

RISK PROFILES OF FEMALE PERPETRATORS OF SEVERE VIOLENCE

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FEMALE OFFENDERS WITHOUT A SEVERE MENTAL DISORDER SHOW MORE CRIMINOGENIC FACTORS THAN THOSE WITH BOTH GROUPS ARE CHARACTERIZED BY MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS WE NEED TO FURTHER CHARACTERIZE FEMALE OFFENDERS

Background

Offenders of lethal/severe violence are in a majority of cases male, about 90% (Falk et al., 2014), and research has to a considerable extent focused on male violent offenders. Although less is known about female violent offenders than male offenders, previous research has indicated significant differences between male and female offenders of lethal/severe violence (Trägårdh et al., 2016; Yourstone et al., 2008). Since a majority of female perpetrators of lethal violence undergo a forensic psychiatric investigation (RPU/FPI), these documents contains important information about this group.

Purpose

The aim of this ongoing study is to characterize female perpetrators of severe violent crimes, and to compare female perpetrators sentenced to forensic psychiatric compulsory care with those sentenced to correctional treatment.

Method

This is an exploratory and descriptive study with a cross-sectional design. All forensic evaluations (FPI) made in Sweden between 2000-2014 (from The National Board of Forensic Medicine/RMV), and the subsequent court verdicts, in cases where women had used lethal/severe violence ($n \approx 180$) where used as the basis for data collection in this study. The present preliminary analyses (χ^2 -tests and ANOVA) contains approx. 26% ($n=47$) of the total group. Group differences were investigated regarding:

1. Mental health (FPI)
2. Risk factors (HCR-20 and PCL-R)
3. Victim relation (FPI)
4. Criminal behavior (FPI)

Results

Female offenders with and without a Severe mental disorder (SMD) seems to differ in some respects. For female offenders with a SMD, the crime was more likely to have been conducted in a less criminal context (see Table). For female offenders without a SMD, the following characteristics were more frequently present:

- Victim gender – male
- Substance abuse + Under the influence of substance (offender and victim)
- Previous violence between victim and offender
- Previous registered criminality

Also, several common features between the SMD and non-SMD group of female offenders were found. The majority of all female offenders had:

- Previous psychiatric contact and diagnoses
- Previously attempted suicide
- No previously registered criminality

	All female offenders (n=47)	Female offenders – No Severe mental disorder (n=31)	Female offenders – with a Severe mental disorder (n=16)	P value (χ^2)
Offender, previous psych. contact, n (%)				$p=0.372$
No	6(13.0%)	5(16.1%)	1(6.7%)	(0.132)
Yes	40(87.0%)	26(83.9%)	14(93.3%)	
Offender, previous diagnosis (Axel I & II), n (%)				$p=0.609$
No	9(19.1%)	5(16.1%)	4(25.0%)	(-0.145)
Yes	37(78.7%)	25(80.6%)	12(75.0%)	
Offender, previous attempted suicide, n (%)				$p=0.372$
No	19(41.3%)	12(38.7%)	7(46.7%)	(-0.076)
Yes	27(58.7%)	19(61.3%)	8(53.3%)	
Offender, previous registered criminality, n (%)				$p=0.009$
No	31(67.4%)	17(54.8%)	14(93.3%)	(-0.385)
Yes	15(32.6%)	14(45.2%)	1(6.7%)	

Conclusions

Preliminary results of the female perpetrators who had underwent a FPI seems to identify both substantial differences and similarities between those with versus without a SMD, where those without show more criminogenic factors. Both groups were also characterized by a high amount of mental illness. Also, these results supports previous research that female and male offenders of severe violence differ in important ways.

Since a majority of female perpetrators of lethal violence undergo a forensic psychiatric investigation, these results should be generalizable to this group as a whole in Sweden. Based on these results, a great need to further characterize female offenders of severe/lethal violence remain.