

# Forensic Aspects in Domestic Homicide

Dražen Kovačević<sup>1</sup>, Tija Žarković-Palijan<sup>1</sup>, Sanja Radeljak<sup>1</sup>, Dunja Marinović<sup>2</sup>, Elizabeta Dadić Hero<sup>3</sup> and Tajana Ljubin Golub<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Forensic Psychiatry, Neuropsychiatric Hospital »Dr. Ivan Barbot«, Popovača, Croatia

<sup>2</sup> Juvenile Correctional Institution, Rijeka, Croatia

<sup>3</sup> Community Primary Health Centre of Primorsko-goranska County, Department of Family medicine, Medical faculty, University of Rijeka, Rijeka, Croatia

<sup>4</sup> Police Academy, Zagreb, Croatia

## ABSTRACT

*The aim of the study was investigation of specific forensic aspects in offenders involved in domestic homicide cases in regard to sociodemographic and psychosocial variables and modalities of the offense. The research was conducted at the Department of Forensic Psychiatry in Neuropsychiatric Hospital »Dr. Ivan Barbot« in Popovaca, Croatia. The sample in this study consisted of domestic homicide group (N=162). The results showed certain characteristics within the group of domestic homicide offenders. Generally speaking the offenders in domestic homicide cases were often married and were living in their families. Moreover, they were brought up in families with both parents and they had history of regular military service. Furthermore, offenders in domestic homicide cases were less involved in intervention from social services with rare history of home runaway and substance abuse during adolescence. Finally, the same group of offenders was less often had mothers or close friends with antisocial personality disorder but had frequent language and speech problems during adolescent period. In regard to the victims of domestic homicide they were often aged females. The offenders usually commit crime in their living space, either in the house or in the apartment. Based on these findings we conclude there are certain specific characteristics in the domestic homicide cases compared to homicide in general.*

**Key words:** domestic homicide, homicide offenders, victims

## Introduction

Domestic violence is known as the social phenomenon since early modern society which has been founded on family. The endpoint of domestic violence is domestic homicide. Numerous international studies on domestic homicide showed various discrepancies in regard to this specific phenomenon. Domestic homicide is closely related to various social and cultural factors. The research on domestic homicide across the countries and cultures becomes necessary in order to establish specific characteristics of this type of homicide and for better understanding the complexity of the problem involving the killing a close member of the family<sup>1-3</sup>. According to the literature, domestic homicide represents 30–40% of all homicide cases in the population in the majority of countries. Croatian statistics shows that among 304 cases of homicide offenses, in a four year period (2001–2004), overall 106 (35%) of homicide offenses were cases of domestic homicide with tendency toward an increased

number of cases in 2008 with 40% of domestic homicide offenses. Domestic homicide often involves killing of intimate partner, child, sibling followed by other members of the family. The majority of the cases of domestic homicide fall into the category of intimate partner killing<sup>4</sup>. Among 73 homicide cases in Croatia, in 2002, overall of 15.1% of the offenses were committed by intimate partner. In the following year (2003) among 67 cases of homicide in Croatia, 16.4% were domestic homicide cases involving intimate partner as homicide offender, whereby in 2004 that number increased to 19.3%. The main characteristic of domestic homicide, involving killing of intimate partner, was gender of the offender and the victim in terms that all offenders were males and victims were females<sup>5</sup>. The most recent data are showing an increased number of domestic homicide cases involving killing of intimate partner, representing 17.9% of all homicide cases in 2008. In US and Europe, statistics show a rare

cases of domestic homicide, namely 4%, where killing of the parents occurs<sup>6,7</sup>. It should be emphasized that in the 20–30% of all domestic homicide cases, where victims are parents, the offenders are psychotic males<sup>8,9</sup>. There are significant cultural differences in the type of domestic homicide which involves killing of children<sup>10–13</sup>. Recent data from Croatian statistic shows that in 2 cases of domestic homicide in Croatia where infanticide occurred, offenders were fathers and the victims were adult male children, whereas female offenders were involved in 2 cases of neonaticide. The most often type of domestic homicide where victims are siblings involves killing among brothers and very seldom killing among sisters<sup>14</sup>. Some studies on certain characteristics of domestic homicide pointed out on particular motives otherwise not usually found in typical homicide cases<sup>7,15–18</sup>. The aim of this study was searching for specific differences among domestic homicide offenders and homicide offenders in general in regard to sociodemographic and psychosocial variables and modalities of the offense.

