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Empirical Analysis of Deaths Due to Sharp Weapons in Faisalabad

Kishwar Naheed, Mobin Inam Pal, Ahmad Saeed

ABSTRACT

Violence is a product of aggressive behavior which leads to a large number of unnatural deaths. A significant number of deaths have been reported due to attacks with sharp weapons as it is one of the most violent and disgusting methods of revenge. This study empirically evaluates the sharp weapon deaths in Faisalabad from different perspectives. **Objective:** To analyze the deaths by sharp weapons in Faisalabad city regarding incidence, the most vulnerable age groups, gender prevalence, manner of death and parts of body mostly involved. **Study Design:** Retrospective, non-interventional descriptive study having cross sectional and longitudinal data. **Settings:** Department of Forensic Medicine, Faisalabad Medical University/Allied Hospital. **Duration of Study:** 5 years from 1st January 2012 to 31st December 2016. **Methodology:** This study covered all 96 cases of sharp weapon deaths from a total of 1,692 autopsies conducted at the Department of Forensic Medicine, Faisalabad Medical University. Frequency distribution, descriptive analysis was performed to compute the findings. **Results:** Frequency of deaths from sharp weapons decreased in the study period. It was the highest in the age group 20-29 (32.29%) in Faisalabad. The ratio of male to female victims was 2:1. All deaths were homicidal in nature. Majority of the attacks were on the neck followed by the abdomen and chest respectively. **Conclusion:** It was concluded that deaths due to sharp weapon attack on the neck, abdomen and chest were high in the young in Faisalabad. Establishment of more trauma centers may be helpful in reducing the deaths due to sharp edged weapons.

Keywords: Sharp weapon, Violence, Neck, Abdomen

Corresponding Author
Dr. Kishwar Naheed
Assistant Professor, Forensic Medicine, Gujranwala Medical College Gujranwala
Contact: +92 333-6597950
Email: kashif.boparai@hotmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Sharp weapon may cause injury by cutting or stabbing[1.] Violent deaths of human beings with sharp weapons have a popular domain in the world since its evolution. This method is the most cruel and condemnable whether it is suicidal or homicidal[2]. Such weapons which cut and cause sharp injuries on the human body are declared as dangerous weapons and their punishments are ranked higher because they cause grievous hurt rather than the simple hurts on human body[3].

The major proportion of unnatural deaths worldwide is due to assault from firearms followed by blunt weapons[4,5] or poison[6], while some studies show that the majority of unnatural deaths are from sharp edged weapons[7-9]. Brutal murder with sharp edged weapons indicates the presence of extreme violence, increased frequency of aggravation, lack of patience and mental disturbance in the culprits[2]. This study is important to create awareness in the society so that efforts can be initiated to control such behaviors to avoid unpleasant deaths. It will also help to form future strategy acting as a food for thought for the concerned administrative authorities, law and order institutions and medico-legal experts.

Objective: The major objective of this study was to empirically investigate the incidence of deaths by sharp weapons in Faisalabad. Moreover this study was aimed at determining the most frequently affected age groups, gender, manner of death, and part of body largely involved.

METHODOLOGY

Study design: Retrospective, non-interventional descriptive study having cross sectional and longitudinal data.

Settings & Duration of Study: 5 years from 1st January 2012 to 31st December 2016.

Sample size: 96 cases of sharp weapon deaths from a total of 1,692 autopsies conducted by the doctors of Department of Forensic Medicine, Faisalabad Medical University.

Data collection procedure: Data was collected and recorded in predesigned performa after scrutiny of police papers and post mortem reports. Frequencies and percentages were computed for

all the relevant variables. Graphs were used to express the behavior of the data.

RESULTS

The total number of medico-legal deaths reported in the period 1st January, 2012 to 31st December, 2016 was 1,692. From this, only 96 medico-legal deaths were due to assault by sharp weapons giving an incidence rate of 5.67%. All of the 96 deaths were found to be homicidal. Out of these, 64 (66.67%) were males and 32 (33.33%) were females making a male to female ratio of 2:1. On an average, 19 individuals, 13 males and 6 females died from injuries inflicted by sharp edged weapons per annum. Table 1 shows the year wise trend of sharp weapon deaths out of total medico legal deaths.

According to Table 2, males statistics indicate total male deaths (n=64) with an annual mean and standard deviation of (12.8 ±3.35) and female statistics of total deaths (n=32) with an annual mean and standard deviation of (6.4 ± 4.28).

Table 1: Sharp weapon deaths-%age of the total medico-legal deaths (2012-2016)

Year	Male Autopsies	Female Autopsies	Total Autopsies	Sharp Force Deaths	%age
2012	297	100	397	28	7.05
2013	289	88	377	19	5.04
2014	231	92	323	24	7.43
2015	246	61	307	14	4.56
2016	226	62	288	11	3.82

Table 2: Annual Statistics of Male and Female deaths due to Sharp Weapons (2012-2016)

Year	Male	Male (%)	Female	Female (%)	Total	Total (%)
2012	17	26.56%	11	34.38%	28	29.17%
2013	15	23.44%	04	12.50%	19	19.79%
2014	13	20.31%	11	34.38%	24	25.00%
2015	10	15.63%	04	12.50%	14	14.58%
2016	09	14.06%	02	6.25%	11	11.46%
Total	64	100	32	100	96	100
Average or Mean Value	12.8		6.4		19.2	

The age group in which the most number of deaths occurred was 20–29 years (31, 2.29%) followed by the 30-39 year age group (23, 3.96%). Least number of victims were from the extreme age groups i.e. 0-9 and 70 onwards.

