

Original Article

Comprehensive Study of Unnatural Deaths in Females of Age Group 15–45 years in Allahabad

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ABSTRACT

A significant number of unnatural deaths of females occur in the age group of 15–45 years because this is the age when young girls or women have to go through the important changes of their lives such as education, marriage, job, family responsibility etc. A prospective cross-sectional study was carried out between 11 April 2012 to 10 April 2013 at mortuary, S.R.N. Hospital, Allahabad with the main aim of determining various epidemiological aspects, causes and manner of unnatural deaths of females in the age group of 15–45 years. Amongst 2857 autopsies performed during the study period, 864 (30.24%) victims were female. Amongst 864 female victims, 593 (68.63%) females were in the age group studied. The age group of 15–25 years included maximum number of deaths (54.13%) in study sample ($n=593$). Burns was the most common mode of death. Septicaemic shock was the most common cause of death (47.96%). Unnatural deaths were highest in Hindu females (78.07%) and higher in rural (71.84%) than in urban (28.16%) areas. Out of 467 married females, 241 (51.61%) died within 7 years of their marriage, most probably due to widely prevalent evil of 'dowry death' in India. Accident was the most common manner of death (46.37%). A comprehensive study was done revealing the need of various socio-cultural and legal measures to be taken to handle the grave results of this study.

Keywords: Unnatural death, Cause of death, Dowry death, Socio-cultural and legal measures

INTRODUCTION

Throughout most of India's history, women have been targeted as unimportant, burdensome and disposable. The tragedy begins shortly after conception and continues until their deaths. From time immemorial, crime against women existed, only pattern varied with time and place. Women have always been at the receiving end of the male-dominated society. Types and trends of crime, however, kept changing with change in mind-set and techniques. In our society, a significant number of female deaths occur due to unnatural causes. Death is called unnatural if it results directly from an injury or poison or indirectly an injury which may precipitate pre-existing natural disease in an individual. In other words, death is unnatural when caused prematurely against the order of nature by injury,

poison or other means of violence. This could be homicidal, suicidal, accidental or of unexplained origin.

Unnatural causes of death amount a big fraction of deaths in adult females and amongst that the age group of 15–45 years is most vulnerable because this is the age when young girls or women have to go through independently, for various vital events such as education, marriage, change of social environment, job responsibility, family responsibility, bearing and rearing children, for which they have to face mental, physical, psychological and social stress and many times premature unnatural deaths! The high incidence of unnatural deaths in this age group is also due to deaths of newly married females within first few years of their marriage. The most obvious reason behind such deaths is unending demands of dowry by their

husbands and/or in-laws, for which they torture the bride in such a way that she commits suicide, either by burning, poisoning, hanging, jumping from terrace or by some other means. Its increasing incidence is symbolic of continuing erosion and devaluation of women's status in independent India and is a dark spot on the noble tradition of our society. India's National Crime Records Bureau reported that 8233 Indian women were killed in 2012 in dowry-related violence^[1], or nearly one per hour^[2]. The incidence of dowry deaths grew by nearly 3% over the previous 5 years, and torture at the hands of a husband or family increased by 5.4%, with 99,135 cases reported by survivors in 2011^[1].

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study was a prospective cross-sectional descriptive study comprising the profile of all ($n=593$) medico-legal unnatural deaths of females of the age group 15–45 years who were brought to the mortuary at the S.R.N. Hospital/M.L.N. medical College, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh for medico-legal autopsy during the study period of 1 year extending from 11 April 2012 to 10 April 2013. The unidentified bodies and bodies in advanced state of decomposition and the cases where death was opined to be due to a natural cause after the autopsy were excluded from the sample of study.

The data obtained from this study was analysed statistically by presenting the data in the form of appropriate tables, graphs and percentages. The chi-square test was applied to test the association between the socio-demographic variables and other distribution factors. To test the statistical difference between the groups, the independent sample test was applied.

RESULTS

During the study period, a total of 2857 autopsies were done at mortuary, S.R.N. Hospital, Allahabad with 1993 (69.76%) male victims and 864 (30.24%) female victims, which gave a male-to-female ratio of 2.3:1. Amongst 864 female victims, 593 (68.63%) female victims were in the age group of 15–45 years. A maximum number of unnatural female deaths were seen in the age group of 15–25 years, that is 321 (54.13%), and the least number of cases were in the age group of 36–45 years, that is 14.34%. The age group specific unnatural female death rate decreased with increase in the age (Table 1).

Table 1: Incidence of female death in the age group of 15-45 years

Age group (in years)	No. of female deaths	Percentage
15–25	321	54.13
26–35	187	31.53
36–45	85	14.34
Total	593	100

The maximum number of unnatural female deaths in the present study took place by the way of burning, that is 221 (37.27%) followed by transportation injuries including road traffic accidents and railway track injuries which constitute 139 cases (23.44%) (Table 2). Among 114 cases of unnatural deaths of female due to asphyxia, majority, that is 76 (66.67%), were due to hanging, whereas only 3 cases (2.63%) of asphyxial deaths were due to ligature strangulation. A significant number of asphyxial deaths, that is 18 (15.79%), were attributed to drowning. Out of 139 unnatural female deaths due to transportation injuries, 117 cases (84.17%) were due to road traffic accidents and only 22 cases (15.83%) were due to railway track accidents.

