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Trends in publications of review of literature in forensic journals: A five years retrospective study

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Abstract

Background: Trends of research publication has to be evaluated timely to acknowledge the growth and advancement of the research publications. Review of literature is not only beneficial to curricular and institutional developer but also useful for scientific researcher to recognize the critical issuance to be built. Aims and Objectives: To analyse and evaluate the trends of publications in five highly indexed forensic journals 2019 to 2023 concerning review articles. Materials and Methods: The retrospective study design was totally based on five highly indexed forensic journals. Data were collected by searching from website of respective journal from January 2019 to December 2023. Selected articles of respective journal were studied for acquiring information of the evaluation. The screening of published review article was done by segregating the topic of articles on the basis of 25 major field of forensic and each topic was assigned as code. All the published article and trend in review of literature of forensic in the last five years in top five highly indexed journal were statistically analysed.

Results: Out of 4292 total number of articles considered for this study, 3475 were original articles, 563 case reports and 254 review articles. Review articles constitute 6% of total published articles. From the twenty-five topics drown out for major field of forensic, topic "Forensic biology and DNA" had maximum number of review articles with 15% contribution, "Forensic pathology" had 13% review article. Topic "Crime scene investigation", "Digital evidence" and "Torture" had lowest review articles with 0.4% contribution for each.

Conclusion: Review articles give brief review of the recent progress and direction of a particular topics.

Keywords: Review, Literature, Forensic, Trends, Article, Indexed, Publication.

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1. Introduction

Forensic science has a rising and optimistic future as new approaches, scientific expansion and technologies create new prospects that cannot yet be imagined. Nobody can envisage the technologies and new innovations that have to come, but everyone can definitely anticipate that they will eventuate and that they will bring into being new opportunities and prospects for forensic. Knowledge of forensics can be either by teaching, case-based learning, research and publications or by the development of forensic science epistemology. The leading way to reach the scientific community is specific work publications of individual or institutional-level research

publications.³ Research works are depictions of speciality development. The development and growth of a particular speciality is directly proportional to research work publication.⁴ Researchers have always made debates about the various routes to measuring scientific progress. Scientific research is not limited but rather a spectrum of questioning and answering the questions.⁵ Due to the implementation of newer instruments, equipment and software, there has been a rapid transformation of the topic of case reports and review of literature and research from old and conventional trends to more recent trends. Trends of research publications have to be evaluated timely to acknowledge the growth and advancement of the research publications. Possible

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advantages and drawbacks of the publications must be assessed by the scientific community, either by modifying them or framing a new setup in publication and research work for coming generation.6 In the early 21st century, several studies have evaluated the quality and quantity of research publications throughout the world. 7-9 Specific quantitative methods have been conducted to analyse published research in different scientific fields. 10,11 There are several forensic speciality journals. Much forensic-related research is published in many multidisciplinary journals as well. Only little evidence is available about the qualitative and quantitative progress of forensic research publications. Hence, there is a need to assess, analyse and review the publication trends and areas of focus in forensic journals in a simple, clear, systemic and scientific way so that publication trends in scientific journals can be easily understood. During publication in scientific journals, the research publication is scrutinised, which varies from formulation of the research questions, ethical review, review of literature for better acknowledgement.¹² Publication is one of the best methods of illuminating the scientific community regarding recent advancements in the scientific world. Literature of the particular speciality is the most critical element in the growth of the original research work. Review of literature is not only beneficial to curricular and instructional developers, but also useful for scientific researchers to recognise the critical issues to be built⁶. Thus, it can be asserted that review articles are the face of the research publications.

The aims of the present study are to analyse and evaluate the trends of publications in five highly indexed forensic journals, which are Forensic Science International: Genetics (FSI G), Forensic Science International (FSI), Journal of Forensic Sciences (JFS), International Journal of Legal Medicine (IJLM), and Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine (JFLM) from January 2019 to December 2023 concerning review articles.

2. Materials and Methods

The present study were a retrospective study which were conducted to interpret, analyse and evaluate the literature in the forensic field. The study design were based on five highly indexed forensic journals, which are Forensic Science International: Genetics (FSI G), Forensic Science International (FSI), Journal of Forensic Sciences (JFS), International Journal of Legal Medicine (IJLM), and Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine (JFLM). Data was collected by searching the website of the respective journal from January 2019 to December 2023.

