Filicide, infanticide and familicide, and its intersections with femicide in South Africa

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RESULTS

1277 child murders in South Africa in 2009
40% (474) children were under 5 years
26.4% (337) children were under 1 year
18.9% (241) were neonates
Infanticide rate: 28.3/100 000 live births
Early neonaticide (0-6 days) rate: 19.6/100 000 live births
Late neonaticide (7-28 days) rate: 0.7/100 000 live births
44.5% of all child murders were linked to child abuse/neglect
8.7% of all child murders were rape homicides

Familicide

Nearly 1 in 10 (305) children killed within the context of another family member killed
16% of filicidal murders were also familicidal.
Most common age for familicide was the 1-13 years.
62.6% of familicidal perpetrators were another family member
Family members killed were commonly siblings and parents

Intimate Partner Femicide

42% of all murdered adult women 18 years and older were killed by an intimate partner
Among women 14 years and older this was 56%
Femicide was not common among intimate partner femicides

CONCLUSION

Filicide, familicide and femicide are not rare events in South Africa.
Not much known about fathers as perpetrators of child murders.
Children more likely to be victims than intimate partner femicides in familicide murders.
Age pattern shows filicide decreases with age with highest risk among neonates.
This data is important to develop age specific interventions

INTRODUCTION

Very little is known about child homicide in low and middle income countries. Age is an important risk factor and younger age groups are most at risk. Limited information is available on perpetrators and the context of the murders and its intersections with femicide have not been explored. The South African 2009 national child homicide and female homicide study provided the opportunity to describe and explore the different forms of child homicide. This is important for developing prevention interventions for different age groups.

METHODOLOGY

National study
Operating mortuaries in 2009 formed sampling frame
Mortuaries divided into three strata (small, medium, big)
Weighted sample of 38 mortuaries
Adult women (18+ years)
Children (boys and girls 0-17 years)
Three process data collection victim, perpetrator and crime data
1. Mortuary register to identify homicides
2. Autopsy report to collect forensic data
3. Police interview

Families

Filicide: killing of a child by a parent
Infanticide: killing of a child under the age of 1 year
Familicide: killing of more than 1 family member
Neonaticide: killing of a new born (0-28 days)

Child homicide 2009: Age pattern

- Neonates
- 1-11 months
- 1-5 years
- 5-13 years
- 13-18 yrs

Filicide by age and sex

Families

Filicide parents

Most common perpetrators are mothers with fathers responsible for 1.1% of filicidal deaths.