## Materials and Methods

The aim of the research was to establish possible association between certain contextual factors underlying causal relationship between domestic homicide and homicide in general. The research was conducted at the Department of Forensic Psychiatry in Neuropsychiatric Hospital »Dr. Ivan Barbot« in Popovaca, Croatia. Study was based on the questionnaire designed on the basis of sociodemographic and psychosocial variables and modalities of the offense. The questionnaire was filled with data obtained from the forensic expertise's of the offender (psychiatric evaluation and assessment) containing the medical history, social anamnesis, court records and psychiatric interview. The sample consisted of homicide group (N=286) divided in two subgroups; domestic homicide offenders (N=162) and homicide offenders in general (N=124). Homicide group was also divided according to the mental state of the offender at the time of the offence in order to have similar percentage of offenders pronounced mentally incapable to stand trial in both subgroups (domestic homicide offenders=53.7%, homicide offenders in general=59.7%;  $\chi^2=1.019$ ;  $p=0.337$ ). Moreover, in order to analyze modality of crime the study was based on the characteristics of homicide offence; attempted homicide and accomplished homicide. The predictive variables were finally divided into the sociodemographic and psychosocial variables and variables of the offense. Data were statistically analyzed using SPSS program version 11.5. The comparisons were made by  $\chi^2$  test and data were processed by logistic regression analysis.

## Results

In order to examine certain characteristics in the variables and modalities in cases of domestic homicides and homicide offenses in general, the differences between two groups of the offenders were analyzed by  $\chi^2$

test. The results of analysis are shown in variables associated with  $\chi^2$ , df and p (Table 1 and 2). We have set the value for statistically significant level of risk which is less than 5%. From a total of 38 variables that were analyzed in the study we have found 10 that were statistically significantly different. The results obtained by logistic regression analysis (Table 3) shows a final model for predictive variables to be statistically significant at the level of value risk being less than 0.001 ( $\chi^2=99.027$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). The final model with variables appears to be predictive for distinction between domestic homicide offenders and homicide offenders in general with statistical risk value of less than 1%. Multivariate statistical analysis showed significant value for sociodemographic variable, referring to the person living with the offender in the same household. Domestic homicide offenders are rarely living alone (11.7%) compared to homicide offenders in general (38.7%). Regarding the characteristics in the wide range of psychosocial variables, a significant beta coefficient (with  $p<0.05$ ) was observed when history of substance abuse was present in the family as well as with comorbid language and speech disorders. In order to investigate possible significant differences between 2 groups of offenders, in regard to modalities of the offense, we have applied  $\chi^2$  test (Table 4). In 4 out of 15 characteristics concerning modality of the offense we have found differences between offenders, with statistical risk value of less than 5%, in regard to: first victim gender, age, history of previous offenses and crime scene. The results obtained by logistic regression analysis (Table 5) shows that modality of the offense has significant contribution in final predictive model with statistical risk value less than 0.001 ( $\chi^2=147,209$ ,  $p<0,001$ ). The final model with variables appears to be predictive for distinction between domestic homicide offenders and homicide offenders in general with statistical risk value of less than 1%. Taken as a whole, the predictive variable which appears to be essential in distinction between domestic homicide offenders and homicide offenders in general are: first victim age and gender, crime scene, and murder weapon. On the basis of the results obtained by univariate and multivariate analysis we can conclude that there are differences in regard to sociodemographic and psychosocial variables and modalities of the offense between two groups of the offenders. In regard to homicide in general, offenders were more often married, employed and with higher socioeconomic status. Furthermore, they have regularly served army. Moreover, they were coming from families with both parents; they were not having previous intervention from the social services and were less often engaged in substance abuse compared to domestic homicide offenders. Domestic homicide offenders were more often single, unemployed with low socioeconomic status and dismissed from the army service. Finally, domestic homicide offenders were often growing up in dysfunctional families, usually with antisocial mother, and were more often alcohol and drug abusers. We have found that predictive factors that are also contributing to differences between the two groups of homicide offenders are variables such as gender and age of the first vic-