Selected articles from respective journals were studied to acquire information for the evaluation. For ease of analysis, the screening of published review articles was done by segregating the topic of articles on the basis of the major field of forensics. These fields of forensics were divided into 25 topics and each topic was assigned as code mentioned in **Table 1**. All the data were obtained from the respective

journals on the basis of exclusion and inclusion criteria. All obtained data was arranged in tabulated forms based on each journal and year reflected in the evaluation. All the published articles and trends in the review of forensic literature in the last five years in the top five highly indexed journals were statistically analysed.

2.1. Inclusion criteria

Review literature published from January 2019 to December 2023 in above mentioned journals.

2.2. Exclusion criteria

- 1. Editorials.
- 2. Annual & book review,
- 3. Letter to editors.
- 4. Short communications,
- 5. Tips from readers and
- 6. Technical notes

The present study was done manually hence, for the convenience of data analysis, the primary screening was performed by sorting out the topic of published review of literature articles based on major fields of forensics.

Table 1: Coding system for sorting out the topics of review of literature

S. No.	Topic	Code
1	Forensic Biology and DNA	I
2	Forensic Anthropology	II
3	Forensic Odontology	III
4	Forensic Pathology	IV
5	Medicolegal Death Investigation	V
6	Forensic Toxicology	VI
7	Firearm and Tool marks	VII
8	Crime Scene Investigation	VII
9	Digital Evidence	IX
10	Trace Evidence	X
11	Fire and Arson Investigation	XI
12	Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology	XII
13	Forensic Radiology	XIII
14	Forensic Entomology	XIV
15	Taphonomy	XV
16	Dactylography	XVI
17	Gait Analysis	XVII
18	Torture	XVIII
19	Child Abuse	XIX
20	Sexual Violence	XX
21	Forensic Microbiology	XXI
22	Gender Based Violence	XXII
23	Medical Ethics	XXIII
24	Artificial Intelligence	XXIV
25	Miscellaneous	XXV

3. Results

Results of the present study showed that review article 254 (6%) were least number of articles published followed by case reports 563 (13%) whereas, original research 3475

(81%) were highest number of the article published (**Figure** 1). In year 2019, 803 original research, 122 case reports and 59 review articles were published, in year 2020, 809 original research, 105 case reports and 50 review articles were published, in year 2021, 760 original research, 153 case reports and 48 review articles were published, in year 2022, 648 original research, 101 case reports and 49 review articles were published and in year 2023, 455 original research, 82 case reports and 48 review articles were published (Figure 2). Yearly published review articles were 59, 50, 48, 49 and 48 in the year 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 respectively (**Figure 3**). Total number of articles published during last five years from the journal FSI G were 585 which consist of 548 original research, 16 case reports and 21 review articles, from the journal FSI total articles were 1507 which consist of 1310 original articles, 115 case reports and 82 review articles, from the journal JOFS total articles were 888 which consist of 636 original articles, 226 case reports and 26 review articles, from the journal IJLM total article were 877 which consist of 716 original articles, 113 case reports and 48 review articles and from the journal JFLM total articles were 553 which consist of 383 original articles, 93 case reports and 77 review articles (Figure 4). In the year 2019 total number of articles published from the journal FSI G were 132 which consist of 123 original research, 1 case report and 8 review articles, from the journal FSI total articles were 392 which consist of 332 original research, 37 case reports and 23 review articles, from the journal JOFS total articles were 173 which consist of 100 original research, 66 case reports and 7 review articles, from the journal IJLM total articles were 165 which consist of 142 original research, 17 case reports and 6 review articles and from the journal JFLM total articles were 122 which consist of 106 original research, 1 case reports and 15 review articles (Table 2). In the year 2020 total number of articles published from the journal FSI G were 133 which consist of 124 original research, 7 case reports and 2 review articles, from the journal FSI were 327 which consist of 295 original research, 15 case reports and 17 review articles, from the journal JOFS were 202 which consist of 157 original research, 39 case reports and 6 review articles, from the journal IJLM were 190 which consist of 154 original research, 26 case reports and 10 review articles and from the journal JFLM were 112 which consist of 79 original research, 18 case reports and 15 review articles (**Table 2**). In the year 2021 total number of articles published from the journal FSI G were 107 which consist of 93 original research, 5 case reports and 9 review articles, from the journal FSI were 338 which consist of 286 original research, 38 case reports and 14 review articles, from the journal JOFS were 178 which consist of 128 original research, 45 case reports and 5 review articles, from the journal IJLM were 213 which consist of 170 original research, 34 case reports and 9 review articles and from the journal JFLM were 125 which consist of 83 original research, 31 case reports and 11 review articles (Table 2). In the year 2022 total number of articles published from the journal FSI G were 125 which consist of 122 original

