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Patterns of Homicide in South Sumatra: Territorial Concentration, Interpersonal Violence, and Institutional Variation

This study examines homicide patterns across South Sumatra, Indonesia, by integrating homicide-related conviction records from ten court jurisdictions covering 2014–2024, operational police data from 17 regencies and cities covering 2022–2024, and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders involved in homicide investigation, mediation, and victim support. The analysis focuses on jurisdictional concentration, reported and cleared homicide cases, homicide motives, and homicide scene characteristics. The findings show that homicide is unevenly distributed across South Sumatra, with Palembang, Musi Banyuasin, and the Kayu Agung jurisdiction consistently recording relatively high concentrations of homicide-related cases. Feud was the most frequently recorded motive (56 cases), followed by malice aforethought (43 cases) and miscommunication (32 cases), highlighting the importance of interpersonal conflict and retaliatory violence. Houses were the most common homicide scene (86 cases), followed by streets (34 cases), indicating that lethal violence frequently occurs within familiar social environments. The study also identifies substantial disparities between reported and cleared homicide cases across jurisdictions, suggesting uneven investigative conditions across the province. Drawing on Social Disorganization Theory, Routine Activity Theory, Black's sociology of self-help, and conflict-escalation perspectives, the study argues that homicide in South Sumatra is best understood as a relational, territorially patterned, and institutionally uneven phenomenon shaped by the interaction of territorial vulnerability, interpersonal conflict, situational accessibility, and institutional variation.

Keywords: Criminology, Homicide, Indonesia, Social Disorganization, South Sumatra, Violence

Muster von Tötungsdelikten in Süd-Sumatra: Territoriale Konzentration, zwischenmenschliche Gewalt und institutionelle Unterschiede

Diese Studie untersucht die Muster von Tötungsdelikten in Süd-Sumatra, Indonesien, indem sie Daten aus verschiedenen Akten zu Tötungsdelikten zusammenführt. Dazu zählen Akten aus zehn Gerichtsbezirken im Zeitraum von 2014–2024, operative Polizeidaten aus 17 Regionen und Städten aus dem Zeitraum von 2022–2024 sowie halbstrukturierte Interviews mit Akteur:innen aus den Bereichen Mordermittlung, Mediation und Opferhilfe. Die Analyse fokussiert sich auf die geografische Konzentration, gemeldete und aufgeklärte Mordfälle, Mordmotive sowie Merkmale der Tatorte. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Mordfälle in Süd-Sumatra ungleichmäßig verteilt sind, wobei in Palembang, Musi Banyuasin und im Gerichtsbezirk Kayu Agung durchweg eine relativ hohe Konzentration an Mordfällen verzeichnet wird. Anhaltende Konflikte waren das am häufigsten verzeichnete Motiv (56 Fälle), gefolgt von Tötungs-

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vorsatz (43 Fälle) und Missverständnissen (32 Fälle), was die Bedeutung zwischenmenschlicher Konflikte und Vergeltungsgewalt unterstreicht. Wohnhäuser waren der häufigste Tatort (86 Fälle), gefolgt von Straßen (34 Fälle), was darauf hindeutet, dass tödliche Gewalt häufig in vertrauten sozialen Umgebungen stattfindet. Die Studie identifiziert zudem erhebliche Diskrepanzen zwischen gemeldeten und aufgeklärten Mordfällen in den verschiedenen Gerichtsbezirken, was auf ungleiche Ermittlungsbedingungen in der gesamten Provinz hindeutet. Angesichts der Social Disorganization Theorie, der Routine Activity Theorie, Black's sociology of self-help, sowie Perspektiven der Konflikteskalation, argumentiert die Studie, dass Tötungsdelikte in Süd-Sumatra am besten als ein relationales, territorial geprägtes und institutionell ungleichmäßiges Phänomen verstanden werden können, welches durch das Zusammenspiel von territorialer Verwundbarkeit, zwischenmenschlichen Konflikten, situativer Zugänglichkeit und institutionellen Unterschieden geprägt ist.

Schlagwörter: Gewalt; Indonesien; Kriminologie; Soziale Desorganisation; Süd-Sumatra; Tötungsdelikte

1. Introduction

Homicide represents one of the most severe forms of violence because it violates the fundamental right to life and generates lasting social and institutional consequences for affected communities. Beyond the immediate loss of life, homicide contributes to fear, weakened social trust, declining perceptions of safety, and sustained pressure on criminal justice institutions to respond effectively. Consequently, homicide is widely treated not only as a criminal justice problem but as a signal of deeper territorial, interpersonal, situational, and institutional conditions that shape how violence emerges and how effectively it is addressed within specific social contexts (Walker et al., 2025).

Although Indonesia continues to record homicide rates below the global average of 5.61 per 100 000 people (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023), lethal violence remains a persistent national concern. Statistics published by BPS Indonesia (2025) show that homicide cases declined between 2018 and 2022, then increased again in 2023 (1 129 cases), with recorded cases remaining above 1 000 in 2024. These trends indicate that lethal violence continues to pose important social and institutional challenges despite relatively moderate national homicide rates. They also underscore the importance of examining homicide not only at the national level but within specific regional and provincial contexts where local structural, demographic, and institutional conditions shape patterns that aggregate statistics may conceal. Within Indonesia, South Sumatra provides a particularly instructive setting for examining regional homicide dynamics. The province encompasses a dense urban center in Palembang, extensive regencies shaped by plantation agriculture and extractive industries, major interprovincial transportation corridors, and riverine communities with limited access to formal institutions (Harini, 2020). It also exhibits substantial variation in homicide incidence and case resolution outcomes across jurisdictions, reflecting differences in institutional capacity, population mobility, community social structure, and the environmental contexts in which interpersonal conflict develops and escalates. These characteristics make South Sumatra a useful setting for examining how territorial, social, and institutional conditions shape homicide patterns within a single province.

Criminological research on homicide has increasingly moved away from single-factor explanations toward accounts that attend to the interaction of structural, interpersonal, situational,

and institutional conditions. At the structural level, studies drawing on social disorganization traditions have shown that territorial characteristics, including population mobility, community cohesion, and the density of informal social ties, shape local vulnerability to lethal violence across diverse settings (Errol et al., 2021; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Shaw & McKay, 1942). At the situational level, routine activity and crime pattern perspectives have demonstrated that where and how homicide occurs is shaped by the everyday convergence of motivated parties within familiar social environments rather than by exceptional or organized criminal activity alone (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1993; Cohen & Felson, 1979; Parkin, 2014). Research on homicide motives has further shown that interpersonal retaliation, accumulated grievance, and escalating conflict are often more prominent than purely economic instrumentality in recorded homicide cases (Black, 1983; Chopin et al., 2020; Luckenbill, 1977; Polk, 1994), particularly in contexts where informal dispute resolution is limited and institutional mediation is perceived as inaccessible. Studies on homicide clearance have also demonstrated that investigative outcomes vary substantially across territorial and social contexts, depending on case characteristics, witness cooperation, and the nature of offender-victim relationships, rather than on institutional resources alone (Puckett & Lundman, 2003; Roberts, 2008; Wellford & Cronin, 1999). Taken together, these bodies of research indicate that homicide patterns are most productively understood as outcomes of multiple intersecting conditions rather than any single causal factor.

Despite the growing body of homicide research in Indonesia, studies focusing specifically on South Sumatra remain fragmented and limited in scope. Existing studies have largely concentrated on legal analysis, forensic examination, customary law, mediation practices, or individual homicide cases (Abdullah et al., 2020; Fauzan, 2020; Junaidi, 2024; Wijaya, 2019). While these studies provide valuable insight into specific dimensions of violence and legal response, a comprehensive regional analysis examining long-term homicide concentration, motive structures, situational characteristics, and clearance disparities across multiple jurisdictions in South Sumatra remains absent from the criminological literature.

This study addresses that gap by examining homicide patterns across South Sumatra using administrative conviction records, operational police data, and stakeholder interviews. The study analyzes jurisdictional concentration and temporal fluctuation of homicide convictions between 2014 and 2024, regional disparities in reported and cleared homicide cases between 2022 and 2024, the distribution of homicide motives across 17 regencies and cities, and the situational characteristics of homicide scenes. Interview evidence from law enforcement personnel, mediation actors, legal practitioners, journalists, religious leaders, and victim-family representatives is used to contextualize and triangulate the quantitative findings. Rather than attempting to identify a single causal determinant of homicide, the study adopts a descriptive quantitative approach that integrates administrative criminal justice data with qualitative stakeholder interviews to examine how territorial concentration, interpersonal conflict dynamics, situational accessibility, and institutional variation interact within homicide patterns across the province.

