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Death Due to Domestic Violence in Imphal: A Retrospective Study of 10 Years

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Abstract

Introduction: Death due to domestic violence is an issue throughout the country and the world and Manipur is not an exception. Violence ranges from mental torture to physical and ultimately to death. Victims are man to man, man to women and women to men but the majority of cases, women are the most sufferers along with morbidity and mortalities. This retrospective analysis is targeted to dig out the actual scenario of the state.

Objective: To find out the socio-demographic profile of domestic violence death cases, different mode of killing, motives, patterns of injuries & cause of death etc.

Materials and Methods: A descriptive retrospective autopsy based study of deaths due to domestic violence is conducted in the Department of Forensic Medicine, Regional Institute of Medical Sciences, Imphal Manipur during the period from the year 2004 to 2013.

Results: In this study a total of 61 cases of domestic violence deaths out of 4313 cases of postmortem during the study period is analysed in various medico-legal aspects. The maximum deaths were among males and reported against the 2nd & 3rd decade's age group and land disputes and personal violence were the common reason for such fatalities.

Conclusion: The study has demonstrated that deaths out of domestic violence are of increasing trend in all format of society all over the state. Strict legislation and appropriate implementation existing law and order is need of the hour and further laws are to be adopted to curb this menace of the society is required.

Key words: Domestic; violence; weapon; motive; intimate partner; victim; injury; death.

Introduction

Domestic violence is also known as domestic

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abuse, spousal abuse, battering, family violence, dating abuse, and intimate partner violence (IPV). Domestic violence is an age old social evil which remained hidden from the eyes of the society for long. In India, it came out to be human rights issue in the late 1980s due to the alarming increase in

number of dowry deaths that have been experienced in judicial system. Violence against human beings is a serious problem concerning human rights violation. In the last two decades, violence against human beings has emerged as the most burning issue throughout the world. Violence against women can be physical, sexual, psychological, and threat of physical or sexual violence. But such violence has not solely limited to women only. It is a pattern of behavior which involves the abuse by one person against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, cohabitation, dating or within the family. It has repeatedly been identified as a major cause of morbidity and mortality in developing countries. Not unusual for violence to remain undetected until a women dies and the reason being receiving more and more sufferings considering the typical Indian society where women are always at the receivers end and their financial dependency on the male counterpart . Death due to familial violence is observed even among blood relatives like father-son, between brothers and sister in connection monetary and property disputes. This present study has been taken up to find out the prevalence and magnitude of the deaths due to domestic violence itself leaving all other means of homicidal deaths prevailing in the state of Manipur.

Materials and Methods

A descriptive retrospective study in a tertiary health care centre (RIMS) at Imphal on the cases of medico-legal autopsy brought during the period of 10 years i.e. from the year 2004 to 2013. Detailed history of the cases was collected from the accompanying relatives by psychological autopsy, investigating Police Officers. Detailed

postmortem examinations were performed and findings correlated with the history and the cases were analyzed accordingly. Cases where no proper history is available were excluded from the study.

Results

During our study period from January 2004 to December 2013, a total of 3000 medico-legal autopsies were conducted out of which 61 (2.03%) deaths comprised of deaths out of domestic violence. The proportion of deaths was highest in 21-30 years (32.78%) followed by 31-40 years (18.32%) and 41-50 years (16.39%) age groups. Of these cases, fatalities were almost same in both the genders i.e. males comprising of 31(50.81%) cases whereas females were 30(49.18%) cases. Most of the victims were married (75.40%) and rural preponderance was observed in majority of deaths (59.01%). In our observation most of them were from Meitei families (68.85%) followed by Muslims (18.03%) and Christianity followers (11.47%). As per modified Prasad's classification of socioeconomic status, major proportion of victims were from low class (52.45%) followed by low middle class (32.78%), middle class (13.11%) and upper class (1.63%). Intimate partner violence i.e. between husband and wife were observed almost half of the cases (44.26%) followed by between nephew, in laws & cousins (24.59%), and similar data found between brothers (14.75%) and father & son (14.75%). In this study we observed incidence of fatalities were more in joint type of families (54.09%) and remaining cases among nuclear families (45.90%). Blunt weapons (36.06%) were used more commonly followed by sharp variety of weapons (21.31%). We observed the most commonly injured

body part were the head (49.18%) followed by neck (18.03%), abdomen (11.47%), chest (9.83%) and others. Incidents occurred in most of the instances in victim's residence (45.90%) and in the hospital (32.78%). Previous history of violence was present in 62.30% cases. The common motives were land and property disputes (36.06%) and, sudden

provocation (26.22%), alcoholism (18.03%), dowry related (11.47%) and harassment (8.1%). The cause of death was commonly due to shock and haemorrhage (31.14%), intracranial haemorrhage (24.59%), injury to the vital organs (21.31%), and burn shock (9.83%).

