

Original Article

An Audit of Homicidal Deaths in Interior of Sindh: A Multicentre Experience.

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ABSTRACT

Objectives:

1. To know frequency of homicidal deaths in Shaheed Benazirabad & Sukkur
2. To observe the gender and age group mostly involved
3. To ascertain the most commonly weapon used, & parts of body involved
4. To determine seasonal trend if any occurring such cases.

Study Design:

 Cross sectional study

Place & Duration: The study was conducted in the departments of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, PUMHSW, Nawabshah, Shaheed Benazirabad & GMMMC Sukkur, from 1st January 2008 to 31st December 2010.

Material & Methods: This study is a retrospective research examining the 120 cases of medicolegal autopsies. Among these 90 cases determined to be homicidal were taken into the scope of this study. The male & female ratio was 3:1. The information was gathered from police inquest and other record. The cases were grouped on the basis of age, sex and causative agent and part of body involved having fatal injuries and the season in which the incidence took place. The data were recorded on a proforma, the results were tabulated and statistically analyzed.

Result: Among 120 medicolegal autopsies 90 (75%) were determined to be homicidal during the study period. The majority of victims of homicide (44.4%) were found to be in third decade of age followed by fourth, fifth and second decade (22.2%, 11.1% and 7.8%) respectively. The majority of homicides were committed with firearms including 30 cases in males and 10 cases in females, followed by sharp weapon and blunt means 16 & 11 cases respectively in males. The strangulation was noted in 4 cases in female after firearm weapon. The maximum number of cases was found to be in summer season with the involvement of chest and head as primary target organs.

Keywords: Homicide, Firearm, Strangulation, Sharp & Blunt weapons.

INTRODUCTION

Homicide is an expression of aggression in its most extreme form and defined as killing of one human being by another human being¹. It is one of the three unnatural manners of deaths, other two being suicidal and accidental^{2,3}. There is a great variation in the frequency of homicide in the world ranging from more or less 1 per 100.000 populations in Canada, Germany, Egypt, Mexico and Columbia^{4,5}. In USA homicide rate have varied from 1.1/100.000 in 1903 to peak of 10.7 per 100.000 in 1980, declining to 6.1/100.000 in 2004^{6,7}. Homicide reported to be commoner in the younger age group. Males are predominant victims. The most common regions of body involved in homicidal injuries are

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head and chest while maximum incidents of homicide occurred in summer³.

MATERIAL & METHODS A total of 120 medico legal autopsies conducted in the departments of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, PUMHSW, Nawabshah, Shaheed Benazirabad and GMMMC Sukkur, during 1st January 2008 to 31st December 2010. All of these were analyzed and 90 homicidal cases were selected for the study. The information was gathered from police inquest and other record. The cases labeled as homicide on the bases of circumstances of deaths and autopsy finding were included in the study while all suicidal / accidental deaths were excluded from the study. They were grouped on the basis of age, sex and causative agent and part of body involved having fatal injuries and the season in which the incident took place. The data were recorded on a Proforma, the results were tabulated and statistically analyzed.

TABLE 1
Distribution of Age & Sex (n=90)

Age (years)	Male	Female	Total
Upto 9	04	01	05
10-19	05	02	07
20-29	30	10	40
30-39	15	05	20
40-49	07	03	10
50-59	04	01	05
60 and above	03	00	03
Total	68	22	90
with percentage	(75.04%)	(24.95%)	(100%)

TABLE 2
Causative agent weapon in relation to age groups in male

Causative Agent/Weapon	Age groups in years						Total
	upto 9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	
Firearm	00	03	05	03	04	02	17
Sharp	02	01	03	02	02	01	11
Blunt	02	01	00	00	01	00	04
Strangulation	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
Burns	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
Total	04	05	08	05	07	03	32

RESULT

Among 120 medicolegal autopsies 90 (75%) were determined to be homicidal during the years 2008 to 2010. The majority of victims of homicide (44.4%) were found in third decade of age followed by fourth, fifth and second decade (22.2%, 11.1 %, & 7.8 %) respectively (Table 1).

The majority of male homicides were committed with firearms (44.1%) followed by sharp weapon and blunt means (23.5% & 16.2%) respectively (Table 2). The strangulation was the second leading (18.2%) causative agent of homicide in female after firearm weapon (45.5%) and third decade of life was most vulnerable age group while there was no case of homicide were predominantly in the seventh decade of life. Among the regions of body chest is predominantly involved followed by head and abdomen. The weapon used in majority of cases was firearm followed by sharp weapon (Table 4), majority of homicidal deaths occurred in the months of June and July (Table 5).