The study contributes to the criminological literature in three ways. First, it provides one of the first integrated provincial-level examinations of homicide concentration, motives, crime scenes, and clearance outcomes across South Sumatra using multiple criminal justice data sources covering an extended observation period. Second, it moves beyond narrowly economic explanations of homicide by demonstrating the co-presence and interaction of territorial, interpersonal, situational, and institutional dimensions within a single regional context. Third,

it contributes empirical evidence from an Indonesian provincial setting that remains substantially underrepresented in international criminological discussions of homicide concentration, relational violence, and institutional response disparities.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the theoretical and analytical framework guiding the study. Section 3 describes the methodology and data sources. Section 4 reports the empirical findings across the four analytical dimensions. Section 5 discusses the findings in relation to broader criminological perspectives, and Section 6 concludes with the study's contributions, limitations, and implications for future research.

2. Theoretical and Analytical Framework

Homicide is a multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be adequately understood through a single explanatory perspective. The present study therefore draws on four complementary criminological traditions that address territorial concentration, interpersonal conflict, situational context, and institutional response. Together, these perspectives provide the analytical framework for interpreting homicide patterns across South Sumatra.

2.1 Homicide Concentration and Structural Conditions

A foundational insight in contemporary criminology is that crime is unevenly distributed across space rather than randomly dispersed. Weisburd (2015) formalizes this observation through the law of crime concentration, arguing that a relatively small proportion of geographic units consistently accounts for a disproportionate share of criminal events across different settings and crime types. Although initially developed in relation to micro-level places such as street segments and addresses, the underlying logic may also extend to broader jurisdictional contexts where persistent variation in crime levels reflects underlying structural and territorial conditions rather than statistical fluctuation alone.

A classical explanation for why such conditions may produce differential crime rates derives from Shaw and McKay's (1942) Social Disorganization Theory. Developed through a comparative analysis of urban neighborhoods, the theory argues that structural characteristics such as population heterogeneity, residential instability, and weakened community integration may reduce the informal social ties through which communities collectively regulate conduct. Sampson and Groves (1989) later refined this perspective by demonstrating that the effects of structural disadvantage operate through mediating mechanisms of social disorganization, including weakened friendship networks, lower organizational participation, and reduced supervisory capacity, rather than through structural conditions alone.

Jurisdictions characterized by high mobility, fragmented social interaction, extensive territorial coverage, or uneven institutional presence may experience greater vulnerability to crime concentration because the mechanisms supporting informal social regulation become more difficult to sustain consistently across space. Accordingly, attention shifts from purely economic explanations toward the broader structural and territorial conditions shaping homicide distribution patterns.

Viewed together, the crime concentration literature and Social Disorganization Theory suggest that homicide is unlikely to be distributed evenly across territorial units. Persistent spatial concentration may instead reflect differences in mobility, territorial complexity, community integration, and informal social regulation. These perspectives therefore provide a useful framework for interpreting why homicide clusters within particular jurisdictions despite substantial variation in their demographic and economic characteristics.

2.2 Interpersonal Conflict and Retaliatory Violence

Criminological explanations of homicide frequently emphasize the social and motivational processes that contribute to violent behavior. One influential perspective is Strain Theory, which proposes that crime may arise when individuals experience pressure resulting from blocked opportunities, socioeconomic disadvantage, or the inability to achieve culturally valued goals through legitimate means (Merton, 1938). Strain perspectives therefore draw attention to the role of economic hardship, social inequality, and frustration in generating conditions conducive to criminal behavior. However, homicide may also emerge through interpersonal disputes, retaliation, and conflict escalation that cannot be reduced solely to economic pressures. For this reason, the present study also considers interpersonal conflict perspectives that focus more directly on grievance, retaliation, and dispute resolution.

Central to this tradition is Black's (1983) proposition that certain forms of criminal behavior may function as self-help: the direct pursuit of grievance, retaliation, or perceived justice in situations where third-party conflict resolution is limited, inaccessible, or viewed as ineffective. Within this perspective, violence is interpreted not simply as irrational or pathological behavior but as a socially situated response to perceived injustice or unresolved interpersonal conflict. The framework therefore shifts analytical attention away from individual abnormality alone and toward the broader social conditions under which retaliatory violence may emerge. A complementary micro-level perspective is provided by Luckenbill's (1977) analysis of homicide as a situated transaction. Through detailed examination of homicide incidents, Luckenbill argued that lethal violence often develops through sequential interaction processes involving provocation, confrontation, failed de-escalation, and escalating retaliation. This approach emphasizes that homicide may emerge through dynamic social interaction rather than solely through fixed individual characteristics. The escalation process itself becomes analytically important because relatively ordinary disputes, misunderstandings, or interpersonal tensions may intensify into lethal outcomes depending on how participants interpret and respond to one another during confrontation.

Cooney's (1998) work on third-party conflict intervention provides an additional structural dimension linking interpersonal escalation to broader social regulation processes. Cooney argues that the likelihood of disputes escalating into violence may be shaped by the availability and perceived legitimacy of third-party intervention, including formal legal institutions and informal community mediation mechanisms. When interpersonal disputes are not effectively mediated, conflicts are more likely to persist and escalate directly between the involved parties. Together, these perspectives emphasize that homicide frequently emerges through social processes of grievance, retaliation, and conflict escalation rather than solely through economic motivation or individual pathology. They direct attention to how unresolved disputes develop over time, how violence can function as a form of self-help, and how the absence of effective

third-party intervention may increase the likelihood that interpersonal conflict culminates in lethal outcomes.

2.3 Situational Opportunity and Familiar Environments

A third analytical perspective concerns the situational conditions through which homicide incidents become possible within everyday social environments. Cohen and Felson's (1979) Routine Activity Theory proposes that crime becomes more likely when three elements converge in time and space: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of effective guardianship. Rather than focusing exclusively on background structural conditions, the framework directs attention toward how ordinary routines, repeated interaction, and patterns of movement shape opportunities for violence. In the context of homicide, lethal violence is therefore most likely to emerge within environments where potential offenders and victims already interact routinely rather than in exceptional or highly isolated settings.

Brantingham and Brantingham's (1993) Crime Pattern Theory provides a complementary spatial perspective through the concept of awareness space: the locations individuals routinely encounter through daily movement, social interaction, and habitual activity. Criminal opportunities are more likely to arise in these familiar environments because individuals have prior knowledge of the locations, routines, and accessibility. In cases involving interpersonal conflict or retaliation, awareness spaces may include homes, neighborhood streets, workplaces, or other settings characterized by repeated social contact between perpetrators and victims.

Together, these perspectives suggest that homicide locations are not random settings but environments embedded within everyday social life. Interpersonal proximity, routine interaction, spatial familiarity, and uneven guardianship shape where violence becomes possible, linking the social dynamics of conflict with the situational contexts in which lethal encounters occur.

2.4 Institutional Response and Clearance Variation

A fourth analytical dimension concerns the institutional processes through which homicide cases are investigated and resolved. Homicide clearance rates, commonly measured through arrests or exceptional resolution mechanisms, are frequently used as indicators of investigative outcomes. Criminological research, however, consistently demonstrates that variation in clearance rates should not be interpreted solely as a direct reflection of institutional competence.

Early research identified the social characteristics of homicide cases as important determinants of investigative outcomes. Homicides involving strangers are generally more difficult to clear than cases involving prior acquaintance or domestic relationships, largely because investigators have fewer immediate leads and weaker informational networks linking victims and offenders (Puckett & Lundman, 2003). Similarly, offender-victim relationships consistently emerge as one of the strongest predictors of homicide clearance outcomes, highlighting the importance of social familiarity in shaping investigative tractability (Roberts, 2008).

More recent research has expanded this perspective by emphasizing the interaction of case-level and contextual factors. Homicide clearance outcomes are influenced by multiple condi-

tions operating simultaneously, including witness availability, physical evidence, offender-victim relationships, investigative workload, and local environmental characteristics (Cook & Mancik, 2024). Cases involving identifiable social relationships between perpetrators and victims are often resolved more readily because investigators benefit from clearer suspect pathways and stronger informational networks surrounding the incident (Manifold, 2024).

Collectively, this literature suggests that clearance disparities emerge from the interaction among social, situational, territorial, and institutional conditions rather than from institutional resources alone. Population mobility, territorial scale, case composition, witness cooperation, and patterns of social familiarity may each influence investigative outcomes in different ways across jurisdictions. Differences between reported and cleared homicide cases should therefore be interpreted cautiously and contextually rather than treated as straightforward indicators of institutional success or failure.

