutilation and psychopathy or substance abuse. Additionally, Pointon et al. (2023) noted a difference in expressive and instrumental traits in dismemberment homicides, with the most identified motive being the instrumental-defensive typology.

Our findings can be situated in this scientific context. Given the sample size, it is important to approach statistical test results with caution, while the use of small samples has a potential advantage for the early detection of a correlation (Kareev et. al., 1997).

In the scope of dismemberment homicides examined in this study, it was noted that three out of 11 perpetrators were diagnosed with mental illnesses: one with schizophrenia, another with delusional disorder and epilepsy, and the third perpetrator with a personality disorder. The

remaining eight perpetrators, who were convicted for homicide and dismemberment, exhibited no evident signs of psychiatric disorders. All the individuals in this study were male, with ages at the time of the homicide ranging from 21 to 62 years old.

Our study's results (Table 1) show a negative correlation between the level of crime scene organization and the psychiatric illness of the killer in cases of post-mortem dismemberment homicide. The findings suggest a connection between the disorganized nature of a crime scene, in cases of post-mortem dismemberment homicides, and the mental health issues of the killer. Furthermore, Table 2 displays a significant correlation between the lack of attempts to hide the victim's body at the crime scene (no corpse concealment) and the mental illness of the killer.

To conduct better statistical analysis, we performed linear regression, using both the level of crime scene organization and the absence of corpse concealment (independent variables) as predictors of the psychiatric disease of the killer. The results of the linear regression (Tables 3 and 4) suggest that, in cases of homicide with post-mortem corpse dismemberment, the presence of the victim's dead body at the crime scene and a low level of crime scene organization (or high level of disorganization) are both good predictors of the psychiatric disease of the killer. Conversely, the concealment of the dismembered corpse and a high level of crime scene organization are not related to the psychiatric illness of the perpetrator. These findings may contribute to the scientific dialogue on the topic and also serve as a tool for investigators to formulate hypotheses in cases of post-mortem dismemberment.

Future research on this topic should aim to use a larger sample size to improve the external validity of the results. An interesting angle might be a comparative study on how different countries or legal systems tackle post-mortem dismemberment homicide cases. Of particular interest could be the part that mental health considerations play in investigations and court proceedings.

Conclusion

Results of the present study suggest that, in a case of homicide with post-mortem dismemberment, the level of crime scene organization and corpse concealment may provide insight

into the mental state of the unknown killer. These findings may have significant implications for criminal profiling or psychopathological profiling, warranting further discussion. For example, an investigator working on a case of post-mortem dismemberment homicide in which the dismembered corpse is found at the crime scene and the crime scene organization level is low (disorganized crime scene) might direct their investigations towards a hypothesis of a psychiatric history of the unknown killer.

In conclusion, these insights may refine investigative techniques, broaden legal viewpoints, and assist jury members in their deliberations, and could add to the ongoing scholarly dialogue around potential mental health conditions in offenders and any potential ties to their behavior before and after a homicide. Notably, these insights could stimulate conversations that encourage targeted training for police officers, especially in cases of post-mortem dismemberment homicides. Furthermore, they may encourage a reassessment of unconscious bias in court sentencing. Here, factors such as motivations and extenuating circumstances, like mental health concerns, are frequently overshadowed due to the gruesome nature of the crime scene.

Limitations

The first limitation concerns the number of selected cases, only 11. Statistical test results must be regarded with caution given the sample size. Future studies are desirable to further investigate the evidence in this study by examining more cases.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards, and according to the General Data Protection Regulation – GDPR (European Union, 2016).

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Appendix

List of Dismemberment Homicide in this Study⁷

Killer	Age⁸	Crime scene organization⁹	Corpses Concealment	Sentence
Lino Renzi	45	Completely Disorganized	No	N.G.R.I. – art. 88 Italian penal code (Schizophrenia)
Ciro Guarente	35	Quite Organised	Yes	Guilty – no psychiatric disease
Innocent Oseghale	29	Completely Organized	Yes	Guilty – no psychiatric disease
Luigi Orefice	49	Quite Organised	Yes	Guilty – no psychiatric disease
Maurizio Diotallevi	62	Mixed	Yes	Guilty – art. 89 Italian penal code (personality Disorder)
Claudio Borgarelli	54	Mixed	Yes	Guilty – no psychiatric disease
Ivano Famiglietti	28	Completely Disorganized	No	N.G.R.I. – art. 88 Italian penal code (delusional disorder and epilepsy)
Roberto Garimberti	46	Quite Organised	Yes	Guilty – no psychiatric disease
Filippo Botteri	43	Completely Organized	Yes	Guilty – no psychiatric disease
Andrei Filip	21	Mixed	Yes	Guilty – no psychiatric disease
Romano Bisceglia	52	Mixed	Yes	Guilty – no psychiatric disease

⁷ The table, developed by the author, is derived from public resources and legal databases as cited in footnotes 3 and 4. It succinctly encapsulates the essential elements utilized in this study.

⁸ Age of the perpetrator at the time the homicide was committed.

⁹ 5-point Likert scale: Completely Organized = 5 – Quite Organised = 4 – Mixed = 3 – Quite Disorganized = 2 – Completely Disorganized = 1.