DISCUSSION

Homicidal is of interest not only because of its severity but also because of its fairly reliable barometer of all violent crime⁸. Keeping this in mind besides that knowledge of the magnitude and dimensions of problem will help to solve minimize or eradicate the period of present study 75% deaths were diagnosed as case of homicide after medicolegal autopsy examination, this is a lower percentage than reported in Faisalabad (79.66%)⁷ Peshawar (82.67%)⁹, Bhawalpur (80.30%)¹⁰. These figures reflect more grave law and order situation in cities other than S.B.A & Sukkur.

TABLE 3
Causative agent weapon in relation to age groups in female

Causative Agent/Weapon	Age groups in years						
	upto 9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	Total
Firearm	01	03	05	03	04	02	18
Sharp	00	01	03	02	02	01	09
Blunt	00	00	00	00	01	00	01
Strangulation	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
Burns	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
Total	01	04	08	05	07	03	28

TABLE 4
Target areas in different weapons of homicide

Area	Number of injuries in different methods of homicide			
	Firearm	Sharp weapon	Blunt means	Total
Head	10	03	05	18
Neck	05	01	00	06
Chest	30	07	01	38
Abdomen	10	05	00	15
Upper limb	03	01	01	05
Lower limb	02	00	00	02

TABLE 5
Total numbers of autopsies during the year January-December 2008

Month	Firearm	Sharp	Blunt	Strangulation	Poisoning	Burn	Total
Jan	15	00	00	00	--	--	
Feb	02	00	00	00	--	--	
March	02	00	00	00	--	--	
April	03	01	00	00	02	00	
May	05	02	01	00	04	02	
June	10	05	03	02	03	00	
July	20	05	04	02	--	--	
August	05	02	01	00			
Sept	05	01	03	00			
Oct	05	01	00	00			
Nov	02	00	00	00			
Dec	01	00	00	00			
Total	75	17	12	4	10	2	

The increasing homicidal percentage indicating that strict compliance of law should be enforced. This rate of homicide is high when compared to countries like Canada, Germany, Turkey Egypt, England and Greece but is lower than Mexico and Columbia highlighting that in countries with poor law and order control homicidal percentage are more than in civilized countries^{11,12}. The higher incidence of homicide in younger age group in the present study is consistent with the other studies^{13,14}, in the present study is consistent with the other studies and is alarming for globally increasing trend of violence in the younger. The male to female ratio was 3:1 that is almost similar to other studies in Pakistan, India, Nigeria, and USA is indicator of extrovert personalities of male both in male predominant society like Pakistan, India and USA where females are enjoying equal rights^{11,13-16}. The vast, divergent, inappropriate illegal use of firearm weapons in the society is exposed by the more homicidal deaths caused by firearm in our study. This is consistent with the other studies in Pakistan and that of the other countries and reason perhaps being that one can kill one's enemy from a distance by hiding himself without giving the opportunity of defense or counterattack to victim and easy availability of locally manufactured firearm weapons due to negligence of authorities and non-compliance of concerned law^{11,12}. This finding of increased use of firearm weapon in homicidal deaths also consistent with the studies in other countries where there is high level of possession of firearm weapon in contradiction to countries where there is low level of firearm possession¹⁷⁻¹⁹. In another studies in Nigeria sharp edge weapon was reported to be leading causative agent in homicidal death¹³. In present study chest is the leading target organ in homicide victims followed by head. Other has reported head as the primary target organ in their studies^{20,21}. This finding explained the fatality firearm weapons on the vital organs. Peak incidence of homicidal deaths have been recorded in summer season (June, July) that is also reported by other authors²². This is perhaps due to the low level of tolerance in exhausting heat and humidity particularly in the society where basic rights of people are succumbed and low socioeconomic

situation is prevailing evoking deprivation and anger augmented by increased contact time among people due to longer day time of summer. Other study reported same incidence of homicide in both summer and winter and more occurrence of cases in night²³.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

The present study depicts that incidence of homicide is high especially in summer season particularly among younger age group with male predominance involving chest and head as primary target areas.

So more elaborated studies comprising of five to ten years is suggested analyzing etiology of high incidence of homicide with urban and rural distribution.

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