

Study of Suspicious Deaths in Middle Aged Married Females

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Abstract

Introduction – Female deaths, especially young married females always arouse suspicions, but later age females who have crossed 30 years of age are not the cases which draws our attention. So, we conducted an observational study for a period of 1 year in autopsy of SSG Hospital, Baroda.

Material & Method – Of all cases coming for the postmortem examination, cases in which the victim is married female and above 30 years of age were taken for the study when there was suspicion regarding the cause of death.

Results – Victims having Illiterates (16.66 %), primary (45.83 %), secondary (33.33 %) school education were total 95.82 % of cases. It was observed that 72.91 % of deaths were suicidal in nature followed by accidental (22.91 %) and homicidal deaths (4.16 %).

Statistical analysis –The data collected was analyzed using MS Excel worksheets for averages and percentage.

Conclusion – Education holds a very pivotal role in the prevention of unnatural deaths in females.

Key-words – Married females, suspicious death

Introduction

In an autopsy whenever there is a case of married female for post-mortem examination, there is always suspicion raised by the family of the female. So, in every case of married female death we work extra cautious. Specifically, if the married female is young. But married females who are more than 30 years in age, these cases do not attract our great attention. So, to identify profiles and patterns in suspicious deaths in married females who are more than 30 years in age, current study was designed. The current study was undertaken at P.M. room of S.S.G. Hospital, Vadodara to study the profiles and patterns in suspicious deaths in married females of more than 30 years age group. Out of total cases coming from post-mortem examination total 48 cases were

selected based on inclusion, exclusion criteria.

Material & Method

An autopsy study of suspicious deaths in married females of above 30 years age was carried out in this Medical College from 1st August 2017 to 31st July 2018. A total 48 autopsy cases of unnatural deaths in married females with age more than 30 years were studied during the study period.

Inclusion Criteria:

The material for the present study consists of the cases of suspicious deaths of married female with age more than 30 years which have been brought for medico-legal autopsy.

Exclusion Criteria:

4. Deaths due to mass casualties or road traffic accidents.
5. Deaths due to natural disease.
6. Unidentified and Decomposed female dead

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bodies.

Before performing autopsy, all these cases were studied in details from indoor case records, hospital records (where applicable), history obtained from relatives of deceased and police inquest. A standard proforma was used to collect information regarding age of deceased, duration since marriage, educational background of deceased and husband and types of family. A careful and complete autopsy was performed in each case. The viscera and necessary samples were preserved in required cases. Statistical analysis of data was done and presented as result and observation in tabular form, graphs and charts.

Statistical Method

The data so collected was tabulated and required calculations were done using MS Excel 2010. No other statistical method was required.

Results

Out of total 1925 autopsies performed in 1-year study period, 138 were females of all ages with suspicious deaths. From them 48 cases with age more than 30 years were selected as per inclusion, exclusion criteria. The results are as per tables below.

Table No.1: Distribution of cases according to age.

No.	Age of Deceased	No. of Cases	Percentage
1.	31-40 years	32	66.66 %
2.	40-50 years	12	25.00 %
3.	>50 years	4	8.33 %
Total		48	100 %

Maximum number (66.66 %) of deaths were observed in the age group of 31-40 years followed by 40-50 years (25 %).

Table No.2: Number of cases having children

No.	Deceased having children	No. of Cases	Percentage
1.	Yes	44	91.66 %
2.	No	4	8.33 %
Total		48	100 %

It was observed that 91.66 % of female victims had children while 8.33% female victims had no child.

Table No 3: Distribution of cases according to education of victim

No.	Education of Deceased	No. of Cases	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	8	16.66 %
2.	Primary	22	45.83 %
3.	Secondary	16	33.33 %
4.	Graduation	2	4.16 %
5.	Post-graduation	0	0 %
Total		48	100 %

Maximum number of married female deaths cases 45.83 % were observed in females having just primary or less education. Victims having Illiterates (16.66 %), primary (45.83 %), secondary (33.33 %) school education were total 95.82 % of cases.

Table No. 4: Distribution of cases according education of their husband

No.	Education of Husband	No. of Cases	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	10	20.83 %
2.	Primary	16	33.33 %
3.	Secondary	12	25 %
4.	Graduation	10	20.83 %
5.	Post-graduation	0	0 %
Total		48	100 %

Maximum number of suspicious deaths (79.83 %) in married females occurred where their husbands were poorly educated which include Illiterate (20.83%), primary (33.33 %), secondary (25 %).

Table No. 5: Distribution of cases according to cause and manner of Death

No.	Cause of Death	Manner of death			No. of Cases
		Accidental	Suicidal	Homicidal	
1.	Burns & its complications	6 (12.50 %)	10 (20.83 %)	0 (0 %)	16 (33.33 %)
2.	Hanging	0 (0 %)	10 (20.83 %)	0 (0 %)	10 (20.83 %)
3.	Poisoning	2 (4.16 %)	14 (29.17 %)	0 (0 %)	16 (33.33 %)
4.	Drowning	1 (2.08 %)	1 (2.08 %)	0 (0 %)	2 (4.16 %)
5.	Physical Assault	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)	2 (4.16 %)	2 (4.16 %)
6.	Electrocution	1 (2.08 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)	1 (2.08 %)
7.	Snake bite	1 (2.08 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)	1 (2.08 %)
Total		11 (22.92 %)	35 (72.92 %)	2 (4.16 %)	48 (100 %)

It was observed that 72.92% of deaths were suicidal in nature followed by accidental (22.92%) and homicidal deaths (4.16 %). Total 20.83 % of deaths from burns were suicidal in nature, 12.50 % of burns were accidental.

