

Socio-demographic Profile of Homicidal Deaths of 3005 Post-Mortem Cases

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Abstract

Introduction: Homicide is a legal term for any killing of a human being as a result of the conduct of another. There has been a global increase in homicide and it causes over 500,000 deaths per year worldwide. Throughout the world deaths due to firearm weapons have been increased tremendously. Depending on the circumstances of the death, homicides can be divided into murder, manslaughter, justifiable homicide, killing in war, euthanasia and execution.

Objectives: To find out socio-demographic features of homicidal deaths in some part of Dhaka city.

Materials and Methods: A record based cross-sectional study includes 506 cases of homicide out of the total of 3005 medico-legal autopsies conducted at Forensic Medicine Department of Dhaka Medical College during the year of March 2006 to February 2007. Data were collected using a pre-designed schedule from Post mortem registers and reports. The cases have been labeled as homicide on the basis of autopsy and police inquest report. All the data were collected in a predefined data collection sheet and necessary statistical analyses were performed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software.

Results: A total number of 3005 medico-legal autopsies were conducted, of them 1594 (53.04%) cases were accidents, 786 (26.15%) cases were suicide, 506 (16.84%) cases were homicide, undetermined cases were 88 (2.93%) and 31 (1.04%) cases were natural deaths. Of them 190 (37.55%) were caused by firearms. Other methods

used for homicide were 97 (19.17%) cases by blunt weapons, 82 (16.21%) by sharp cutting weapons, 49 (9.68%) by stab injuries. Most of the victims 188 (37.15) were in the age group of 21-30 years followed by 110 (21.74%) in the age group of 31-40 years. In 447 (88.33%) cases the victims were male and 480 (94.86%) were Muslims.

Conclusion: Homicide is a relatively rare offence than accidents or suicides but it is one of the most notifiable crimes in country as they are widely publicized by the media due to their severity and visibility. Homicidal deaths, mostly due to fire arms have increased substantially in the last decade. Strict measures should be taken to monitor and control the possession of illegal fire arms.

Key-words: Homicidal deaths, Murder, Post-mortem examination.

Introduction

Death is a tragedy in whatever form, at whatever time and in whatever way it comes¹. Homicide is a legal term for any killing of a human being as a result of the conduct of another². The motives behind of different types of homicides are due to Argument, Revenge, Financial Conflicts, Property gain, Mental illness of offender, Infidelity, and many more. There has been a global increase in homicide and it causes over 500,000 deaths per year worldwide³. Throughout the world deaths due to firearm weapons have increased tremendously. In the United States, the most frequent method of killing in cases of homicide and suicide is by means of firearms⁴.

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More than 25000 people die every year in the USA by injuries caused by firearms⁵. In England and Wales, the most frequent firearms are shotguns, both in cases of homicide and suicide, but firearms as a whole is a less frequent method of killing than in many other countries⁶. In Pakistan, the number of deaths due to firearm weapons has also increased due to easy availability of all the sophisticated and modern weapons. Pakistan, having a border with tribal areas and of Afghanistan, is famous for the presence of every type of firearm weapons. The locally made arms and ammunition are easily available in the market at a nominal price without any control, prohibition or restriction from the government law enforcing agencies⁷.

Depending on the circumstances of the death, homicides can be divided into: murder, manslaughter, justifiable homicide, killing in war, euthanasia, and execution. These different types of homicides are often treated very differently in human societies; some are considered crimes, while others are permitted or even ordered by the legal system such as a justifiable homicide- which is occurred in the administration of justice as execution of sentence of death or the maintenance of justice as in suppressing riots or killing of a person who attempts to rape a woman or executing arrest⁸. Excusable homicide-This homicide is caused unintentionally that is done in good faith e.g. killing in self-defense or by accident or misadventure or following a lawful operation or homicide committed by an insane person. But unlawful homicides are classified as crimes like Murder, Culpable homicide amounting to murder or not amounting to murder and Rash or negligent act⁸. Manslaughter-is the unjustifiable, inexcusable, and intentional killing of a human being without deliberation, premeditation, and malice⁹.

Culpable homicide amounting to murder-when it is done with the intention of causing death or of causing such bodily injury as is likely to cause death⁸. Culpable homicide not amounting to murder-when the act is done under grave and sudden provocation or in good faith of the right of private defense of person or property or for the advancement of public justice or without premeditation or when the person above the age of 18 years takes the risk of death with his own

consent⁸. Rash or Negligent act- Any act done without due deliberation and caution and thereby is in all likelihood sufficient to run the risk of causing death or grievous hurt can be said to be rash⁹.

Materials and Methods

A record based cross-sectional study includes 506 cases of homicide out of the total of 3005 medico-legal autopsies conducted at Forensic Medicine Department of Dhaka Medical College during the year of March 2006 to February 2007. A total of 3005 autopsies were analyzed during the study period. Most of the victims from south-eastern part of Dhaka district were brought to Dhaka Medical College (DMC) morgue. Morgue caters 18 police stations under Dhaka city. Data were collected using a pre-designed schedule from Post mortem registers and reports. The cases have been labeled as homicide on the basis of autopsy and police inquest report. All the data were collected in a predefined data collection sheet and necessary statistical analyses were performed by using the computer software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) for window 17.0 and expressed in frequency and percentage.