This perspective provides the analytical foundation for interpreting regional variation in reported and cleared homicide cases across South Sumatra. It directs attention toward the broader structural and contextual conditions that shape investigative outcomes while recognizing that homicide clearance is influenced by multiple interacting factors operating simultaneously across jurisdictions.

2.5 Analytical Integration

The perspectives presented in this section address different dimensions of homicide rather than competing explanations. Social Disorganization Theory and the crime concentration literature help explain the uneven territorial patterns in homicide. Interpersonal conflict perspectives illuminate how grievances, retaliation, and dispute escalation develop into lethal violence. Routine Activity Theory and Crime Pattern Theory provide insight into the situational contexts in which homicide occurs, particularly the role of routine interaction and spatial familiarity. Finally, homicide clearance research highlights that investigative outcomes vary across jurisdictions due to differences in case characteristics, territorial conditions, and institutional contexts. Together, these perspectives provide a framework for interpreting homicide in South Sumatra as a phenomenon shaped by interacting territorial, interpersonal, situational, and institutional conditions.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a descriptive quantitative research design, supplemented by qualitative stakeholder interviews, to examine homicide patterns across South Sumatra. Rather than testing causal hypotheses or estimating predictive statistical models, the study aims to identify and interpret regional patterns in homicide concentration, motive distribution, situational characteristics, and case clearance variation using administrative criminal justice data. The analytical approach combines descriptive analysis of administrative records with qualitative contextual interpretation.

The quantitative component constitutes the primary source of evidence and focuses on long-term conviction patterns and operational homicide records. To provide contextual understanding of the observed patterns, qualitative interviews were conducted with stakeholders directly involved in homicide prevention, investigation, adjudication, mediation, reporting, and victim support. The interview data were used to triangulate, contextualize, and enrich the interpretation of the quantitative findings rather than to develop independent causal explanations. The study adopts a regional analytical perspective by examining homicide variation across court jurisdictions, regencies, and cities within South Sumatra Province. This approach allows the analysis to identify patterns that may be obscured in province-level aggregates and to explore how homicide dynamics vary across different territorial contexts.

3.2 Data Sources

The study draws upon three sources of data. The first dataset consists of homicide-related conviction records from 10 court jurisdictions across South Sumatra, covering the 2014–2024 period. The dataset records the number of convicted individuals associated with homicide-related cases processed within the district court jurisdictions of Palembang, Kayu Agung, Sekayu, Muara Enim, Baturaja, Lahat, Lubuklinggau, Prabumulih, Pagar Alam, and Pangkalan Balai. Several court jurisdictions encompass multiple regencies or cities. Consequently, the conviction figures reflect aggregated jurisdictional patterns rather than those of individual administrative units.

The second dataset consists of operational homicide records obtained from the Indonesian National Criminal Information Center for the 2022–2024 period across 17 regencies and cities in South Sumatra. The dataset includes information on reported homicide cases, cleared homicide cases, homicide motives, and homicide scene characteristics.

The third source consists of semi-structured interviews with purposively selected stakeholders who have direct experience with homicide-related issues in South Sumatra. Participants included five law enforcement personnel, three local mediation actors and local government officials, three religious leaders, two journalists or legal practitioners, and two victim-family representatives. Interview participants were selected based on their professional or lived experience with homicide investigation, conflict mediation, legal proceedings, community conflict management, religious counseling, or the social consequences of homicide. Interviews focused on perceived drivers of homicide, conflict escalation processes, characteristics of high-risk environments, institutional challenges, investigative constraints, and violence-prevention strategies. The interviews were conducted to provide contextual interpretation of the quantitative findings and to complement the administrative data with practitioner and community perspectives. Detailed participant information is provided in Appendix A.

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the authors' institutional research ethics committee (Approval No. 044/UNSRI.FISIP/TU.KEPSH/2026). All participants provided informed consent prior to participation. Personal identifiers were removed during transcription, and anonymized participant codes were used throughout the analysis. No minors or other vulnerable populations were included in the study.

The combination of administrative datasets and stakeholder interviews enables the study to examine both observable homicide patterns and the contextual processes underlying them.

This approach provides a broader understanding of how homicide is distributed, experienced, investigated, and interpreted across South Sumatra.

3.3 Analytical Procedure

The quantitative analysis was conducted through descriptive comparison and pattern interpretation across jurisdictions, regencies, and cities. Conviction data were used to identify long-term spatial concentration and temporal fluctuation patterns in homicide-related cases across court jurisdictions. Operational police data were subsequently analyzed to examine regional disparities in reported and cleared homicide cases, as well as the distribution of homicide motives and homicide scenes.

The qualitative interviews were analyzed using inductive thematic coding. The research team reviewed 15 interview transcripts iteratively. Initial codes were generated directly by the first author from participant responses. They captured recurring observations regarding homicide drivers, conflict escalation, territorial vulnerability, situational characteristics, investigative challenges, conflict resolution processes, and prevention strategies. Coding decisions and thematic groupings were subsequently reviewed and discussed within the research team to enhance interpretive consistency. These initial codes were grouped into broader analytical themes through multiple rounds of comparison and refinement. The resulting themes were then compared with the quantitative findings to identify areas of convergence, contextual explanation, and analytical complementarity. All interviews were conducted in Indonesian; quotations presented in this article were translated into English by the research team for reporting purposes. The interview protocol was designed to address the four analytical dimensions guiding the study and is presented in Appendix B, while the thematic coding framework is summarized in Appendix C.

The overall analytical process focused on identifying recurring concentration patterns, regional disparities, dominant motive structures, situational characteristics, and institutional challenges observable across both quantitative and qualitative data sources. Findings were then interpreted using selected criminological perspectives, including Social Disorganization Theory, Routine Activity Theory, interpersonal conflict perspectives, and homicide clearance literature. These theoretical perspectives were not employed as deterministic explanatory models but as analytical frameworks for interpreting observed empirical patterns and situating the findings within broader criminological debates.

3.4 Limitations of the Data

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the jurisdictional conviction dataset aggregates multiple regencies within broader court jurisdictions, limiting sub-regional precision. Second, the operational police dataset covers only the 2022–2024 period because these were the most recent records available through the National Criminal Information Center system at the time of data collection. As a result, the dataset captures relatively short-term operational patterns compared to the longer conviction dataset.

Third, administrative classifications regarding homicide motives and case clearance outcomes depend on investigative and institutional processes that may contain reporting limitations, interpretive bias, or incomplete information. Fourth, the datasets do not contain detailed information on perpetrators, victims, or neighborhoods, limiting the direct examination of demographic characteristics, victim-offender relationships, and localized situational dynamics.

The qualitative component also has limitations. Interview participants were selected purposively and do not constitute a statistically representative sample of stakeholders across South Sumatra. The interviews were intended to provide contextual understanding and triangulation rather than generalizable qualitative findings. Participant accounts reflect professional experience, institutional perspectives, and personal experiences that may be subject to recall bias or interpretive subjectivity.

Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as descriptive and analytical observations regarding regional homicide patterns in South Sumatra rather than definitive causal explanations of homicide behavior.