research, 2 case reports and 1 review articles, from the journal FSI were 243 which consist of 216 original research, 13 case reports and 14 review articles, from the journal JOFS were 186 which consist of 135 original research, 46 case reports and 5 review articles, from the journal IJLM were 150 which consist of 119 original research, 20 case reports and 11 review articles and from the journal JFLM were 94 which consist of 56 original research, 20 case reports and 18 review articles (**Table 2**). In the year 2023 total number of articles published from the journal FSI G were 88 which consist of 86 original research, 1 case reports and 1 review articles, from the journal FSI were 207 which consist of 181 original research, 12 case reports and 14 review articles, from the journal JOFS were 149 which consist of 116 original research, 30 case reports and 3 review articles, from the journal IJLM were 159 which consist of 131 original research, 16 case reports and 12 review articles and from the journal JFLM were 100 which consist of 59 original research, 23 case reports and 18 review articles (Table 2). Review article published in the years 2019,2020,2021,2022 and 2023 were 8,2,9,1 and 1 respectively from the Journal FSI G, were 23,17,14,14 and 14 respectively, from the journal FSI, were 7,6,5,5 and 3 respectively, from the journal IJLM were 6,10,9,11 and 12 whereas, from the journal JFLM were 15,15,11,18 and 18 respectively (**Figure 5**).

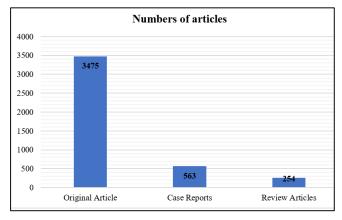


Figure 1: Total articles published in last 5 years

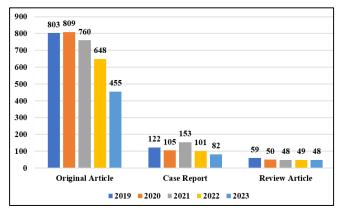


Figure 2: Year wise article published in last 5 years

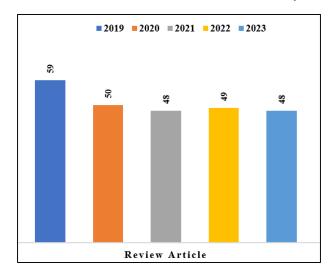


Figure 3: Year wise review article published in last 5 years

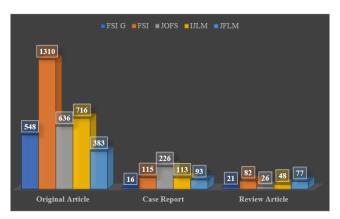


Figure 4: Total number of article published from 2019 to 2023 in top five journals

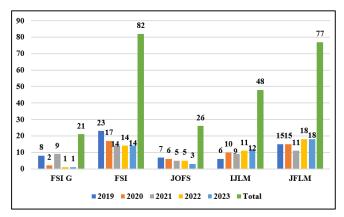


Figure 5: Total number of review article published from 2019 to 2023 among top five journals

Out of 8 review articles published in 2019 from journal FSI G, 6 article belonged to topic I, 1 article belonged to topic V and 1 article belonged to XXI. Out of 2 review articles published in 2020 from the journal FSI G, 1 article belonged to topic I and 1 other article belonged to topic XXV. Out of 9 review articles published in 2021 from the journal FSI G, 8 article belonged to topic I and 1 article belonged to topic XX. In 2022 only 1 review article was published which belonged to topic I. In 2023 also only 1 review article was published