**TABLE 1**  
COMPARISON OF DOMESTIC HOMICIDE OFFENDERS (N = 162) AND HOMICIDE OFFENDERS IN GENERAL (N=124) BASED ON SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Sociodemographic variables	Domestic homicide offenders (%)	Homicide offenders general (%)	$\chi^2$ ; df; p
<b>Age</b>			
below 21	3.7	8.1	7.547; 5; 0.183
22–30	17.9	24.4	
31–40	24.7	27.4	
41–50	21.0	19.4	
51–60	14.2	8.9	
above 60	18.5	12.1	
<b>Marital status</b>			
married/illegitimate	55.6	30.6	17.630; 2; 0.000
divorced/widower	13.6	21.0	
single	17.5	48.4	
<b>Level educations</b>			
not finished primary school	30.9	26.6	2.926; 3; 0.403
finished primary school	25.3	30.6	
finished secondary school	40.7	41.9	
faculty diploma	3.1	0.8	
<b>Profession</b>			
without profession	5.6	12.9	7.619; 5; 0.179
agricultural worker	12.3	8.1	
clerk with secondary school	71.0	70.6	
clerk with faculty	3.1	4.0	
others	3.1	0.8	
	4.9	4.0	
<b>Employment</b>			
employed	34.6	22.6	8.198; 3; 0.042
unemployed	33.3	49.2	
pupil/student	2.5	2.4	
pensioner	29.8	25.9	
<b>Social status</b>			
excellent	2.5	0.8	15.538; 4; 0.004
very good	8.6	8.9	
medial	41.4	30.6	
under average	29.6	21.8	
bad	17.9	37.9	
<b>Offender lives</b>			
alone	11.7	38.7	37.325; 3; 0.000
with family	58.0	28.2	
with parents	25.3	24.2	
in an institution/other	4.9	8.9	
<b>Residence</b>			
capital	12.3	7.3	6.654; 4; 0.155
city	15.4	19.4	
medial town	9.3	10.5	
smaller town	9.3	16.9	
village	53.7	46.0	
Family migrated from village to the city	25.9	27.4	0.080; 1; 0.777
Family migrated from other country	13.0	17.7	1.256; 1; 0.262
Earlier social's office intervention	45.1	63.7	9.809; 1; 0.002
Earlier criminal offences	41.4	48.2	1.744; 1; 0.187
Earlier homicide or homicide attempt	10.5	14.5	1.058; 1; 0.304
Served military term	78.4	66.9	4.727; 1; 0.030

**TABLE 2**  
COMPARISON OF DOMESTIC HOMICIDE OFFENDERS (N=162) AND HOMICIDE OFFENDERS IN GENERAL (N=124) ACCORDING TO PSYCHOSOCIAL VARIABLES

Psychosocial variables	Domestic homicide (%)	Homicide in general (%)	$\chi^2$ ; df; p
<b>Heredity</b>			
negative	44.4	42.7	0.083; 1; 0.774
positive psychiatric heredity	16.7	22.6	1.582; 1; 0.209
addiction in the family	48.8	41.1	1.652; 1; 0.199
father's asocial behavior	13.6	18.5	1.308; 1; 0.253
mother's asocial behavior	5.6	12.1	3.909; 1; 0.048
<b>Difficult delivery</b>	9.3	8.1	0.126; 1; 0.723
<b>Psychophysical development disorders</b>			
negative	80.9	71.8	3.269; 1; 0.071
specific disorders in speech and language development	5.6	1.6	2.952; 1; 0.086
learning and formal knowledge disorders	4.3	6.5	0.642; 1; 0.423
disorders in development of locomotoric functions	1.9	1.6	0.023; 1; 0.879
emotional disorders	13.6	21.8	3.322; 1; 0.068
<b>Social development disruptions</b>	58.6	68.5	2.955; 1; 0.086
problems during education	46.9	57.3	3.009; 1; 0.083
run away from home	3.7	11.3	6.216; 1; 0.013
abuse of addictive substances	16.7	29.0	6.253; 1; 0.012
asocial company	6.2	12.9	3.850; 1; 0.050
juvenile delinquency	6.8	12.9	3.070; 1; 0.080
<b>While growing up offender lived</b>			
with parents	93.8	83.1	
in a foster home	2.5	1.6	14.286; 3; 0.003
in an institution	3.7	9.7	
others	0.0	5.6	
<b>While growing up had support in crises</b>	54.9	52.4	0.179; 1; 0.672
<b>Intelligence</b>			
highly beyond average	1.2	0.0	
beyond average	4.3	8.1	
average	57.4	51.6	6.305; 5; 0.278
under average	21.6	17.7	
borderline	9.3	12.1	
mental retardation	6.2	10.5	
<b>Suicide attempt</b>	16.7	16.1	0.015; 1; 0.903
<b>Alcohol consumption</b>			
doesn't drink	14.8	14.5	
drinks moderately	21.0	21.0	
alcohol abuse	24.1	35.5	5.620; 3; 0.133
alcoholism	40.1	29.0	
<b>Earlier psychiatric treatment</b>	53.1	62.9	2.767; 1; 0.096
<b>EEG</b>			
normal	62.7	62.9	
borderline	6.8	4.8	
altered	24.8	29.0	1.786; 3; 0.618
epilepsy	5.6	3.2	