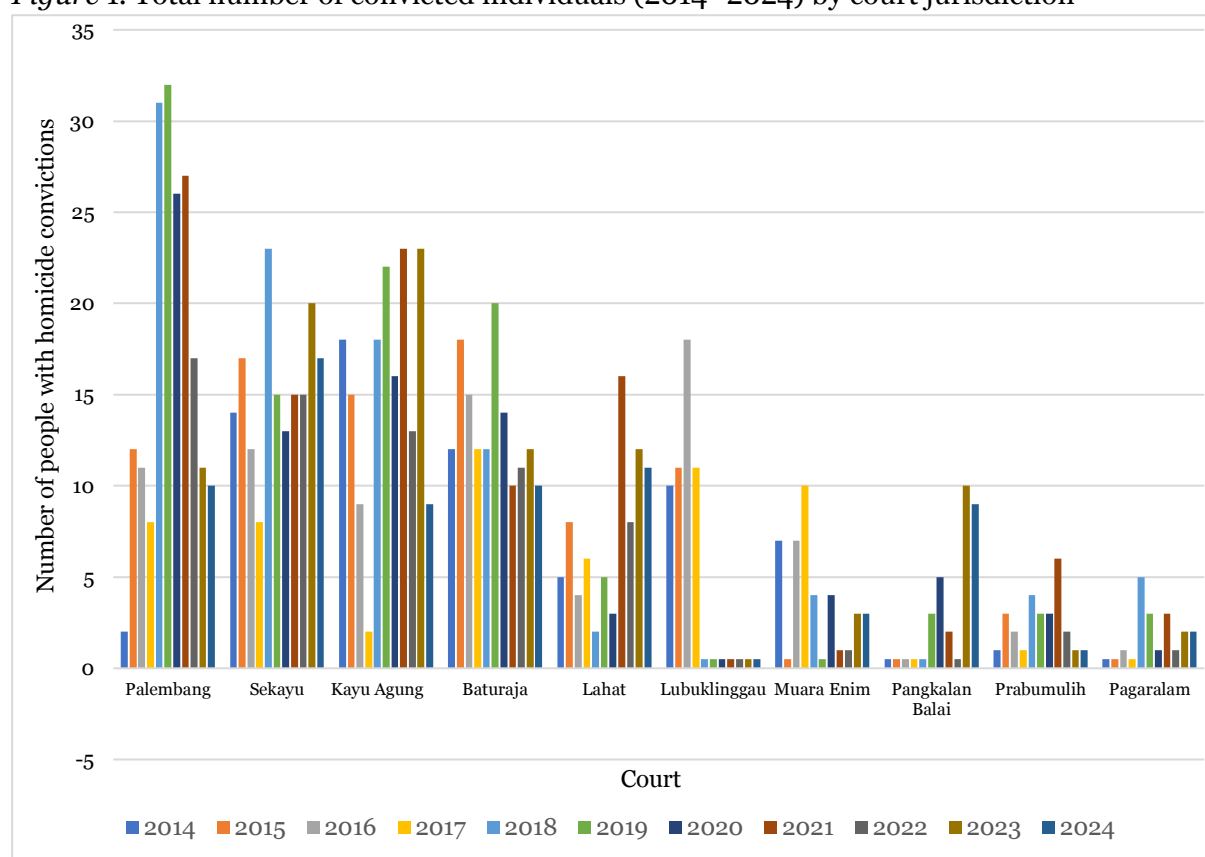
4. Results

4.1 Jurisdictional Concentration and Temporal Fluctuation of Homicide Convictions (2014–2024)

The court jurisdictions analyzed in this study cover varying administrative areas. While jurisdictions such as Palembang, Prabumulih, Sekayu, Pangkalan Balai, and Pagar Alam correspond to single city/regency, others encompass multiple regencies and cities. For example, the jurisdiction of Kayu Agung covers Ogan Komering Ilir and Ogan Ilir, while Baturaja includes Ogan Komering Ulu (OKU), OKU Selatan, and OKU Timur. Consequently, the reported figures reflect aggregated jurisdictional patterns rather than single-regency conditions.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of convicted individuals in homicide-related cases across court jurisdictions in South Sumatra from 2014 to 2024. The findings demonstrate substantial regional disparities and fluctuating concentration patterns across jurisdictions throughout the observation period. Several jurisdictions consistently recorded relatively high numbers of convicted individuals over time, particularly Palembang, Sekayu, Kayu Agung, and Baturaja. Palembang became especially prominent during the later observation period, increasing sharply from eight convicted individuals in 2017 to 31 and 32 in 2018 and 2019, respectively, before remaining comparatively high through 2021. Kayu Agung and Sekayu also maintained relatively elevated figures across multiple years. Kayu Agung reached 22 and 23 convicted individuals in 2019 and 2021–2023, while Sekayu peaked at 23 in 2018 and remained above 15 in most years after 2014. Baturaja similarly showed relatively persistent concentrations, including 18 convicted individuals in 2015 and 20 in 2019.

The data further indicate notable temporal variation across jurisdictions rather than a uniform provincial trend. Lubuklinggau recorded comparatively high figures during the earlier observation period, reaching 18 convicted individuals in 2016, before declining substantially after 2017. In contrast, Pangkalan Balai exhibited the opposite pattern, recording no convicted individuals during most of the early years before increasing to 10 and 9 convicted individuals in 2023 and 2024, respectively.

Figure 1. Total number of convicted individuals (2014–2024) by court jurisdiction

Overall, the findings indicate that homicide-related convictions in South Sumatra were unevenly distributed across jurisdictions throughout the observation period. A limited number of jurisdictions consistently accounted for relatively large numbers of convicted individuals, while others exhibited lower or more fluctuating patterns over time.

4.2 Reported and Cleared Homicide Cases Across Regencies and Cities (2022–24)

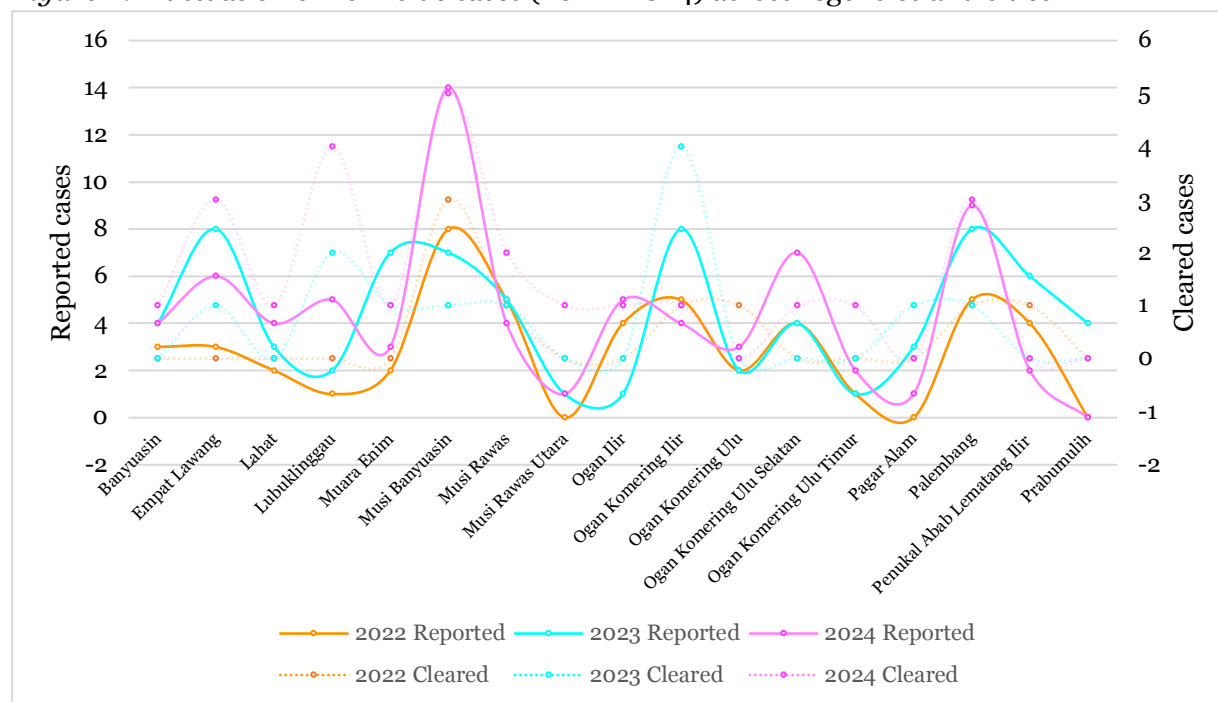
Figure 2 presents the distribution of reported and cleared homicide cases across South Sumatra during 2022–2024. The findings reveal substantial variation in both homicide incidence and case clearance outcomes across regencies and cities.

Several regions consistently recorded relatively high numbers of reported homicide cases. Musi Banyuasin recorded the highest concentration during the observation period, rising from 8 reported cases in 2022 to 14 in 2024. Palembang and Ogan Komering Ilir also recorded comparatively elevated figures, with Palembang increasing from 5 cases in 2022 to 9 cases in 2024, while Ogan Komering Ilir reached 8 reported cases in 2023. Empat Lawang and Ogan Komering Ulu Selatan similarly demonstrated noticeable increases during the later observation period.

The data further indicate considerable fluctuation across several regions rather than a uniform provincial pattern. Muara Enim increased sharply from 2 reported cases in 2022 to 7 in 2023 before declining to 3 in 2024. Lubuklinggau showed a gradual increase from 1 reported case in

2022 to 5 cases in 2024. In contrast, several regions, such as Musi Rawas and Penukal Abab Lematang Ilir, recorded relatively stable or declining trends during the same period.