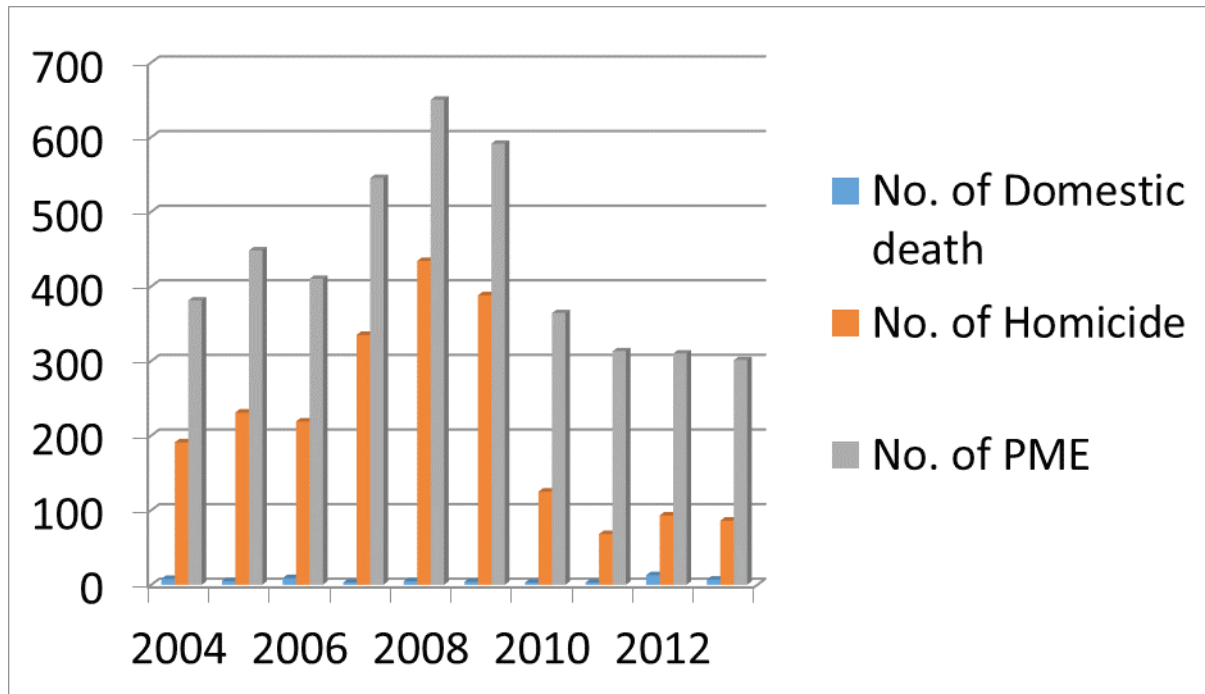


Figure No.01: Bar diagram showing year wise distribution of postmortem, homicide and domestic violence deaths.

Table no.01: Socioeconomic status

Socioeconomic status	Number of Cases	Percentage (%)
Low Class	32	52
Low Middle Class	20	32
Middle Class	8	13
Upper Class	1	3
	Total 61 cases	100%

Table no. 02: Relationship between Accused & Victims

Relationship Between Accused & Victims	No of cases	Percentage (%)
Husband and Wife	28	45.90
Brother and brother	16	26.22
Father and Son	12	19.67
Father and Daughter	2	3.2
Mother and Son	1	1.6
Others(Nephew, In-laws, Cousins,etc)	2	3.2
	Total 61 cases	100%

Table No. 03: Causes of death in Domestic Violence Deaths

Cause of death	No of cases	Percentage (%)
Shock and Haemorrhage	19	31.14
Intracranial Haemorrhage	15	24.59
Injury to the Vital Organs	13	21.31
Burn Shock	6	9.8
Others(Poisoning,etc)	8	13.11
	Total 61 cases	100%

Table No.04: Motives behind Domestic Violence

Motives	No of cases	Percentage (%)
Land & property disputes	22	36.06
Sudden provocation	16	26.22
Alcoholism	11	18.03
Dowry related	7	11.47
Harassment	5	8.1
	Total 61 cases	100%