tim, crime scene, and murder weapon. On the basis of our results we can conclude that there are differences between domestic homicide offenders and homicide offenders in general population based on the sociodemographic and psychosocial variables and modality of the offense.

## Discussion

The role of the family in shaping one's personality is known to be of great importance in the complex process of dynamic interaction between the person itself, its fam-

**TABLE 3**  
 LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR DIFFERENTIATING DOMESTIC HOMICIDE OFFENDERS (N=162) AND HOMICIDE OFFENDERS IN GENERAL (N=124) BASED ON SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC AND PSYCHOSOCIAL VARIABLES

Variables	$\beta$	Wald's index	Exponential $\beta$	p
<b>Sociodemographic variables</b>				
Age	-0.328	3.151	0.721	0.076
Marital situation		0.101		0.951
married/illegitimate	0.189	0.086	1.207	0.769
divorced/widower	0.000	0.000	1.000	1.000
Level educations	-0.095	0.114	0.909	0.736
Profession		6.123		0.294
without profession	1.327	1.360	3.768	0.244
agricultural	-0.170	0.026	0.843	0.872
worker	0.704	0.538	2.022	0.463
clerk with secondary school	0.780	0.424	2.181	0.515
clerk with faculty	-1.238	0.566	0.290	0.452
Employment		1.011		0.799
employed	-0.458	0.804	0.632	0.370
unemployed	-0.338	0.443	0.713	0.506
pupil/student	0.072	0.003	1.075	0.959
Social status	-0.079	0.131	0.924	0.717
With who offender lives		23.708		0.000
alone	1.299	2.990	3.665	0.084
with family	-1.088	1.733	0.337	0.188
with parents	-1.106	2.177	0.331	0.140
Residence		3.069		0.546
capital	-0.516	0.525	0.597	0.469
city	-0.152	0.076	0.859	0.783
medial town	0.347	0.305	1.415	0.581
smaller town	0.573	1.206	1.773	0.272
Family migrated from village to the city	0.176	0.114	1.193	0.736
Family migrated from other country	0.058	0.018	1.060	0.893
Earlier social's office intervention	-0.625	2.519	0.535	0.893
Earlier criminal offences	0.317	0.743	1.373	0.389
Served military term	0.502	1.275	1.652	0.259
<b>Psychosocial variable</b>				
Existence of psychiatric heredities	-0.405	0.940	0.667	0.332
Existence of addiction in the family	0.938	5.489	2.555	0.019
Father's asocial behavior	-0.950	2.943	0.387	0.086
Mother's asocial behavior	-0.454	0.532	0.635	0.466
Had difficult delivery	0.263	0.210	1.301	0.647
Disorders in speech and language development	3.517	8.243	33.683	0.004
Learning and formal knowledge disorders	0.459	0.313	1.582	0.576
Disorders in development of locomotoric functions	-0.352	0.060	0.703	0.806
Emotional disorder	0.282	0.296	1.326	0.587
Problems during education	-0.156	0.166	0.855	0.684
Run away from home	-0.246	0.112	0.782	0.738
Alcohol abuse	-0.544	1.368	0.581	0.242
Asocial company	0.757	0.859	2.132	0.354
Juvenile delinquency	-0.522	0.475	0.593	0.491
Environment while growing up		3.354		0.340
with family	-21.161	0.000	0.000	0.999
with parents	-19.724	0.000	0.000	0.999
in an institution	-19.701	0.000	0.000	0.999
Support from family in the crisis	-0.769	3.056	0.463	0.080
Intelligence	0.131	0.423	1.139	0.516
Suicide attempt	-0.451	0.919	0.637	0.338
Alcoholic consumption	-0.136	0.595	0.873	0.440
Earlier psychiatric treatment	0.155	0.194	1.168	0.660
EEG findings	-0.104	0.364	0.901	0.547