Figure 2. Fluctuation of homicide cases (2022–2024) across regencies and cities



Substantial disparities were also observed between reported and cleared homicide cases across regencies and cities. While some regions demonstrated relatively stronger clearance outcomes, others showed persistent gaps between reported and resolved cases. Lubuklinggau recorded one of the most notable improvements in clearance performance, increasing from no cleared cases in 2022 to 4 cleared cases in 2024. Musi Banyuasin similarly recorded comparatively higher clearance figures than several other regions, reaching 5 cleared cases in 2024 despite also having the highest number of reported cases.

Conversely, several regions consistently recorded lower clearance figures relative to reported homicide cases. Palembang recorded 5, 8, and 9 reported cases between 2022 and 2024, respectively, while cleared cases remained lower at 1, 1, and 3, respectively. Similar disparities were observed in Banyuasin, Ogan Ilir, and Prabumulih, where corresponding clearance outcomes did not consistently accompany reported homicide cases.

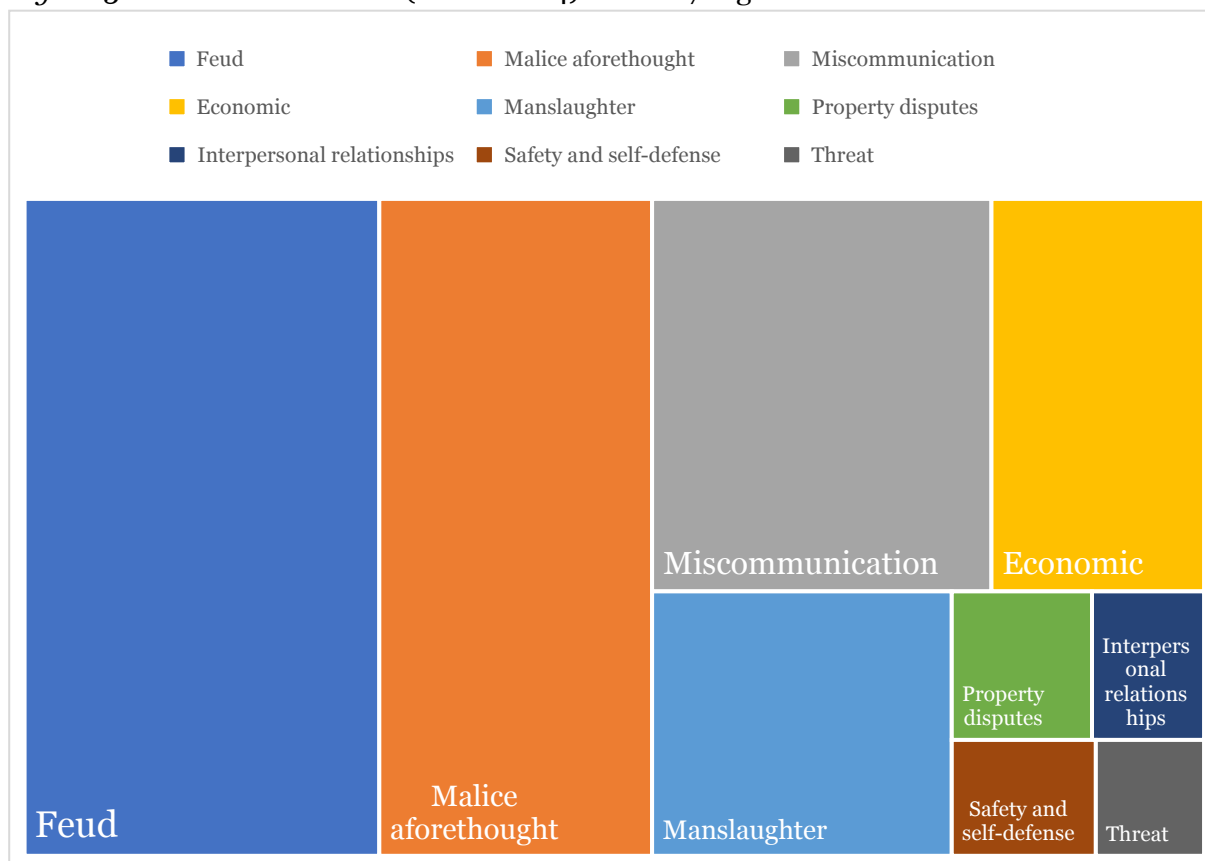
Interview participants reported several challenges encountered during homicide investigations, including witness reluctance, delayed reporting, remote crime scenes, evidence deterioration, and logistical constraints. Participants also noted difficulties associated with transportation, communication, and access to remote locations. These observations provide additional contextual information regarding homicide investigations across different parts of South Sumatra.

Overall, the findings indicate substantial variation in both homicide incidence and case clearance outcomes across regencies and cities during the observation period. While some jurisdictions recorded relatively higher numbers of cleared cases, others exhibited persistent gaps between reported and cleared homicide cases.

4.3 Motives of Homicide Across South Sumatra

Feud was identified as the most frequent motive, accounting for 56 recorded cases, followed by malice aforethought (43) and miscommunication (32). Economic motives ranked fourth with 20 cases, while manslaughter accounted for 19 cases. Other motives, including property disputes, interpersonal relationships, self-defense, and threats, were recorded in substantially smaller numbers. Figure 3 presents the distribution of recorded homicide motives during the study period.

Figure 3. Motives of homicide (2022–2024) across 17 regencies and cities in South Sumatra



Feud, malice aforethought, and miscommunication accounted for a larger number of recorded cases than economic motives during the observation period. Together, these three categories represented the most frequently recorded homicide motives across the province.

Interview participants similarly identified accumulated resentment, perceived disrespect, jealousy, family disputes, personal rivalries, and unresolved interpersonal grievances as recurring circumstances preceding homicide incidents. Law enforcement personnel, mediation actors, religious leaders, and victim-family representatives frequently described conflicts that developed over extended periods before culminating in lethal violence. Participants also noted that economic hardship, debt, gambling, and resource-related disputes were present in some cases, although these factors were often reported alongside broader interpersonal conflicts.

The findings also indicate that homicide motives may overlap within individual incidents. Participants frequently described cases involving multiple contributing circumstances, including

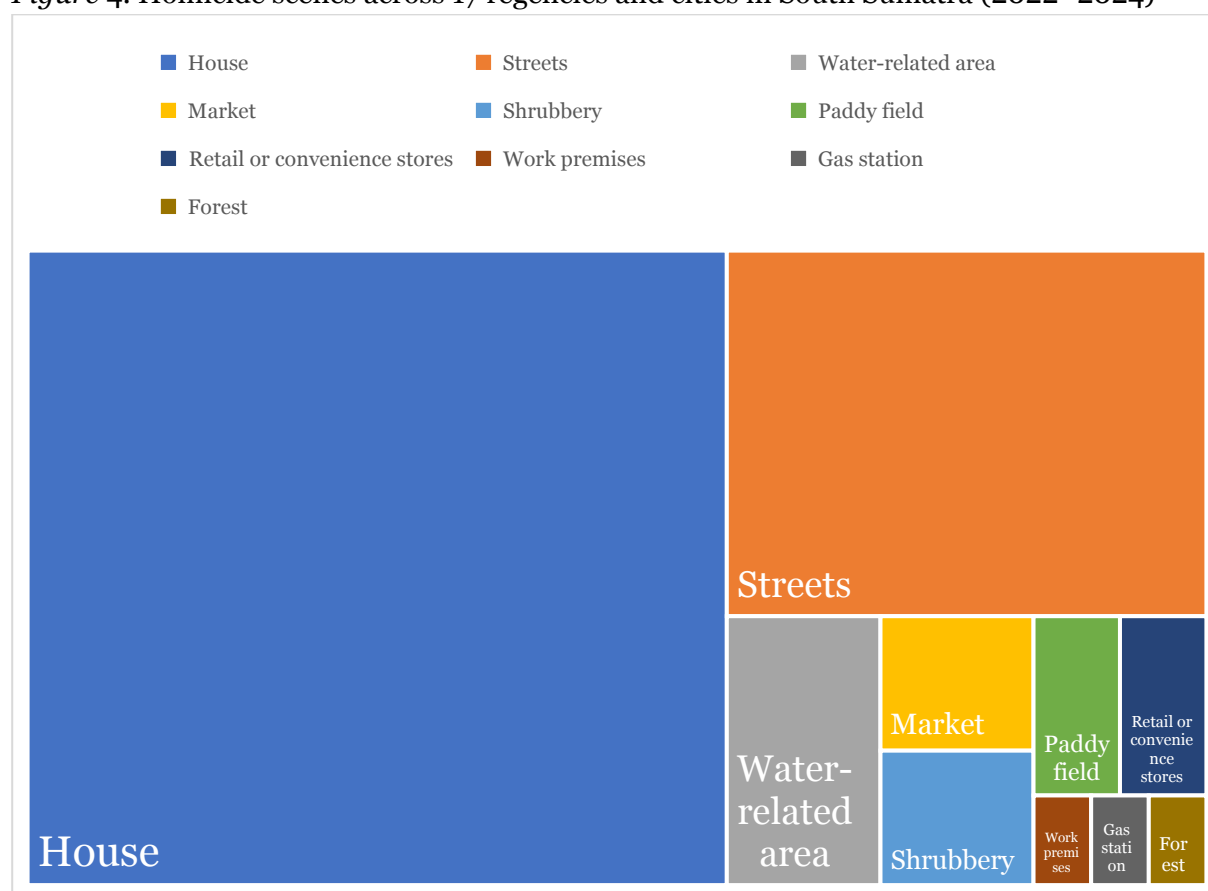
family conflict, economic pressure, jealousy, revenge, and long-standing disputes. Consequently, motive classifications should be interpreted as administrative categories used to summarize complex events rather than as exhaustive representations of all factors associated with a homicide incident.

