

Original Research Paper

Profile of Unnatural Deaths in Females A Retrospective Study

¹CK Pawar, ²DS Bhullar, ³SS Oberoi, ⁴KK Aggarwal

Abstract

Right from the time of conception in her mother's womb, till her death, a woman is subjected to one or the other crime/ torture/ inhuman behavior. Crimes against women are increasing at an alarming pace in our country. The male-female ratio is also declining.

This study was undertaken at the Department of Forensic Medicine, GMC Patiala, to understand the contribution of social conditions towards the main causes of unnatural female deaths. A total of 100 cases were studied. Of these, 55% cases were from rural area; 68% were in the age group of 18 to 30 years. Majority of the victims comprised married female. Forty one percent of them died within seven years of marriage; 55% victims were matriculate and 11% were illiterate. Most of the deaths, 57% were reported as accidental, while 30% were reported as suicidal and 11% were homicidal in manner. The most common precipitating factor was dowry. Maximum victims died as a result of burn injuries. In homicidal cases, 45% victims were killed by burning. Poisoning was the commonest cause of suicidal deaths, 60%. In accidental deaths, 53% victims died as a result of accidental burning.

Key Words: Dowry deaths, Bride burning, Kitchen accidents, Crime

Introduction:

From time immemorial, instances of crime against women existed; only the pattern varied with time and place. Women always have been at receiving end in the male dominated society. Types and trends of crime however, kept changing with change in mind sets and techniques. With the modern woman coming out of the confines of her home, either to study/ socialize or work, situational and institutional crimes have been on rise.

In the recent times, there has been a phenomenal spurt in violence and crime against females and this has not only been the concern of the contemporary society but also is present since time immemorial.

Working women were most commonly affected and they have to go through various vital events such as marriage, change of social environment, job responsibility, bearing and rearing children, for which they have to face mental, physical, psychological or social stress.

Among all these evils, "bride burning" commonly known as dowry deaths, assumes much importance. Constitutionally women were provided special protection under Article 21 and Article 14. Time and again the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India extended the ambit of Article 21 and held that mere existence is not the right to live; to live be to have the right to live with dignity. [5] In the present study, an attempt was made to find out various causes of unnatural deaths in women with special reference to death within 7 years of marriage.

Aims & Objective:

The present study was undertaken in order to find out a correlation between marriage, socio economic status, educational background and other significant factors responsible for such deaths and to understand the pattern of unnatural female deaths and analyze the same.

Material and Method:

The material for the present study comprised 100 cases of unnatural female deaths aged between 18–45 years, brought to the mortuary of the Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Government Medical College, Patiala, Punjab, during the year 2010 and 2011. The cases were taken randomly from the cases brought to the mortuary.

A standardized pro-forma specially designed for this purpose was used and filled in each case after detailed interviews with the

Corresponding Author:

¹Demonstrator,
Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology,
Govt. Medical College and Hospital, Chandigarh
E-mail: ckmoonshine0@gmail.com

²Assist. Prof, Govt. Medical College, Patiala

³Assoc.Prof,

⁴Professor

DOR: 01.10.2013 DOA: 29.05.2014

investigating officials and accompanying regarding manner of death, age, socio economic background, level of education, occupation, marital status and rural/ urban residence status.

The relevant samples/ viscera were subjected to chemical analysis on autopsy to establish the poison consumed in suspected cases of poisoning.

Results and Discussion:

A total of 100 cases were included in this study, the most common age group in our study was 18-30 years and married females outnumbered the unmarried ones by 2.6:1. (Fig. 1) Our results are in consonance with those of other workers in the field. [2-5]

Majority of the victims (41%), died within 7 years of marriage (Fig. 2), while 55% were from rural background. (Fig. 3) Again, 55% were educated up to matriculation level. (Fig. 4) Similar findings were reported by others. [4-8]

In our study Sixty-two percent females were house-wives while 35% females were employed in the private sector. (Table 1)

Maximum victims belonged to the Sikh community (60%), followed by Hindus, (32%). (Table 2) This can be explained by the fact that Patiala, being a Sikh dominates city and the Punjab state's most common religion being Sikhism; the victims were also mostly Sikhs.

The most common manner of death was accidental, 57%, followed by suicides, 30%. Burns were involved in 38% of unnatural female deaths, followed by poisoning, 31%.