Logarithm value of the final model = 291.249;  $\chi^2 = 99.027$ ; df = 48; p = 0.000

**TABLE 4**  
COMPARISON OF DOMESTIC HOMICIDE OFFENDERS (N=162) AND HOMICIDE OFFENDERS IN GENERAL (N=124) ACCORDING TO CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OFFENSE

Criminal offence variables	Domestic homicide (%)	Homicide in general (%)	$\chi^2$ ; df; p
Number of victims			
one	84.0	85.5	0.127; 1; 0.722
multiple victims	16.0	14.5	
First victim's gender			
male	43.8	84.7	49.521; 1; 0.000
female	56.2	15.3	
Second victim's gender			
male	11.1	6.5	2.788; 2; 0.248
female	4.9	8.1	
second victim absent	84.0	85.5	
First victim's age			
to 21	2.5	4.8	12.545; 5; 0.028
22–30	8.1	15.3	
31–40	18.6	24.2	
41–50	24.2	26.6	
51–60	17.4	14.5	
above 60	29.2	14.5	
Second victim's age			
to 21	0.0	11.1	7.148; 5; 0.210
22–30	11.5	27.8	
31–40	26.9	16.7	
41–50	19.2	5.6	
51–60	15.4	22.2	
above 60	26.9	16.7	
Participation in offence	1.9	10.5	11.327; 2; 0.003
Means of committed offence			
own physical strength	9.9	12.9	1.538; 2; 0.463
fire arms/explosives	31.5	35.5	
cold weapon	58.6	51.6	
Time of day			
0–3 hours	10.6	15.3	4.048; 5; 0.542
4–7	3.7	5.6	
8–11	11.2	11.3	
12–15	12.4	14.5	
16–19	28.6	20.2	
20–23	33.5	33.1	
Planned criminal offence	13.0	16.1	0.573; 1; 0.449
Alcoholism <i>tempore criminis</i>			
no one	32.1	39.5	6.832; 3; 0.077
offender	41.4	26.6	
victim	3.1	3.2	
both	23.5	30.6	
Crime scene			
house/apartment	59.9	15.3	77.524; 5; 0.000
courtyard/courtyard house	15.4	9.7	
strange house/apartment	10.5	21.0	
street	6.2	17.7	
food and beverage facilities	2.5	13.7	
other	5.6	22.6	
Offender was provoked by the victim	38.9	45.2	1.137; 1; 0.286
Offender specifically abused the victim	18.5	15.3	0.505; 1; 0.477
Criminal offence confession			
acknowledges in its entirety	42.0	38.7	4.035; 3; 0.258
partly admits	44.4	38.7	
denies	8.6	13.7	
silence defense	4.9	8.9	
Emotional attitude toward homicide			
in remorse	14.8	16.9	4.144; 3; 0.246
indifferent	16.0	20.2	
denies	8.6	13.7	
justifies its actions	60.5	49.2	

**TABLE 5**  
RESULTS OF LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR DISTINCTION OF DOMESTIC HOMICIDE OFFENDERS AND HOMICIDE OFFENDERS IN GENERAL (N=124) ACCORDING TO CRIMINAL OFFENCE CHARACTERISTICS