Results

A total number of 3005 medico-legal autopsies were conducted, of them 1594 (53.04%) cases were accidents, 786 (26.15%) cases were suicide, 506 (16.84%) cases were homicide, undetermined cases were 88 (2.93%) and 31 (1.04%) cases were natural deaths. Homicidal deaths constituted 506 (16.84%) of all the autopsies for the studied period. Out of these 190 (37.55%) were caused by firearms as the method of homicides. Other methods used for homicide were 97 (19.17%) by blunt weapons, 82 (16.21%) by sharp cutting weapons, 49 (9.68%) by stab injuries. Most of the victims 188 (37.15) were in the age group of 21-30 years followed by 110 (21.74%) in the age group of 31-40 years. In 506 cases, most of the victims were male (88.33%) and were Muslims (94.86%).

Table-I: Distributions of manners of death (n=3005).

Sl No	Manners of death	Frequency	Percentage
1	Accidental deaths	1594	53.04
2	Suicidal deaths	786	26.15
3	Homicidal deaths	506	16.84
4	Undetermined cases	88	2.93
5	Natural deaths	31	1.04
Total		3005	100

Table-II: Distribution of homicides based on causative factors or agents (n=506).

Sl No	Causative factors/agents	Frequency	Percentage
1	Firearms injuries	190	37.55
2	Blunt force injuries	97	19.17
3	Sharp cutting weapons	82	16.21
4	Stab injuries	49	9.68
5	Strangulations	48	9.49
6	Cut throat injury	27	5.34
7	Burnt cases	08	1.57
8	Bomb blast injuries	03	0.59
9	Smothering	02	0.58
Total		506	100

Table-III: Distribution of victims based on age groups in years (n=506).

Sl No	Age groups in years	Frequency	Percentage
1	0-10	32	6.32
2	11-20	62	12.25
3	21-30	188	37.15
4	31-40	110	21.74
5	41-50	71	14.03
6	51-60	30	5.93
7	Above 60	13	2.57
Total		506	100

Table-IV: Distribution of victims based on Sex and Religion (n=506).

Sl No	Sex	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	447	88.33
2	Female	59	11.67
Total		506	100
Sl No	Religion	Frequency	Percentage
1	Muslim	480	94.86
2	Hindu	23	4.55
3	Others (Chirstian, Buddos)	03	0.59
Total		506	100

Discussion

The Global Study¹⁰ on Homicide 2013 found that nearly half a million people were intentionally murdered in 2012 and killings were largely concentrated in two regions: the Americas and Africa. The top ten highest murder rates¹⁰ were in Honduras 90.4, Venezuela 53.7, Belize 44.7, El Salvador's 41.2, Guatemala, 39.9, Jamaica 39.3 Swaziland 33.8, Saint Kitts and Nevis 33.6, South Africa 31 and Colombia had 30.8 per 100,000 in 2012. Murder rates in Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Iceland, Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, Spain and Germany are among the lowest in the world, around 0.3-1 cases per 100,000 people per year¹⁰; the rate of the United States is among the highest¹¹ of developed countries, around 4.5 in 2014.

In this study, a total number of 3005 medico-legal autopsies were conducted, of them 53.04% cases were accidents, 26.15% cases were suicide, 16.84% cases were homicide, undetermined cases were 2.93% and 1.04% were natural deaths. Another study in Dhaka Medical College Mortuary in 1996 showed the frequency pattern of unnatural deaths was 68.92% accidents, 08.00% suicides and 11.69% homicides, and 2.80% were natural deaths¹².

A total number of 506 homicidal cases were studied of them 37.55% were caused by firearms which is similar with the studies conducted by Preti A¹³, Alan Fox¹⁴, Hussain Z¹⁵ where in Firearms were the most common means used for homicides. But this study is in contrast to the studies conducted by P. Wahlsten¹⁶ where in sharp weapon injury 39% was the most common cause of death, Gupta Avnesh¹⁷ also showed sharp weapon injuries accounted for 57.4% of homicides. In the studied victims, most of them were in the age group of 21-30 years. Similar findings were observed in the studies conducted by the Scott KWM¹⁸, Gupta Avnesh¹⁷ and Mohanty MK¹⁹. But it differs with the study made by Wahlsten P¹⁶ where most of the victims belonged to 31-40 years, by Kominato Y's²⁰ (36-45 years) by Henderson JP²¹ (30-39 years) and by Saint Martin P²² (50-59 years).

In the present study, in 88.33% cases the victims were male. This may be due to male are more violent than female population with a higher proportion of men naturally have higher murder rate which is almost similar observation 71.75% made by Alan Fox¹⁴, Rygol K²³, Mohanty MK¹⁹ but in a study conducted by Kominato Y²⁰ male to female ratio of the victims was 1:1. In the study, 94.86% Muslims were found as the victims of homicidal deaths probably due to Muslims²⁴ constitute 90.2% which is the largest population of Bangladesh followed by Hindus who constitute 4.55%.

Conclusion

Homicide is a relatively rare offence than accidents or suicides but it can contribute to the public's fear of crime. Homicide is one of the most notifiable crimes in country as they are widely publicized by the media due to their severity and visibility. Homicidal deaths, mostly due to fire arms have increased substantially in the last decade. Strict measures should be taken to monitor and control the possession of illegal fire arms. Law and order need to be improved in the country.

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