which belonged to topic I (Table 3). Out of 23 review articles published in 2019 from the journal FSI, 4 article belonged to topic I, 2 review article each belonged to topic II, X and XXV one each review article belonged to topic III, IV, VIII, XII, XV and XVII, 7 article belonged to topic. Out of 17 review articles published in 2020 from the journal FSI, 4 article belonged to topic II, 2 article each belonged to topic IV, VI, XXIV and XXV, one review article each belonged to topic VII, IX, X, XVI and XXI. Out of 14 review articles published in 2021 from the journal FSI, 2 article each belonged to topic I, II and XXII, one review article each belonged to topic IV, VII, X, and XXV. Out of 14 review articles published in 2022 from the journal FSI, 2 article each belonged to topic I, III and V, 1 article each belonged to topic II, IV, X, XXI and XXIV, 3 review article belonged to topic VI. Out of 14 review articles published in 2023 from the journal FSI, 1 article each belonged to topic I, II, III, IV, V, XV and XVI, 2 article each belonged to topic VI and XI, 3 review article belonged to topic X (**Table 4**). Out of 7 review articles published in 2019 from the journal JOFS, 1 article each belonged to topic I and XVII, 2 article belonged to topic IV, 3 review article belonged to topic XII. Out of 6 review articles published in 2020 from the journal JOFS, 1 article each belonged to topic II, IV, VI, and XII, 2 article belonged to topic XVI. Out of 5 review articles published in 2021 from the journal JOFS, 1 article each belonged to topic I, XII and XXV, 2 article belonged to topic VI. Out of 5 review articles published in 2022 from the journal JOFS, 1 article each belonged to topic I, II, III, IV and VI. Out of 3 review articles published in 2023 from the journal JOFS, 1 article each belonged to topic III, IV and VI (Table 5). Out of 6 review articles published in 2019 from the journal IJLM, 1 article each belonged to topic I, VI, VII and XXIII, 2 article belonged to topic V. Out of 10 review articles published in 2020 from the journal IJLM, 2 article each belonged to topic I and V, 1 article each belonged to topic III, VI, VII, XIV, XV and XXV. Out of 9 review articles published in 2021 from the journal IJLM, 1 article each belonged to topic I, IV, XIII, XIV and XIX, 2 article each belonged to topic V and VII. Out of 12 review articles published in 2022 from the journal IJLM, 2 article belonged to topic I, 4 article belonged to topic III, 3 article belonged to topic 6, and 1 article each belonged to topic XIII, XXI and XXV. Out of 11 review articles published in 2023 from the journal IJLM, 1 article each belonged to topic I, II, VI, XV, XIX and XXIV, 3 article belonged to topic III, and 2 article belonged to topic IV (**Table 6**). Out of 15 review articles published in 2019 from the journal JFLM, 3 article each belonged to topic III, IV, VI and XII, 1 article belonged to topic V, and 2 article belonged to topic XIV. Out of 15 review articles published in 2020 from the journal JFLM, 2 article belonged to topic III, 4 article belonged to topic IV, 1 article each belonged to topic V, VI, XII, XX, XXII and XXIII, 3 belonged to topic XXV. Out of 11 review articles published in 2021 from the journal JFLM, 5 article belonged to topic IV, 1 article each belonged to topic V, VI, XII, XVIII, XXI and XXIII. Out of 18 review articles published in 2022 from the journal JFLM, 2 article each belonged to topic I, VI, XII and XXV, 1 article each belonged to topic II, VII, XIX and XXIII, 3 article each belonged to topic IV and XX. Out of 18 review articles published in 2023 from the journal JFLM, 2 article each belonged to topic II and XXV, 5 article belonged to topic III,

and 4 article each belonged to topic IV and VI, 1 article belonged to topic XII (**Table 7**). From the twenty-five topics drown out for major field of forensic, topic I has maximum number of review articles with 15% share followed by topic IV with 13% review article. Topic VIII, IX and XVIII shared lowest review articles with 0.4% each (**Table 8**).

Table 2: Total number of article published from 2019 to 2023 among top five journals

Journal		2019			2020			2021			2022			2023	
	OA	CR	RA												
FSI G	123	1	8	124	7	2	93	5	9	122	2	1	86	1	1
FSI	332	37	23	295	15	17	286	38	14	216	13	14	181	12	14
JOFS	100	66	7	157	39	6	128	45	5	135	46	5	116	30	3
IJLM	142	17	6	154	26	10	170	34	9	119	20	11	131	16	12
JFLM	106	1	15	79	18	15	83	31	11	56	20	18	59	23	18

Table 3: Topic wise review article published from FSI G in last five years

Years	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
I	6	1	8	1	1
П	0	0	0	0	0
III	0	0	0	0	0
IV	0	0	0	0	0
V	1	0	0	0	0
VI	0	0	0	0	0
VII	0	0	0	0	0
VIII	0	0	0	0	0
IX	0	0	0	0	0
X	0	0	0	0	0
XI	0	0	0	0	0
XII	0	0	0	0	0
XIII	0	0	0	0	0
XIV	0	0	0	0	0
XV	0	0	0	0	0
XVI	0	0	0	0	0
XVII	0	0	0	0	0
XVIII	0	0	0	0	0
XIX	0	0	0	0	0
XX	0	0	1	0	0
XXI	1	0	0	0	0
XXII	0	0	0	0	0
XXIII	0	0	0	0	0
XXIV	0	0	0	0	0
XXV	0	1	0	0	0