Criminal offence variables	$\beta$	Wald's index	Exponential $\beta$	p
Number of victims	0.188	0.157	0.828	0.692
First victim's gender	2.204	27.332	9.057	0.000
First victim's age	-0.386	8.243	0.680	0.004
Participation in offence	0.886	1.188	2.425	0.276
Means of committed offence		8.082		0.044
own physical strength	0.866	1.930	2.377	0.165
fire arms/explosives	-0.730	1.899	0.482	0.168
cold weapon	-0.903	2.939	0.406	0.086
Time of day		5.203		0.392
0–3 hours	0.679	1.254	2.007	0.263
4–7	1.065	1.436	2.902	0.231
8–11	0.986	2.227	2.680	0.136
12–15	0.906	2.608	2.475	0.106
16–19	0.134	0.089	1.143	0.765
Planned criminal offence	-0.241	0.212	0.786	0.645
Crime scene		48.227		0.000
house/apartment	-2.985	26.906	0.051	0.000
courtyard/courtyard house	-2.317	12.627	0.099	0.000
strange house/apartment	-0.534	0.675	0.586	0.411
street	-0.717	1.134	0.488	0.287
food and beverage facilities	0.072	0.008	1.075	0.930
Offender was provoked by the victim	0.561	2.116	1.752	0.146
Offender specifically abused the victim	0.455	0.830	1.576	0.362
Criminal offence confession		0.121		0.989
acknowledges in its entirety	0.070	0.007	1.073	0.933
partly admits	-0.005	0.000	0.995	0.996
denies	-0.218	0.061	0.804	0.805
Emotional attitude toward homicide		1.838		0.607
in remorse	0.107	0.043	1.113	0.836
indifferent	0.674	1.548	1.962	0.213
denies	0.957	0.963	2.604	0.326
Offender's alcoholism <i>tempore criminis</i>	0.087	0.049	1.091	0.824

Logarithmic value of the final model = 241.923;  $\chi^2 = 147.209$ ;  $df = 27$ ;  $p=0.000$

ily and environment which all play part in multiple psychosocial interactions. In our study we have found that majority of homicide offenders (55.6% and 57.3%) were living in some sort of dysfunctional family. Regarding the different roles of mother and father in shaping the child's personality we have investigate the role of parental antisocial personality disorder on personality and behavior in offspring. We have found that antisocial father was equally present in the family of both groups of homicide offenders, while within the group of homicide offenders in general, the antisocial mother was more often present. These findings suggest there are certain differences among the 2 groups of offenders at developmental psychodynamic level, as well as at the level of psychopathology. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance in nurturing role of mother in antisocial and criminal behavior of the offender. Homicide offenders in general were showing more disturbances in social development such as early home runaway and substance abuse. The same group shows tendency toward socializing with so-

ciopaths ( $p=0.05$ ), significantly higher number of placements and detentions in juvenile correctional institutions, early growing up out of the home (on the streets, in foster care, etc.) and are more often dismissed from the regular army service. Homicide offenders in general are showing various disturbances in adult life in terms of difficulties in social functioning and consequently they have lower economic status, poor work performances, and unstable relationships which are the rationale why they are often singles and generally living alone. Taken all together, we can conclude that unlike domestic homicide offenders, homicide offenders in general are having more serious behavioral disturbances in early childhood which are lasting till their first offense and further in life. However, it should be pointed out that despite searching for differences, in the course of our research, we have found certain similarities between domestic homicide and homicide in general such as; both types of homicide offenders are belonging to same age group, both had low educational level (56.2% and 57.2%), they were mostly workers