Overall, the findings indicate that feud, malice aforethought, and miscommunication were the most frequently recorded homicide motives across South Sumatra during the observation period, while economic motives and other categories were reported less frequently.

4.4 Homicide Scenes and Situational Characteristics

Houses were identified as the most common homicide scene, accounting for 86 recorded cases, followed by streets with 34 cases. Other locations, including water-related areas, markets, shrubbery, paddy fields, retail stores, work premises, gas stations, and forests, were recorded in substantially smaller numbers. Figure 4 presents the distribution of homicide scenes across the study area.

Figure 4. Homicide scenes across 17 regencies and cities in South Sumatra (2022–2024)



Interview evidence from law enforcement personnel provided additional context regarding the recorded homicide scenes. Investigators reported that many homicide cases involved family members, neighbors, friends, intimate partners, or other individuals who were already ac-

quainted prior to the incident. Participants frequently described domestic disputes, family conflicts, neighborhood disagreements, and long-standing interpersonal tensions among the circumstances preceding homicide events.

The findings further indicate that homicide incidents were not confined to residential settings. Streets, markets, transportation corridors, and other public locations also appeared in the dataset, although at lower frequencies than houses. Water-related areas, shrubbery, forests, paddy fields, retail stores, work premises, and gas stations collectively accounted for a relatively small proportion of recorded homicide scenes.

Interview participants also identified plantation zones, riverine settlements, remote villages, and transportation corridors as locations where homicide incidents had occurred. Law enforcement personnel noted that investigations in these environments often faced logistical challenges due to distance, accessibility, and response times.

Overall, homicide incidents in South Sumatra were recorded across a variety of private and public settings, with houses and streets accounting for the largest share of homicide scenes during the observation period.

5. Discussion

5.1 Persistent Regional Concentration and Structural Vulnerability

The jurisdictional data indicate that homicide in South Sumatra is unevenly distributed rather than spatially diffuse. Conviction figures across the 2014–2024 period consistently clustered within a limited number of jurisdictions, particularly Palembang, the Sekayu jurisdiction covering Musi Banyuasin, and the Kayu Agung jurisdiction encompassing Ogan Komering Ilir and Ogan Ilir, while several other jurisdictions recorded comparatively lower and more episodic figures. The operational police data from 2022–2024 reveal comparable regional disparities, indicating that homicide is unevenly distributed across multiple administrative levels. Such an uneven spatial distribution is consistent with the crime concentration perspective, which emphasizes that crime tends to cluster within particular geographic units rather than being distributed evenly across space (Weisburd, 2015).

At the same time, the concentration observed in South Sumatra cannot be reduced to a single socioeconomic explanation. The jurisdictions carrying relatively high homicide burdens differ substantially in their demographic, economic, and territorial characteristics. Palembang functions as the province's primary urban and administrative center, whereas Musi Banyuasin is shaped more strongly by extractive industries, plantation activity, and extensive interregional transportation networks. Despite these differences, the jurisdictions share several characteristics that complicate the maintenance of social regulation across space, including relatively large and mobile populations, extensive territorial coverage, and uneven institutional reach (Jati, 2023; Reno & Yudistira, 2024). The recurrence of homicide within jurisdictions characterized by these conditions suggests that broader territorial processes may be more important than any single demographic or economic characteristic in shaping the observed concentration pattern.

Interview evidence provides contextual insight into territorial conditions that participants associated with homicide occurrence. Law enforcement personnel and local mediation actors re-

peatedly identified plantation districts, mining areas, riverine settlements, and mobility corridors as environments where interpersonal conflicts were more likely to escalate into serious violence. Participants frequently associated these areas with land disputes, transient populations, limited capacity for conflict resolution, and uneven institutional accessibility. One homicide investigator summarized these territorial challenges by suggesting that homicide vulnerability tends to be highest where “economic pressure, social instability, physical isolation, and weak law enforcement response exist together” (LE1). A second investigator similarly emphasized that homicide risks were particularly pronounced in “areas with palm oil plantations and mining compared to more stable agricultural zones” (LE2). Although these accounts do not establish causal relationships, they provide contextual insight into the territorial conditions repeatedly associated with homicide occurrence across jurisdictions.

Several of the territorial characteristics identified in both the administrative records and stakeholder accounts correspond closely to conditions associated with social disorganization. Population mobility, social heterogeneity, and weakened community integration can undermine the informal social networks through which communities regulate behavior and manage conflict (Sampson & Groves, 1989; Shaw & McKay, 1942). Plantation districts, mining areas, mobility corridors, and geographically dispersed settlements, therefore, represent more than mere geographical descriptors; they are environments in which maintaining consistent informal social regulation may become increasingly challenging due to population movement, social fragmentation, and uneven community integration.

A complementary interpretation is provided by Routine Activity Theory. Crime opportunities emerge when motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of effective guardianship converge in time and space (Cohen & Felson, 1979). The territorial conditions identified in South Sumatra, including extensive mobility networks, geographically dispersed settlements, and uneven institutional accessibility, may increase the frequency of such convergence by creating environments in which social interaction is more difficult to monitor consistently. In this respect, the concentration of homicide appears linked not only to the characteristics of particular jurisdictions but also to the organization of everyday activities and social interactions across territorial space (Nurdiansyah et al., 2023).

Taken together, the evidence indicates that homicide concentration in South Sumatra reflects identifiable territorial patterns rather than random variation across jurisdictions. The findings suggest that vulnerability to lethal violence is shaped by broader structural conditions operating across territorial environments rather than by any single demographic or economic characteristic. Future research incorporating sub-jurisdictional or neighborhood-level data would allow more precise examination of the local mechanisms underlying these spatial patterns.

5.2 Interpersonal Retaliation and Conflict Escalation

The motive structure in South Sumatra is dominated by interpersonal conflict-related categories, particularly feud, malice aforethought, and miscommunication, which collectively exceed economic motives. While strain perspectives emphasize the role of socioeconomic pressure, blocked opportunities, and frustration in generating criminal behavior (Merton, 1938), the pattern observed in South Sumatra suggests that homicide is more frequently associated with grievance, retaliation, and escalating interpersonal conflict than with purely instrumental economic objectives (Dastjerdehei et al., 2020; Wallace et al., 2019; Zakaria et al., 2022).

The dominance of feud, malice aforethought, and miscommunication indicates that many homicide incidents emerge through ongoing social interaction and accumulated tension rather than through spontaneous or opportunistic violence. Such patterns resemble forms of self-help in which perceived injustice, disrespect, or unresolved grievances are addressed directly by the involved parties when formal or informal mechanisms of dispute resolution are viewed as ineffective, inaccessible, or insufficient (Bergsdóttir et al., 2022; Black, 1983). In this context, homicide appears less as an isolated criminal act and more as the culmination of unresolved interpersonal conflict.

Interview evidence strongly reinforces this interpretation. Law enforcement personnel consistently described homicide as the endpoint of long-standing interpersonal tensions rather than isolated disputes. As one homicide investigator explained, “Most killings do not start from one single argument. They are the result of long-term built-up anger, humiliation, or perceived disrespect” (LE3). Investigators further reported that many perpetrators described accumulated resentment, prolonged emotional pressure, and unresolved grievances during interrogation (LE1–LE5). Similar themes emerged from victim-family interviews, where participants described conflicts that had developed over extended periods before escalating into violence, including both retaliation-related and domestic conflict cases (VF1–VF2). Across stakeholder groups, homicide was commonly portrayed as the culmination of a conflict process rather than a single isolated event.