Table 3: Age and Sex Distribution of victims of Sharp Weapon at Faisalabad (2012-2016)

Age Group	Males	Females	Total No. of cases	Percentage
0-9	00	00	00	0.00%
10-19	06	05	11	11.46%
20-29	20	11	31	32.29%
30-39	15	08	23	23.96%
40-49	09	07	16	16.67%
50-59	06	01	07	7.29%
60-69	07	00	07	7.29%
70-79	00	00	00	0.00%
80-89	01	00	01	1.04%
Total	**64**	**32**	**96**	100.00%

Our study further indicated that in the 96 victims, 43(39.45%) injuries were sustained on the neck while 22 (20.18%) sharp edged injuries were on the abdomen and 21 (19.27%) were identified on the chest. While the number of injuries on head were 14 (12.84%) and on upper limb and lower limb were 3 (2.75%) and 6 (5.50%) respectively making a total of 109 injuries.

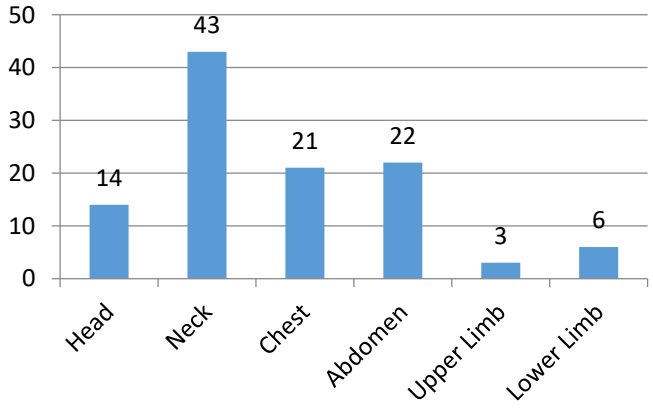

Figure 1: Body part injured due to sharp weapon attack (2012-2016)

DISCUSSION

Life is the gift of God and no one has the right to deprive a human being of his life. This is a universally accepted fact. Faisalabad is the third most populated city in Pakistan spread over an area of 5,856 km. In 2014, a demographic profile showed the population count of Faisalabad at 3.038 million which has risen to 4.375 million in 2017, which is quite alarming. Increase in population size is directly related to increase in the crime rate[10]. Our study specifically dealt with sharp weapon deaths reported in the city of Faisalabad during the period 2012-2016. According to our study, the percentage of deaths due to sharp weapons out of the total number of medico-legal autopsies conducted during the study period was 5.67% where as the sharp weapon deaths were 10.49% of the total homicidal deaths (n=915). These results were close to multiple other studies conducted in various parts of Pakistan [5,6,11,12]. The manner of death in all these incidences was homicidal, which again was substantiated by the study of Mirza FH et al in Karachi[11] and Waseem HKB et al in Lahore[12].

Males outnumbered the females in all the studies [2,4-9,11-15] being twice or even more as compared to the females. This may be due to the fact that males are more aggressive and exposed to fatal violence[8].

The most commonly affected age group in our study was 20-29 years which also coincided with the results of various studies conducted in India [2,8,13] and Pakistan [5,6,12]. However, in a study conducted in North Tunisia, the average victim age was much higher being 37.7 years[9]. Individuals belonging to this age group are generally more active and aggressive being more emotional and vulnerable to the fast changing trends[2].

Our study showed that the neck was the most frequently affected site, followed by the abdomen and chest, which was similar to the observations of Chughtai BR et al [5] in Taxila, Waseem HK et al[12] in Lahore and Marri MZ et al in Peshawar[15].

CONCLUSION

This study empirically evaluated the sharp weapon deaths in Faisalabad city during the period 2012-2016. It was concluded that even in this advanced era, the incidence of sharp weapon deaths places quite a burden on the state. The criminal attitude seems to have increased in the general behavior of the people due to poor parenting, intolerance, aggression and impulsive behavior. Since the majority of the victims were in the 20-29 year age group, issues pertaining to this particular age group should be addressed like anger management, marital issues, unemployment, etc. Proper education and awareness of implications may somewhat help in curtailing the issue.

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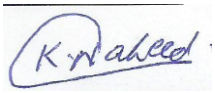
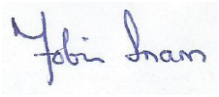
AUTHORSHIP AND CONTRIBUTION DECLARATION

AUTHORS	Contribution to The Paper	Signatures
Dr. Kishwar Naheed Assistant Professor of Forensic Medicine Gujranwala Medical College Gujranwala	Initial writing of the article	
Dr. Mobin Inam Pal Assistant Professor of Forensic Medicine Faisalabad Medical University, Faisalabad	Data collection & analysis	
Dr. Ahmad Saeed Professor of Forensic Medicine Faisalabad Medical University, Faisalabad	Final formatting of the article