(71.0% and 70.6%), majority resided in the rural areas (53.7% and 46.0%) with frequent changing of residence (74.1% and 72.6%). Almost identical results were given by Dundović<sup>6</sup> in his study on family migration in domestic homicide cases involving killing of intimate partner in 73.2% of cases. We have also found in both groups of the offenders previous attempts of suicide in 16% of the offenders. Attempted suicide in homicide offenders was previously explained by psychoanalytic group of authors as two different forms of aggression which is shifted from victim toward offender<sup>19</sup>. The role of alcohol abuse in homicide cases was significant as we found that majority of the offenders within both groups were alcoholics (40.1% and 29.0%) or alcohol abusers (24.1% and 35.5%). Similar data were given by Nad<sup>20</sup>, in his study on the role of alcohol abuse in domestic homicide. The author found that 60.7% of domestic homicide offenders were either alcoholics or heavy alcohol abusers which emphasize a close relationship between prevention of alcohol abuse and prevention of domestic homicide. In regard to personality traits, as an important factor in criminal behavior and homicide, we have found that in domestic homicide cases 53.1% of the offenders had previous psychiatric treatments compared to 62.9% of positive psychiatric history in homicide offenders in general. Modalities of crime are an important source of the information contributing to the more accurate violence risk assessment in homicide offenders. Our results show that victim gender is one of the most relevant variables in differentiating domestic homicide from homicide in general, which also represents one of the fundamental variables in victimology. In the majority of homicide cases in general, where offender is recognized as mentally healthy person, the type of homicide falls into the category of impulsive violent act among male acquaintances. Our results shows that more than half of the victims of domestic homicide are females (56.2%) comparing to 15.3% of female victims of homicide in general. Furthermore, the victim of domestic homicide is more often aged female (age 50 and plus) comparing to younger females victims of homicide in general. Moreover, every fifth victim of homicide in general is less than 30 years old (20.1%) compared to the victim in domestic homicide where every tenth victim is age 30 or less (10.6%). Data on accomplice to murder in cases of domestic homicide and homicide in general are pointing on the fact that in the majority of both type of homicide the offenders do not have an accomplice. The crime scene appears to be relevant variable in homicides as majority of domestic homicides takes place in offender's household (59.9%) whereas the crime scene in homicide in general is either street (17.7%) or some other house or apartment (22.1%). Cross-cultural studies on murder weapon are showing certain pattern which depends on cultural surrounding. In US, the murder weapon in the majority of cases appears to be firearms<sup>21,22</sup>. Multivariate analysis showed that murder weapon is predictive variable in distinction between two types of homicides. In cases of domestic homicide, the murder weapon is either knife or some other tool in 58.6%. According to research data on category and the nature of both types of homi-

cides in Croatia, it appears to be single homicide by category in the majority of cases (84.0% and 85.5%), unsystematic by nature (87.0% and 83.9%) and committed in time frame between 4 pm and midnight (62.1% and 53.3%). Available data on other circumstantial factors are showing that homicide offender was provoked by the victim in 61.1% of the cases in domestic homicide and in 54.8% of the cases of homicide in general. High rate of homicides is usually found in countries and cultures where consummation of alcohol is socially acceptable behavior<sup>23</sup>. The important role of alcohol intoxication in violent transgressions is very well known from numerous previous studies. However, it should be pointed out that 61.6% of the offenders were intoxicated at the time of the offense<sup>24</sup>. Regarding the quality of interpersonal relationship between the family members, the higher rate of extreme violent abuse of the victim (prior to homicide) is to be expected in the cases of domestic homicides<sup>20</sup>. In our sample 17.1% of homicide offenders were violently abusing their victims in the course of the act. Admitting the guilt for the crime committed appears to be strongly correlated with general attitude toward homicide. In our study the majority of offenders are admitting the guilt (82.6%). On the other hand the majority of the offenders who are admitting the guilt for the crime they commit are usually justifying their act (60.5% and 49.2%). Taken all together, our results are pointing to the fact that all homicides are showing general pattern and specific pattern which are characteristic for the specific type of homicide. However, it should be emphasized that there is a certain limitation in methodology in terms of restriction in discriminative character of different variables. Finally, the prevention of domestic homicide can not be separated from prevention of family violence. By deep understanding of dynamics and interactions in relationships between family members which consequently leads to homicide we could be more efficient in early detection of high risk situations and in general prevention of domestic homicide. In that case, the society and numerous public services (social service, police, law enforcement, education and health services), which are dealing with violence on daily basis, could be more efficient in solving the complex issue such as violence and homicide. By early detection of high risk families in the community, the society could provide more secure environment for possible future victims of domestic homicide. This is supported by our research data showing that 45.1% of the families where domestic homicide occurred were previously registered with social services but fail to receive adequate help and protection.

## Conclusion

Our research showed that there are important differences between domestic homicide and homicide in general as well as certain variables are highly discriminative for the offenders. In addition the research is emphasizing a complex and multidimensional nature of domestic homicide compared to homicide in general.