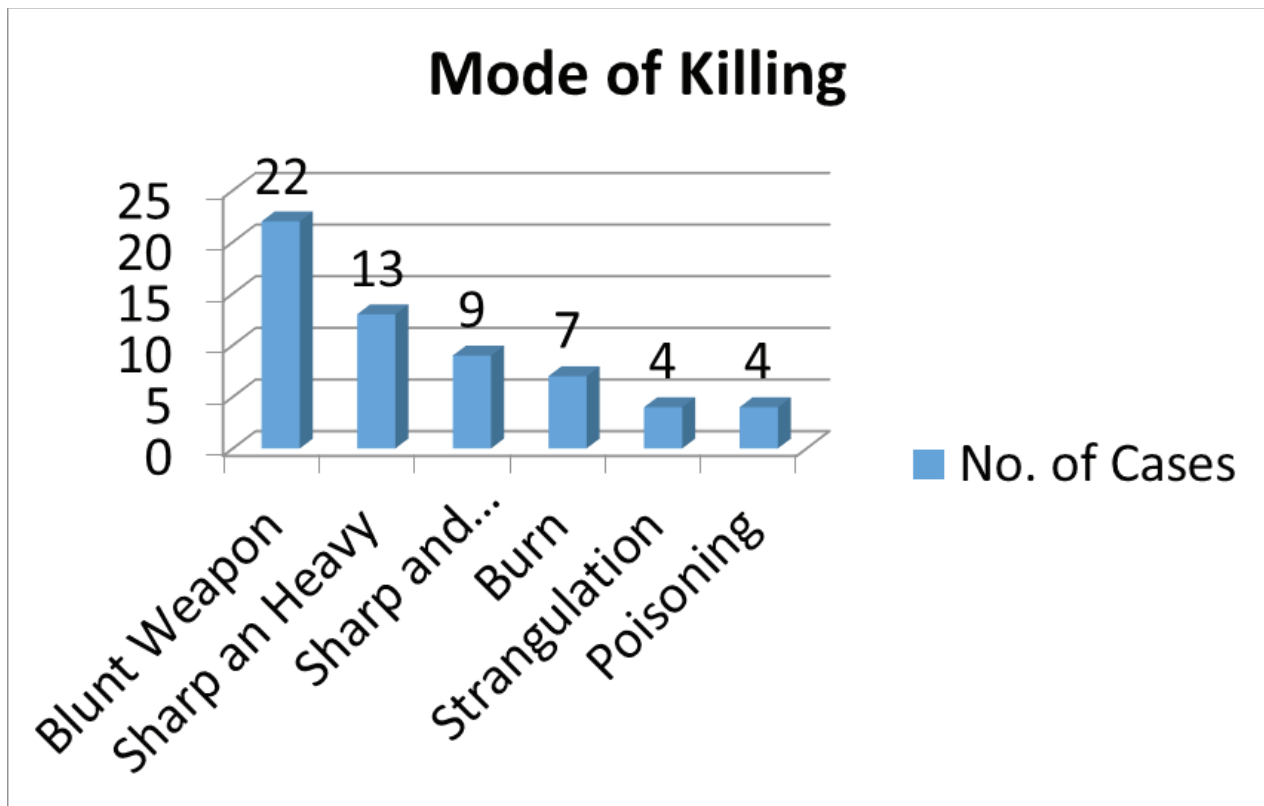


Figure No.02: Mode of killing

Discussion

In this present study we observed that in Manipur, murders often took place in families bound together by feelings of very close association & even son and mother. Violence against women has been on the increase in Nigeria and statistics says that 50% of women have been battered by their intimate partners i.e. husbands¹. In our study, 50.82% of victims were women and trends are almost same as above mentioned study. Different socioeconomic conditions like spouse's lower education, poverty and economic hardship, household overcrowding, husband's substance abuse and women, who grew up witnessing violence in their own homes, are more likely to report experiencing domestic violence. In the present study, the highest incidence is seen in the age group of 21-30 years², alcoholism

and drug abuses are closely related as reported by different authors^{2, 3,4,5,6}. The common underlying motive of crimes in Manipur were land & property dispute (36%)and sudden provocation (26%) followed by alcoholism(18%) which might e due to development process and urbanization in this state as observed by Fimate L⁷ . Rao SP et al¹⁰ in their study in Andhra Pradesh state found that financially dependent members of the family were the common victims and similar observation was there in our study. In a study by Stephen LC et al⁸ observed that young age, heavy drinking pattern, personality disorder marital conflict, economic stress are common factors favoring the occurrences of violence as seen in our present study. In the USA, female intimate partners are more likely to be murdered with a firearm than all other means

combined⁹. But in this present study, blunt weapon is the commonest means of committing crime as it will be easily available at the scene of crime.

Conclusion

The findings in this study highlights that there is increasing trends in incidence of mortality as a result of domestic violence in Manipur and females outnumbered the males. Intimate male partners are mostly the main accused in cases of female deaths and here comes the need of increase education amongst women making them more watchdogs by human right commissions. Strict implementation of legislation at government level relating to dowry related crimes would helpful to prevent incidence of domestic violence. Counseling strategies include validating the domestic violence victim's disclosure, educating her about the dynamics of abuse, assessing current danger , helping for formulate the safety plan, facilitating access to needed resources.

Ethical Clearance: Taken from Institutional ethics committee.

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Conflict of Interest: NIL

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