Discussion –

An autopsy study of suspicious deaths in married females of above 30 years age was carried out in this Medical College from 1st August 2017 to 31st July 2018. A total 48 autopsy cases of unnatural deaths in married females with age more than 30 years were studied during the study period. During this one-year period a total of 1925 medico-legal autopsies were conducted, out of that 138 cases (7.16 %) were all age females with suspicious deaths. Which is comparable to what was reported by Shrivastava A.K.¹, Darji J.A.² et al (9.25%), Verma R.K.³ et al (7.74%) and similar to et al (4.95%). Out of which 48 cases (2.49%) were suspicious deaths of married female with age more than 30 years.

In the present study (Table No 1), Maximum number (66.66 %) of deaths were observed in the age group of 31-40 years followed by 40-50 years (25 %). The study conducted by Dere R.C.⁴ et al most common age group of unnatural death in females was 21-30 years (46.45%). Sharma B. R.⁵ et al noted that higher incidence (53.37%) of unnatural female deaths were in the age group of 21-23 years. The findings in the present study are consistent with the study carried out by Zine K.U.⁶ et al (41.30%). This may be due to the fact that the common age of marriage in our region and many regions all over India is 18 to 23 years and deaths due to torture and mental harassment by husband and in-law's in relation to dowry in newly married females occurs in initial few years of married life. Also, this is the most active period of life where the females are expected to perform work related to cooking and allied work hence are more prone to accidents during kitchen related activities.

In present study (Table No.2), It was observed that 91.66 % of female victims had children while 8.33% female victims had no child. As this study was in more than 30 years females & this might be due to after marriage there is a family and social pressure on the new couple for begetting child and one of the purposes of marriage is continuing the legacy of family.

In present study, (Table no. 3) Maximum number of married female deaths cases (45.83 %) were observed in females having just primary or less education. Victims having Illiterates (16.66 %), primary (45.83 %), secondary (33.33 %) school education were total 95.82 % of cases. It was clearly observed that as educational status rises in females, the death rate decreases. Present study is almost similar to Pankaj Prajapati⁷ et al Parmar V.N.⁸ et al, Zine K.U.⁶ et al and Darji J. A.² et al. This

might be due to the fact that female's professional is not dependent economically on their family members are less affected by violence and dowry death as compared to less educated females who are usually dependent on their family. Shrivastava A.K.¹ et al (37.76%) found that most of the females were educated up to primary school. Kulshreshtha P.¹ et al (50.42%) and Darji J.A.² et al (61.16%) found that most of the females were illiterate. This might due to change in lifestyle, socio-economic condition and population affected in that region and national capital. According to Zine K.U.⁶ et al. 72.3% victims were educated less than matriculation, reason for which may be dependence of less educated women on husbands and or in-laws and hence becoming victims.

In present study, (Table no. 4) Maximum number of suspicious deaths (79.83 %) in married females occurred where their husbands were poorly educated which include Illiterate (20.83 %), primary (33.33 %), secondary (25 %). It was observed that if the husband is educated then the deaths of married female deaths are less. The education of husband up to graduation level increases the chances of him becoming skilled worker and thereby increased chances of job opportunity. Also because of education, the person will be in position of taking proper decision with thinking rationally when conflict between family members arises.

From table No.5 it was observed that in accidental deaths in married female accidental burns was most common cause of death (37.50 %, 6 out of 16 accidental death cases). Quite different were noted by Buchade D.⁹ et al (62.02%). Accidental burns can be explained by females spending most of the time in kitchen and thereby coming in contact with fire following inadequate precautions while cooking on cooking gas, kerosene stove and open unguarded chulha. Wearing highly inflammable synthetic clothes, loose clothes like sari of the victims are highly susceptible to catch fire suddenly while cooking causing kitchen accidents. Also, the relatives of females might give the false history. In suicidal deaths, poisoning (40% - 14 out of 35 suicide cases) was most common followed by hanging (28.57 % - 10 out of 35 suicide cases) followed by burns (28.57 % - 10 out of 35 suicide cases) followed by Drowning (2.86 %). Similar findings were observed by Pankaj Prajapati¹⁰ et al in his study on pattern of suicidal deaths in females (35.51% deaths by poisoning, 31.16% by hanging). Easy availability of household and pesticidal poisons in rural population might be cause for these preferences. Likewise, easy availability of sari or dupatta, kerosene

and matchstick might be responsible for such trends in suicidal deaths by hanging and burns.

Abbreviations -NIL

Statement of Conflict of Interest – NONE

Statement of Informed consent – Informed consent of relatives taken

Statement of Human and animal ethics – No ethical issues involved.

Source of Funding - Self

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