The sequence implied by miscommunication, malice aforethought, and feud closely resembles an interactional process in which provocation, confrontation, failed de-escalation, and retaliation progressively transform interpersonal disputes into lethal encounters (Luckenbill, 1977). Miscommunication may represent the initial trigger, malice aforethought reflects the development of intentional retaliation, and feud captures the broader relational context within which tensions become prolonged and recurrent. Viewed in this way, many homicide incidents appear to emerge through a process of conflict escalation rather than from a single precipitating event (Wigati & Kusumaningsih, 2020).

The interviews further highlighted the importance of addressing gaps in conflict resolution in this escalation process. Mediation actors and religious leaders reported that disputes involving family relationships, land ownership, debt, jealousy, gambling, and personal honor frequently persist for extended periods before formal intervention occurs (MA1–MA3; RL1–RL3). Participants emphasized that many conflicts are initially managed through informal family or community mechanisms but may intensify when reconciliation efforts fail, are delayed, or are rejected by the parties involved. As one community religious leader explained, “Many disputes could be resolved peacefully if respected community members became involved earlier, before anger and resentment accumulate” (RL2). Participants further noted that mediation efforts are often initiated only after positions have hardened, reducing the likelihood of reconciliation and increasing the risk of retaliatory behavior (MA1–MA3; RL1–RL3). In several accounts, homicide occurred only after a prolonged period of unresolved tension, indicating that lethal violence often represents the final stage of a deteriorating conflict trajectory rather than an immediate reaction to a single incident.

The recurrence of prolonged disputes, failed mediation, and retaliatory behavior underscores the importance of third-party intervention in interrupting escalation trajectories before violence occurs (Cooney, 1998). Where conflict resolution mechanisms lack authority, legitimacy, or timely involvement, grievances may accumulate and increasingly be managed directly by the parties involved. The persistence of conflict resolution gaps across the interviews suggests

that the breakdown of effective mediation represents an important dimension of homicide escalation in South Sumatra.

The broader implication is that homicide prevention strategies focused exclusively on economic deprivation may be insufficient to address the dominant motive structure identified in this study. While economic pressure may still contribute indirectly to stress and social tension, the evidence indicates that many homicide incidents develop through prolonged interpersonal conflict, accumulated grievances, and failed conflict resolution. Consequently, conflict mediation, interpersonal dispute resolution, and early de-escalation mechanisms may represent equally important components of violence prevention within local communities.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative evidence indicate that interpersonal conflict escalation is a central feature of homicide patterns in South Sumatra. Rather than emerging primarily from isolated economic motivations or opportunistic encounters (Safitri & Rahmawati, 2025), many homicide incidents develop through prolonged social interaction, unresolved grievances, escalating retaliation, and the failure of timely conflict resolution within existing social relationships.

5.3 Situational Accessibility and Familiar Environments

The distribution of scenes reinforces the view that homicide in South Sumatra is fundamentally relational rather than anonymous. The predominance of houses and neighborhood spaces suggests that lethal violence most often emerges within familiar environments where social interaction is routine and interpersonal tensions can accumulate over time. Such settings provide frequent opportunities for contact between motivated offenders and suitable targets under conditions where guardianship may be limited, making situational accessibility and interpersonal proximity central to understanding where homicide incidents occur (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

Interview evidence strongly supports this interpretation. Law enforcement personnel consistently reported that most homicide incidents involved individuals who already knew one another, including family members, spouses, neighbors, friends, and acquaintances (LE1–LE5). As one homicide investigator observed, “The typical homicide scene in South Sumatra is not a dark alley with an unknown robber. It is more often inside a house at night or within the immediate neighborhood” (LE4). Investigators further noted that many disputes developed gradually through repeated interaction within homes and communities, allowing tensions to accumulate before escalating into violence (LE1–LE5). Similar accounts emerged from victim-family representatives. The retaliation-related case involved a long-standing dispute between individuals who were already acquainted (VF1), while the domestic homicide case developed within an existing family relationship characterized by prolonged interpersonal tension (VF2). Both accounts highlighted the importance of familiarity and repeated social interaction in the events leading up to the homicide.

The predominance of houses is particularly noteworthy because it closely mirrors the motive structure identified in the previous section. Feud, malice aforethought, and miscommunication generally emerge within ongoing social relationships rather than encounters between strangers. Residential settings provide both the opportunity for repeated interaction and the privacy within which interpersonal tensions may intensify without immediate intervention.

Individuals are most likely to encounter conflict within the environments they routinely inhabit and navigate, making homes and surrounding neighborhood spaces especially important settings for the development and escalation of interpersonal disputes (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1993).

The prominence of streets as the second-most-common homicide scene adds a complementary situational dimension. In many parts of South Sumatra, streets function not only as transportation routes but also as extensions of neighborhood and community life. As a result, homicides occurring on the streets do not necessarily represent anonymous public violence but may instead reflect interpersonal conflicts unfolding within familiar social environments (Parker, 2023; Zanchi et al., 2021). The distinction between private and public space is therefore less analytically important than the underlying social relationships connecting the individuals involved.

The findings also indicate that highly concealed or geographically isolated environments accounted for a comparatively small proportion of recorded homicide scenes. Nevertheless, law enforcement personnel emphasized that homicide incidents occurring in remote plantation areas and riverine settlements often present distinctive operational challenges (LE1–LE5). Participants reported that delayed reporting, difficult access routes, and limited transportation infrastructure can complicate evidence preservation, scene security, and subsequent investigation. Although these environments account for relatively few recorded incidents, their geographical characteristics may increase the complexity of post-incident investigation and case resolution.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative evidence indicate that homicide in South Sumatra is closely associated with familiar environments where social relationships, routine interaction, and situational accessibility converge. The predominance of houses and neighborhood spaces, combined with the dominance of interpersonal motives, suggests that many homicide incidents emerge within existing social relationships rather than through encounters between strangers. In this respect, the situational context of homicide closely mirrors the relational dynamics identified in the motive analysis.

Because many incidents develop within ongoing interpersonal relationships, prevention strategies focused solely on surveillance or formal enforcement may be insufficient. Community-based mediation, early conflict intervention, and mechanisms to interrupt conflict escalation within local social environments may therefore represent important complementary approaches for reducing violence risk.

5.4 Institutional Variation and Clearance Disparities

The disparities between reported and cleared homicide cases across South Sumatra's regencies and cities constitute one of the study's most operationally significant findings. The provincial data do not reflect a uniform institutional pattern. Some jurisdictions demonstrated relatively consistent clearance outcomes, while others exhibited persistent gaps between reported and resolved cases across the observation period.

As the provincial capital, Palembang would generally be expected to possess greater institutional resources than many other jurisdictions. However, the city recorded only 1, 1, and 3 cleared homicide cases against 5, 8, and 9 reported cases, respectively, between 2022 and 2024. The persistence of this gap suggests that institutional resources alone do not necessarily

translate into higher investigative effectiveness. Homicide clearance is influenced by factors extending beyond formal organizational capacity, including witness availability, physical evidence, and the nature of offender-victim relationships (Uchida & Swatt, 2026; Wellford & Cronin, 1999). Urban environments characterized by population mobility, social anonymity, and complex social networks may simultaneously complicate several of these investigative conditions.

Interview evidence provides additional insight into the practical challenges surrounding homicide investigations. Law enforcement personnel consistently identified witness reluctance, delayed reporting, remote crime scenes, evidence degradation, and logistical constraints as recurring obstacles to case resolution (LE1–LE5). One investigator described witness cooperation as a particularly significant challenge, noting that “everyone knows the killer, but no one wants to be the one who speaks” (LE5). This observation highlights how fear of retaliation, social pressures, and local community dynamics may constrain the flow of information necessary for successful investigations.

Musi Banyuasin presents a contrasting pattern. Although the regency recorded the highest number of reported homicide cases during the observation period, its clearance figures remained comparatively stronger than those observed in several other jurisdictions. One possible explanation is that homicide incidents involving ongoing social relationships or identifiable interpersonal disputes provide investigators with clearer suspect pathways and stronger community-level informational networks. Cases involving family members, acquaintances, neighbors, or known rivals are often resolved more readily than stranger-to-stranger incidents because the social connections linking victims and offenders provide more accessible investigative leads (Nicholls et al., 2025; Puckett & Lundman, 2003).

