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A comparative descriptive study of female homicides from five provinces in Sri Lanka

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Introduction: Gender violence is understood as actions undertaken in the private or public, occurring in a wide-range of contexts. Homicide of a female being a criminal offence can be considered as the most extreme form of violence against female gender.

Objectives: To describe the injuries, causes of death, underlying etiologies pertaining to female homicides in five provinces and identify any statistically significant patterns.

Methodology: Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to gather data. Component 1: A retrospective descriptive study on female homicides in five provinces (Western, Southern, Eastern, Sabaragamuwa and North Central) conducted using police records from 2013 to 2016 employing convenient sampling method. Component 2: Qualitative study conducted using 10 in-depth interviews of families of female homicides from five provinces.

Results: Incident rates for each province calculated from national statistics showed a downward trend except in the Western and Eastern provinces. 243 female homicides were studied where 95 and 49 were from the Western and Sabaragamuwa provinces respectively. The Eastern province had the highest frequency in less than 20-year category (29%) while Sabaragamuwa and North Central had highest frequency for 21 – 40 years (45%) and 41 – 60 years (42%) category respectively. In all five provinces majority were house wives from rural areas. In majority of cases the perpetrator was a known person (60-80%) while the husbands ranked the highest in the Southern. Family disputes were the commonest (19% - 32%) reason for homicides in all provinces except North Central which was robbery (22%). Extra marital affairs/ love affairs/ problems related to sexuality was second commonest and it was statistically significant in Southern Province (P-0.000.)

Conclusion: Female homicides were mainly linked to issues with relationships. Although there were many similarities of the patterns of homicides in five provinces studied there was a significant difference in the underline reasons for killing in the Southern Province.

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