## REFERENCES

1. BOOTS DE, HEIDE KM, *Int J Offender Ther Comp Criminol*, 50 (2006) 418. — 2. KUMAR V, *J Clin Forensic Med*, 11 (2004) 2. — 3. MOHANTY MK, PANIGRAHI MK, MOHANTY S, DAS SK, *Leg Med*, 6 (2004) 151. — 4. MOUZOS J, RUSHFORTH C, *Family homicide in Australia. National homicide monitoring program* (Australian institute of criminology, Canberra, 2003). — 5. DUNDOVIĆ D, *Razlike u nekim socioekonomskim, femenoškim i penološkim obilježjima počinitelja ubojstva intimnih partnera obzirom na spol počinitelja* (Edukacijsko-rehabilitacijski fakultet, Zagreb, 2005). — 6. HILLBRAND M, ALEXANDRE WJ, YOUNG LJ, SPITZ TR, *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 4 (1999) 179. — 7. FEDOROWITZ O, *Juristat*, 19 (1999) 1. — 8. BENEZECH M, *Perspectives psychiatriques*, 34 (1992) 207. — 9. MILLAUD F, AUCLAIR N, MEUNIER D, *Int J Law Psychiatry*, 19 (1996) 173. — 10. FRIEDMAN SH, HORWITZ SM, RESNICK PJ, *Am J Psychiatry*, 162 (2005) 1578. — 11. BOURGET D, GAGNE P, *J Am Acad Psychiatry Law*, 33 (2005) 354. — 12. BROOKMAN F, NOLAN J, *J Interpers Violence*, 21 (2006) 869. — 13. KARAKUS M, INCE H, INCE N, ARICAN N, SOZEN S, *Croat Med J*, 44 (2003) 592. — 14. GEBO E, *Violence and Victims*, 17 (2002) 157. — 15. BELFRAGE H, RYING M, *Crim Behav Ment Health*, 14 (2004) 121. — 16. MARCIKIĆ M, MANDIĆ N, *Liječ Vjesn*, 120 (1998) 333. — 17. VOGLAR M, *Revija za kriminalistiko in kriminologijo*, 48 (1997) 51. — 18. COOPER M, EAVES D, *Violence Vict*, 11 (1996) 99. — 19. KLEIN E, *Destruktivna agresivnost* In: ŽARKOVIĆ PALJAN T, KOVAČEVIĆ D (Eds.): *Iz forenzične psihijatrije 3* (Ceres, Zagreb, 2009). — 20. NAĐ I, *Obiteljska ubojstva u Republici Hrvatskoj*, (Visoka policijska škola, Zagreb, 2001). — 21. FAROOQUE RS, STOUT RG, ERNST FA, *J Forensic Sci*, 50 (2005) 648. — 22. MORACCO KE, RUNYAN CW, BUTTS JD, *J Am Med Womens Assoc*, 58 (2003) 20. — 23. RAZVODOVSKY YE, *Alcoholism*, 43 (2007) 36. — 24. MITTERMAYER O, *Hrvatski ljetopis za kazneno pravo i praksu*, 14 (2007) 77.

*S. Radeljak*

*Department of Forensic Psychiatry, Neuropsychiatric Hospital »Dr. Ivan Barbot«, Jelengradska 1, 44317 Popovača, Croatia  
e-mail: sanjaradeljak@aol.com*

## FORENZIČKI ASPEKTI UBOJSTAVA U OBITELJI

## SAŽETAK

Cilj istraživanja je ispitati razlike između počinitelja ubojstva u obitelji i izvan obitelji s obzirom na sociodemografske i psihosocijalne varijable te prema modalitetu djela. Istraživanje je provedeno u Zavodu za forenzičku psihijatriju Neuropsihijatrijske bolnice Dr. Ivan Barbot u Popovači. Uzorak u istraživanju čine počinitelji ubojstva u obitelji (N=162) i izvan obitelji (N=124). Rezultati su pokazali da su počinitelji ubojstva u obitelji češće oženjeni i žive sa svojom obitelji, češće su odrastali uz roditelje i služili vojni rok, odnosno rjeđe su postojale intervencije socijalne službe, rjeđe su imali asocijalnu majku, te su u djetinjstvu manje bježali od kuće, rjeđe su zlorabljivali sredstva ovisnosti i rjeđe se družili s asocijalnim osobama. Kod počinitelja ubojstava u obitelji češće bila prisutna ovisnost u obitelji te su češće imali smetnje u razvoju govora i jezika. Žrtva obiteljskog ubojstva češće je žena i starije životne dobi. Počinitelji ubojstvo čine sami i najčešće ubijaju u kući ili stanu. Na temelju provedenog istraživanja zaključujemo da postoje neka zajednička obilježja u svim ubojstvima, ali da postoje i neka specifična obilježja ubojstva u obitelji.