Burns also accounted for maximum cases of Accidents (53%) and homicides (45%); while poisoning was responsible for maximum cases of suicides, 60%. (Table 3)

Dowry was the most common precipitating factor in the deaths of married women. (Fig. 5) A host of other researchers reported similar findings. [9-14]

Fig. 1: Marital Status

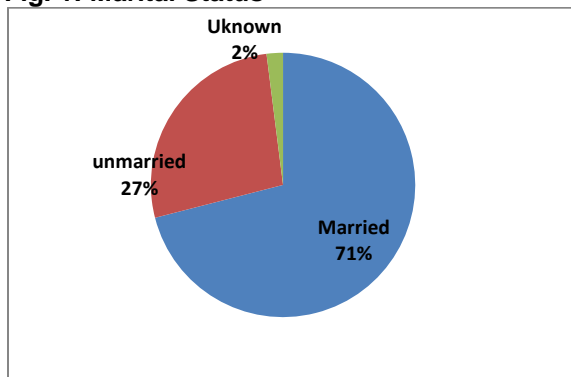


Fig. 2: Marital duration

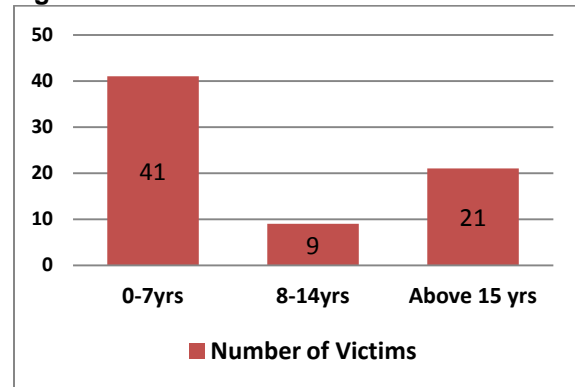


Fig. 3: Urban/Rural Distribution

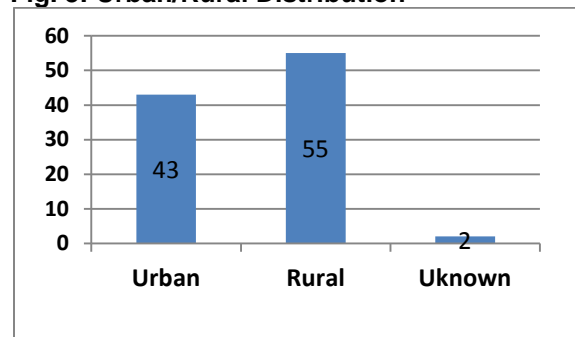


Fig. 4: Educational Status

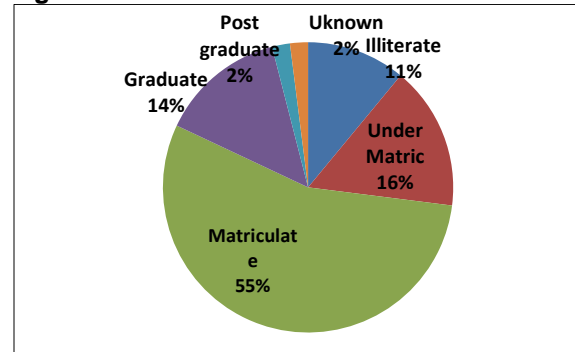


Fig. 5: Precipitating Factors

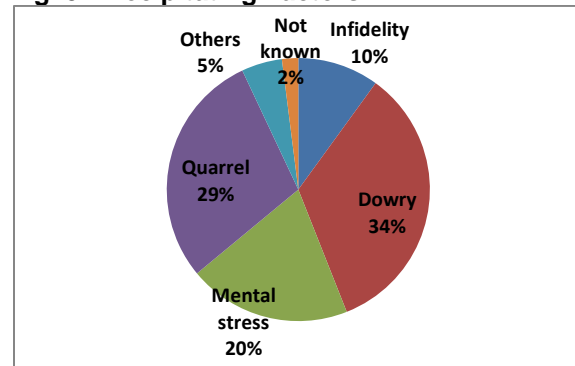


Table 1: Occupational Status

S. No.	Occupation	Number(n=100)
1	House wife	62(62%)
2	Govt. service	1(1%)
3	Private service	35(35%)
4	Unknown	2(2%)

Table 2: Religion wise Distribution

S. No.	Religion	Number(n=100)
1	Sikh	60(60%)
2	Hindu	36(36%)
3	Muslim	2(2%)
4	Unknown	2(2%)

**Table 3
Causative Agents and their Distribution in Homicidal, Suicidal & Accidental Deaths (As Reported By Police)**

S. No.	Causative Agent	Homicidal Deaths	Suicidal Deaths	Accidental Deaths	Total
1	Burn	5(45%)	3(10%)	30(53%)	38
2	Poison	-	18(60%)	13(21%)	31
3	Drowning	-	3(10%) + 1(UDT)	-	4
4	Hanging	-	6(20%)	-	6
5	Strangulation	1(9%)	-	-	1
6	Vehicular Accidents	-	-	10(18%)	10
7	Railway Accidents	-	-	3(6%) + 1(UDT)	4
8	Combination	1(9%)	-	-	1
9	Homicidal Injuries	2(19%)	-	-	2
10	Criminal Abortion	1(9%)	-	-	1
11	Acid intake	-	-	1(2%)	1
12	Firearm	1(9%)	-	-	1
	Total	11	30	57	100

Manner of death in 2 victims is undetermined (UDT)