

TORTURE INJURIES

PATTERN OF INJURIES IN POLICE TORTURE VICTIMS AT FAISALABAD

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ABSTRACT... Objective: To examine the different type of injuries after police torture. **Design:** Torture study. **Setting:** Office of District Standing Medical Board, in DHQ Hospital Faisalabad. **Period:** From 1.1.2009 to 31.12.2009. **Material & Methods:** A study of 300 victims of alleged police torture examined by the District Standing Medical Board (DSMB) Faisalabad. Most of the victims at the time of examination were showing visible evidence of Physical trauma. Victims were males. Examination was conducted on the directions of judicial magistrates and District & Session Judge Faisalabad. **Conclusion:** A wide range of different types of injuries was observed on various parts of the body. Blunt trauma was most frequent. Psychological element of torture was also seen in some victims.

Key words: Torture, Physical Trauma, Victim

INTRODUCTION

Torture is any act by which severe pain, whether physical or psychological, is intentionally inflicted on a person as a means of intimidation, deterrence, revenge, punishment or information gathering. Word came from Latin word *tortura* for “torque-tura”, originally meaning “act of twisting arm”. The Romans used torture only for interrogation before judgement. In the Roman Republic, a slave's testimony was admissible only if it had been extracted by torture, on the assumption that slaves could not be trusted to reveal the truth voluntarily. In the Middle Ages especially and up into the 18th century, torture was deemed a legitimate way to obtain testimonies and confessions from suspects for use in judicial inquiries and trials.

Police being authoritative in our society is expected to do misuse its authority. Illegal confinement by the law enforcing agencies, followed by torture is a common occurrence in our everyday life. They commonly use of ‘Chitter, Manji, Rulla, Danda for extracting information from the suspected criminals. The Medico-Legal examination of such victims is not an easy task especially when a medical opinion becomes medico-legal if it is utilized in law enforcement issues. The medico-legal problem which requires constant review is that of relationship of trauma to disease, particularly now when the definition of trauma has been extended to the

psychological field including emotions & stress, it is declared in the law as injury. Repeated and deliberate application of external force is called ‘torture’. The legal definition of hurt is given in Sec 332 of Qisas & Diyat Act 1997 and is, “Causing pain, harm, disease, infirmity, injury, impairing, disabling, dismembering any organ of the body or a part of the body without causing death”. The doctor involved in examining the patient has an important role to play both legally and as a medical expert to furnish a scientific report that is of great importance and of help for any sub-sequent criminal or civil proceedings. The injuries mentioned thus can be on the body individually or may be grouped together. In our culture the commonly used weapon is a leather slipper dipped in mustard oil, used for torturing the victims physically on their buttocks. The resulted injuries may range from bruises, contusions, abrasions, lacerations and rarely to fracture of bones. During the present modern, scientific era there is a growing trend of torturing psychologically, rather than infliction of only physical tortures. It may range from prolonged standings, abuses; dis honoring the family members, female members and the parents in particular.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted on the original work and data made available from the office of District Standing Medical Board Faisalabad for the year of 2009 from 1.1.2009 to 31.12.2009. The 300 patients attended the

office of District Standing Medical Board, in DHQ Hospital Faisalabad.

Following aspects were studied:

- 1 Age of the victim
- 2 Occupation of the Victims
- 3 Pattern of torture
- 4 Hand Cuffed
- 5 Regional distribution of the injuries
- 6 Cases referred to other Specialties

RESULTS

Age of the victims		
Age group	No. of cases	% of cases
1-5	-	-
6-10	-	-
11-15	5	1.66%
16-20	51	17%
21-25	101	33.66%
26-30	60	20%
31-35	22	7.33%
36-40	36	12%
41-45	21	7%
46-50	3	1%
Above 50	1	0.33%
Total	300	

DISCUSSION

During the study it was observed that young adults of 21 – 25 years of age (33.36%), followed by age groups from 26 – 30 (20%) and 16 – 20 (17%). The incidence of physical torture in the younger age group was found to be very low which gradually increased to the adult age and then again a decline was observed in the older age group. The persons belonging to low socio-economic group were most frequently victimized by the police, the labor class was the commonest followed by the unemployed.

Occupation of the Victims		
Occupation	No of case	%age
Laborers	115	38.33%
Farmer	15	5%
Shopkeepers	17	5.66%
Prisoners	5	1.66%
Business	45	15%
Service	28	9.33%
Students	20	6.66%
Unemployed	55	18.33%
Total	300	

Pattern of Torture		
Nature of Torture	No of cases	%age
Blunt	236	78.66%
Sharp	7	2.33%
Pointed	2	0.66%
Burns	2	0.66%
Rolling of objects	21	7%
Hanging by Feet	23	7.66%
Prolonged Standing	2	0.66%
Psychological	7	2.33%
Total	300	

Hand Cuffed		
Hand Cuffed	No of cases	%age
Yes	57	19%
No	243	81%
Total	300	

Physical use and battering was common in the victims and (97%) persons were subjected to mechanical violence. Commonest of the agents employed to cause

Regional Distribution of Injuries		
Site of torture	No of cases	%age
Head & Face	61	11.29%
Neck	10	1.85%
Chest	93	17.22%
Abdomen	42	7.77%
Upper limb	141	26.1%
Lower Limb	193	35.74%
Total	540	

Cases Referred to Other Specialties		
Specialities	No of cases	%age
Radiology	71	55.03%
Dental	19	14.72%
Gynaecology	-	-
ENT	15	11.62%
Eye	7	5.47%
Medicine	1	0.77%
Surgery	2	1.55%
Neurosurgery	14	10.85%
Total	129	

violence were blunt agents (78%).

Another important aspect of the study was the authorization for the medico legal examination. All such examinations were against the law enforcing agencies. Most of these victims had been detained by the police in illegal custody, after which they were either presented in the court or released without any record.

Pattern of physical trauma which had been observed was almost constant with torture by blunt agents. Rolling of heavy objects, hanging by upper limbs or hanging upside down was observed in few cases. Complaints of psychological trauma and some inhuman behavior was

also alleged in few cases.

Evidence of Physical Trauma visible on the bodies of the victims was seen in a wide variety of injuries ranging from bruises, abrasions of the superficial layers of the skin to fracture of bone in few cases. Anatomically the parts of the body most affected were the buttocks, soles of feet, back of chest, back and front of thighs, palms of hands, wrists. The most common agent alleged to be used to inflict physical torture was cane stick, broad, flat, leather slipper dipped in oil to enhance the effect of pain.

Complications were also noted and cases were referred to various specialties. Radiological examination to diagnose the presence and severity of various skeletal and soft tissue injuries was most commonly required. Expert dental, ENT and Eye opinion were also required. Another important referral was to the Neurosurgery to determine the loss of neural control of the muscles after hanging the victims on the weight of their shoulder joints.

The situation in Pakistan regarding police torture cases is increasing alarmingly. The violation of the human rights by Law enforcing agencies is very evident in the results of the study. Awareness by various sectors of the society and adoption of preventive measures is urgently required in this regard.

Our judicial system is recommended to take action on these violations and there is need to mend Police Rules of the country. More scientific methods should be introduced to extract the information from the people involved in various crimes. Role of media in creating awareness against this is very vital.

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**“In prosperity
our friends know us;
in adversity
we know our friends.”**

(John Churton Collins)