Table 4: Topic wise review article published from FSI in last five years

Years	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
I	4	0	2	2	1
П	2	4	2	1	1
III	1	0	0	2	1
IV	1	2	1	1	1
V	0	0	0	2	1
VI	7	2	4	3	2
VII	0	1	1	0	0
VIII	1	0	0	0	0
IX	0	1	0	0	0
X	2	1	1	1	3
XI	0	0	0	0	2
XII	1	0	0	0	0
XIII	0	0	0	0	0
XIV	0	0	0	0	0
XV	1	0	0	0	1
XVI	0	1	0	0	1
XVII	1	0	0	0	0
XVIII	0	0	0	0	0
XIX	0	0	0	0	0
XX	0	0	0	0	0
XXI	0	1	0	1	0
XXII	0	0	2	0	0
XXIII	0	0	0	0	0
XXIV	0	2	0	1	0
XXV	2	2	1	0	0

Table 5: Topic wise review article published from JOFS in last five years

Years	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
I	1	0	1	1	0
II	0	1	0	1	0
III	0	0	0	1	1
IV	2	1	0	1	1
V	0	0	0	0	0
VI	0	1	2	1	1
VII	0	0	0	0	0
VIII	0	0	0	0	0
IX	0	0	0	0	0
X	0	0	0	0	0
XI	0	0	0	0	0
XII	3	1	1	0	0
XIII	0	0	0	0	0
XIV	0	0	0	0	0
XV	0	0	0	0	0
XVI	0	2	0	0	0
XVII	1	0	0	0	0

Table 5 Continued							
XVIII	0	0	0	0	0		
XIX	0	0	0	0	0		
XX	0	0	0	0	0		
XXI	0	0	0	0	0		
XXII	0	0	0	0	0		
XXIII	0	0	0	0	0		
XXIV	0	0	0	0	0		
XXV	0	0	1	0	0		

Table 6: Topic wise review article published from IJLM in last five years

Years	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
I	1	2	1	2	1
II	0	0	0	0	1
Ш	0	1	0	4	3
IV	0	0	1	0	2
V	2	2	2	0	0
VI	1	1	0	3	1
VII	1	1	2	0	0
VIII	0	0	0	0	0
IX	0	0	0	0	0
X	0	0	0	0	0
XI	0	0	0	0	0
XII	0	0	0	0	0
XIII	0	0	1	1	0
XIV	0	1	1	0	0
XV	0	1	0	0	1
XVI	0	0	0	0	0
XVII	0	0	0	0	0
XVIII	0	0	0	0	0
XIX	0	0	1	0	1
XX	0	0	0	0	0
XXI	0	0	0	1	0
XXII	0	0	0	0	0
XXIII	0	0	0	0	0
XXIV	0	0	0	0	1
XXV	1	1	0	1	0

Table 7: Topic wise review article published from JFLM in last five years

Years	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Ι	0	0	0	2	0
II	0	0	0	1	2
III	3	2	0	0	5
IV	3	4	5	3	4
V	1	1	1	0	0
VI	3	1	1	2	4

Table 7 Continued							
VII	0	0	0	1	0		
VIII	0	0	0	0	0		
IX	0	0	0	0	0		
X	0	0	0	0	0		
XI	0	0	0	0	0		
XII	3	1	1	2	1		
XIII	0	0	0	0	0		
XIV	2	0	0	0	0		
XV	0	0	0	0	0		
XVI	0	0	0	0	0		
XVII	0	0	0	0	0		
XVIII	0	0	1	0	0		
XIX	0	0	0	1	0		
XX	0	1	0	3	0		
XXI	0	0	1	0	0		
XXII	0	1	0	0	0		
XXIII	0	1	1	1	0		
XXIV	0	0	0	0	0		
XXV	0	3	0	2	2		

Table 8: Total number wise review articles and their percentage according to topic