Lubuklinggau adds further complexity to the institutional picture. The jurisdiction recorded no cleared cases in 2022 but improved substantially by 2024. This trajectory suggests that investigative outcomes may shift over time because of changes in case composition, operational practices, resource allocation, or local institutional adaptation. Conversely, regions such as Banyuasin, Ogan Ilir, and Prabumulih demonstrated more persistent disparities between reported and cleared cases throughout the observation period.

The interviews further indicate that territorial conditions influence investigative effectiveness beyond formal institutional capacity. Participants frequently noted that plantation zones, riverine settlements, and geographically isolated communities pose additional challenges due to delayed response times, transportation difficulties, limited surveillance infrastructure, and restricted access to forensic resources (LE1–LE5). Investigators reported that evidence often deteriorates rapidly because of weather conditions, delayed discovery, and difficulties in securing remote crime scenes (LE1–LE5). As one investigator explained, homicide cases occurring in isolated locations are particularly challenging because “the body is only found days later” (LE2), reducing opportunities for evidence preservation and timely investigative intervention. Several investigators also emphasized that informal pressures from influential local actors and attempts to resolve serious conflicts outside formal legal processes may occasionally complicate investigations (LE1–LE5).

Taken together, the evidence suggests that clearance disparities in South Sumatra are shaped by the interaction of multiple contextual conditions rather than a single institutional factor. Territorial scale, population mobility, case characteristics, offender-victim relationships, witness cooperation, and local social dynamics all appear relevant to investigative outcomes across jurisdictions. Notably, many of these factors overlap with the territorial vulnerabilities,

interpersonal relationships, and situational conditions identified in the preceding sections, suggesting that the conditions associated with homicide occurrence may also influence the capacity to investigate and resolve homicide cases.

The broader implication is that homicide clearance in South Sumatra may require differentiated, territorially sensitive approaches rather than uniform, province-wide assumptions about investigative conditions. Aggregate provincial statistics risk obscuring the substantial jurisdictional variation visible within the regional data.

5.5 Integrated Synthesis

Taken together, the four themes identified in this study are best understood as interconnected components of a broader process shaping lethal violence in South Sumatra. Territorial concentration, interpersonal conflict, situational accessibility, and institutional variation emerge not as isolated dimensions of homicide but as mutually reinforcing features of the same social and structural environment.

The concentration of homicide within a limited number of jurisdictions provides the broader context within which conflict escalation occurs. Jurisdictions characterized by extensive territorial coverage, high population mobility, resource-based economic activity, and uneven institutional accessibility face greater challenges in sustaining informal social regulation and effective conflict resolution. Interview participants repeatedly identified plantation districts, mining areas, riverine settlements, and mobility corridors as environments where interpersonal disputes are more likely to persist and intensify. These territorial conditions create settings in which grievances, tensions, and conflicts become increasingly difficult to contain before they escalate.

Within these environments, homicide frequently develops through a process of interpersonal conflict escalation rather than through purely instrumental or economic motivations. The dominance of feud, malice aforethought, and miscommunication as recorded motives, together with interview accounts emphasizing accumulated resentment, humiliation, jealousy, debt disputes, family tensions, and failed mediation, indicates that many homicide incidents emerge through prolonged social interaction. Violence therefore represents not merely an isolated criminal act but the endpoint of an unresolved conflict trajectory.

These conflict processes most commonly unfold within familiar social environments. The predominance of houses and neighborhood spaces as homicide scenes suggests that lethal violence frequently occurs where individuals interact routinely and where tensions accumulate through repeated contact. The motive structure and scene distribution are therefore closely connected. Interpersonal grievances develop within ongoing social relationships, and those same relationships provide the situational settings in which violence ultimately occurs.

The territorial and relational conditions associated with homicide occurrence also shape institutional outcomes. Many of the jurisdictions exhibiting persistent clearance disparities are characterized by conditions repeatedly identified by interview participants as challenging for investigation, including geographical isolation, population mobility, delayed reporting, witness reluctance, and limited access to forensic resources. Consequently, the same contextual conditions that contribute to conflict escalation may also complicate efforts to investigate and resolve homicide cases once they occur.

Viewed collectively, these patterns suggest that homicide in South Sumatra cannot be adequately understood through a single explanatory lens. Territorial conditions influence the strength of informal social regulation and conflict management processes (Sampson & Groves, 1989; Shaw & McKay, 1942). Everyday routines and familiar environments shape where interpersonal tensions are most likely to culminate in violence (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1993; Cohen & Felson, 1979). Unresolved grievances may develop into retaliatory behavior when disputes are managed directly by the involved parties rather than through effective mediation (Black, 1983; Cooney, 1998), while interpersonal confrontations can escalate through sequential interaction processes that transform ordinary disputes into lethal encounters (Luckenbill, 1977).

Taken together, the evidence portrays homicide in South Sumatra as a relational, territorially patterned, and institutionally uneven phenomenon. Lethal violence emerges not from a single cause but from the interaction of structural vulnerability, interpersonal conflict, situational opportunity, and institutional response, each shaping and reinforcing the others within the broader social environment.

6. Conclusion

This study provides a regional examination of homicide patterns in South Sumatra using administrative criminal justice data and stakeholder interviews. The evidence indicates that homicide in the province is neither randomly distributed nor reducible to a single explanatory factor. Instead, lethal violence emerges through the interaction of territorial concentration, interpersonal conflict dynamics, situational accessibility, and institutional variation across jurisdictions.

Several jurisdictions consistently exhibited higher homicide concentration over time, particularly Palembang, Musi Banyuasin, and the Kayu Agung jurisdiction. At the same time, substantial disparities emerged between reported and cleared homicide cases across regencies and cities, indicating uneven investigative outcomes and territorial challenges. The motive analysis revealed that feud, malice aforethought, and miscommunication were substantially more prominent than economic motives, suggesting that interpersonal retaliation and unresolved conflict play a central role in recorded homicide cases across South Sumatra. This relational character of homicide is further reflected in the predominance of houses, streets, and other familiar environments as homicide scenes, indicating that lethal violence frequently develops within settings characterized by routine social interaction and interpersonal proximity. Qualitative evidence from investigators, mediation actors, legal practitioners, journalists, religious leaders, and victim-family representatives reinforced these patterns, particularly the importance of accumulated grievances, failed conflict resolution, and community-level dynamics in shaping homicide events.

The study contributes to criminological research by demonstrating how territorial conditions, social relationships, situational contexts, and institutional processes intersect in shaping homicide patterns within a territorially diverse provincial setting. The findings suggest that homicide is best understood as a multidimensional phenomenon in which structural vulnerability, interpersonal conflict, everyday social interaction, and institutional capacity operate simultaneously rather than as competing explanations. In doing so, the study illustrates the value of

integrating insights from Social Disorganization Theory, Routine Activity Theory, Black's sociology of self-help, Cooney's perspective on third-party intervention, and interactional approaches to conflict escalation when interpreting homicide patterns in complex regional contexts.

Several limitations should nevertheless be acknowledged. The study relies primarily on administrative and institutional data, which are subject to reporting limitations and classification constraints. The aggregation of multiple regencies within court jurisdictions limits finer spatial interpretation, while the absence of case-level demographic and relational information restricts more detailed analysis of victim-offender dynamics. Although qualitative interviews provided important contextual insights, the number of participants was limited and did not represent all stakeholder groups across South Sumatra. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as a regional analytical account rather than a definitive causal explanation of homicide dynamics.

Future research would benefit from integrating larger-scale qualitative inquiry, neighborhood-level geographic analysis, and detailed victim-offender relationship data to examine more directly how interpersonal disputes escalate into lethal violence across different territorial settings. Such approaches would allow more precise examination of the mechanisms linking territorial conditions, conflict escalation, situational environments, and investigative outcomes, both within South Sumatra and in comparable regional contexts.

Overall, the findings portray homicide in South Sumatra as a relational, territorially patterned, and institutionally uneven phenomenon. Rather than emerging primarily from economic deprivation or isolated criminal intent, many homicide incidents appear rooted in unresolved interpersonal conflict occurring within familiar social environments and shaped by broader territorial and institutional conditions. Effective prevention strategies are therefore unlikely to emerge from single-sector interventions alone. Reducing homicide may require coordinated approaches that combine conflict mediation, community-based prevention, territorial risk management, and improvements in investigative capacity, particularly within jurisdictions experiencing persistent homicide concentration and clearance disparities.

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