Topic	Number	Percentage
I	38	15
II	16	6.2
III	24	9.5
IV	33	13
V	13	5.1
VI	30	11.7
VII	17	6.6
VIII	1	0.4
IX	1	0.4
X	8	3.2
XI	2	0.8
XII	14	5.5
XIII	2	0.8
XIV	4	1.6
XV	4	1.6
XVI	4	1.6
XVII	2	0.8
XVIII	1	0.4
XIX	3	1.2
XX	5	2
XXI	5	2
XXII	3	1.2
XXIII	3	1.2
XXIV	4	1.6
XV	17	66

4. Discussion

The present study revealed that there is little information about trends in the publication of review articles in forensics. Out of the 4292 total number of articles considered for this study, 3475 were original articles, 563 case reports and 254 review articles. Review articles constitute 6%, whereas case reports constitute 13% and original articles constitute 81% of total published articles (Figure 1). This indicates that original articles share major space in publication followed by case reports and review article.¹³ It is a good sign for the original article to be a major contributor as they are contemplating it as the backbone of forensic research.¹⁴ Amongst the top five journals selected in this study for the period 2019-2023, it was observed that the maximum number of total articles of 1507 were published by FSI with the maximum number of review articles 82, followed by JFLM with 77 review articles and the least number of review articles 21 was published by FSI G (Figure 4). A maximum number of review articles were published in the year 2019 (Figure 2 & 3). The maximum number of review articles were published by FSI journals in the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 (**Table 2**), whereas in the years 2022 and 2023, the maximum number of review articles was published by JFLM journals (Table 2). From the twenty-five topics drowned out for the major field of forensics, topic I (Forensic biology and DNA) has the maximum number of review articles with 15% contribution, followed by topic IV (Forensic pathology) with 13% review articles. Topic VI (Forensic toxicology) and III (Forensic odontology) shared 3rd and 4th spot respectively having 11.7% and 9.5% of the review articles (**Table 8**). Topics VIII (Crime scene investigation), IX (Digital evidence) and XVIII (Torture) shared the lowest review articles with a 0.4% contribution for each. Most of the review articles related to the topic 'forensic biology and DNA' have been published under sections on DNA analysis in estimation of postmortem interval estimation, DNA methylation as marker for human body fluid identification, massive parallel sequencing, biomarker for traumatic brain injuries, transcriptome study, DNA analysis of hair, biomarker for sudden unexplained cardiac death, DNA database, direct PCR and Rapid DNA outlook for sexual assault testing kit, proteomics, chimaerism, familial analysis of DNA and criminal investigation, DNA preservation, touch DNA collection, facilitators and inhibitors of DNA, microhalophytes in genetics, transfer of DNA, probabilistic genotyping software (PGS), genetic genealogy, nuclear mitochondrial DNA segments (NUMTs), DNA extraction from hard human tissue. The magnificent and spectacular potential of DNA technology as a tool for the identification of an individual brought an immense difference to the system of criminal justice.15 Most human body cells have DNA, which is exclusive for each individual and everybody leaves a trace of it everywhere he or she goes. Forensic investigators benefit from this by bringing out inferences in the identification of the accused and victim at crime scenes. 16 This is the reason behind the increasing review of literature in 'forensic biology

and DNA'. The limitation of the present study is that data referring to forensic review of literature in the top five journals of the last five years is not representative of overall review article output in the field of forensics. Methods used for ease of analysis; the screening of published articles was done by segregating the topic of articles on the basis of major field of forensics is likely to result in deviation from the actual representation of data. However, despite this limitation, the present study provides an index view of trends in the review of literature in forensic journal publications and their topic-wise segregation to determine the direction of review article publications.

5. Conclusions

Review articles provide concise summaries of the recent progress and direction in a particular topic. It not only lays a characteristic outline of the existing literature on the topic but also narrates how the proposed research is related to previous research in statistics. The review article reveals the originality and applicability of the research study. The present study analyses and evaluates the trends of publications in five highly indexed forensic journals from January 2019 to December 2023 concerning review articles. Within the limitations of the present study, the following conclusions were summaries-

- 1. Review articles share a lower percentage of articles in comparison to original research and case reports.
- 2. There is an increase in the trend of review of literature for the topic of "forensic biology and DNA" with a 15% share. Crime scene investigation, digital evidence, and torture shared the lowest number of review articles with 0.4% each in the last five years.
- 3. There is an increase in demands not only for collecting and examining the tissue, but also for performing autopsies. Hence, review articles on forensic pathology have also increased in the last five years and shared 13% of review articles.

6. Source of Funding

Nil.

7. Conflict of Interest

Nil.

8. Ethical Clearance

Not required since data were collected from already published article.

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