Table 2: Modes of death in females of age group 15-45 years

Mode of death	Number of cases	Percentage
Burn	221	37.27
Transportation injuries	139	23.44
Asphyxia	114	19.22
Poisoning	85	14.34
Others	34	5.73
Total	593	100

The maximum number of unnatural deaths of female occurred in the age group of 26–35 years, that is 247 (41.65%) out of 593 (100%). Among 221 cases of deaths due to burn, maximum cases, that is 106 (47.96%), were in the age group of 26–35 years. Likewise, the maximum number of cases of deaths was due to asphyxia, that is 47 (41.23%), and due to transportation injuries, that is 41 (41.01%) in the same age group of 26–35 years. But in case of deaths due to poisoning, maximum cases fell in the age group of 15–25 years. Same was the inference for the deaths grouped under the other modes (Table 3).

Maximum number of unnatural deaths occurred in Hindu females, that is 463 (78.07%) out of 593 (100%). Maximum unnatural female deaths by every mode of death occurred in Hindus. Maximum share of Muslim females was amongst the deaths due to transportation

injuries, that is 41 (29.50%) followed by the deaths due to poisoning, that is 24 (28.24%). No unnatural death was reported at the mortuary of S.R.N. Hospital, Allahabad from the Sikh religion community! Only two unnatural deaths were reported from Christian religion community who died due to asphyxia (Table 4).

A total of 403 cases of unnatural female deaths belonged to rural areas, whereas 167 cases of unnatural female deaths belonged to urban areas. Twenty-three of unnatural female deaths belonged to tribal areas. Burning was the most common mode of unnatural female death in rural population and holds a share of 169 cases (41.94%) out of 403 cases (100%). Out of total 167 (100%) urban cases of unnatural female deaths, maximum 52 deaths (31.14%) occurred due to transportation injuries (Table 5).

In this study, out of 593 cases of unnatural female deaths in the age group 15–45 years, 467 females were married including widows and those living separately after

marriage. Out of these 467 (100%) cases, 241 (51.61%) died within 7 years of marriage whereas 226 (48.39%) died after completion of 7 years of marriage. The proportions of deaths due to burns and asphyxia were more amongst the victims who died within 7 years of marriage, whereas those due to transportation injuries and poisoning were more amongst the victims who died after 7 years of marriage (Table 6).

Accident was the most common manner of unnatural female deaths in this study, that is 275 (46.37%) of 593 (100%) and homicide was the least common manner of death. However, in 9.27% cases, it was not possible to comment upon the manner of death after taking history and post-mortem examination. In the 221 (100%) cases of deaths due to burn, accident (64.25%) was the most common manner of death and homicide was the least common manner of death. Likewise, 78.42% cases of transportation injuries were accident though 5.75% cases committed suicide by sustaining transportation injuries.

Table 3: Age-wise distribution

Age group (years)	No. of deaths due to burn (%)	No. of deaths due to transportation injuries (%)	No. of deaths due to asphyxia (%)	No. of deaths due to poisoning (%)	Others (%)	Total
15–25	67(30.32%)	28(20.14%)	39(34.21%)	37 (43.53%)	15(44.12%)	186(31.37%)
25–35	106(47.96%)	57(41.01%)	47(41.23%)	29(34.12%)	08(23.53%)	247(41.65%)
35–45	48(21.72%)	54(38.85%)	28(24.56%)	19(22.35%)	11(32.35%)	160(26.98%)
Total	221(100%)	139(100%)	114(100%)	85(100%)	34(100%)	593(100%)

$\chi^2=28.5$; $df=8$; $p<0.001$; Highly significant

Table 4: Religion-wise distribution

Religion	No. of deaths due to burn (%)	No. of deaths due to transportation injuries (%)	No. of deaths due to asphyxia (%)	No. of deaths due to poisoning (%)	Others (%)	Total
Hindu	198 (89.60%)	98(70.50%)	86(75.44%)	61 (71.76%)	20(58.82%)	463(78.07%)
Muslim	23 (10.40%)	41(29.50%)	26 (22.81%)	24 (28.24%)	14(41.18%)	128(21.59%)
Sikh	00(0.0%)	00(0.0%)	00(0.0%)	00(0.0%)	00(0.0%)	00(0.0%)
Christian	00(0.0%)	00(0.0%)	02(1.75%)	00(0.0%)	00(0.0%)	02(0.34%)
Total	221 (100%)	139(100%)	114(100%)	85(100%)	34(100%)	593 (100%)

$\chi^2=40$; $df=8$; $p<0.001$; Highly significant

Table 5: Residential status-wise distribution

Residential status	No. of deaths due to burn (%)	No. of deaths due to transportation injuries (%)	No. of deaths due to asphyxia (%)	No. of deaths due to poisoning (%)	Others (%)	Total
Rural	169 (76.47%)	81(58.27%)	79 (69.30%)	58 (68.24%)	16(47.06%)	403(67.96%)
Urban	44 (19.91%)	52(37.41%)	26 (22.81%)	27 (31.76%)	18(52.94%)	167(28.16%)
Tribal	08(3.62%)	06(4.32%)	09(7.89%)	00(0.0%)	00(0.0%)	23(3.88%)
Total	221(100%)	139(100%)	114(100%)	85 (100%)	34(100%)	593(100%)

$\chi^2=34.5$; $df=8$; $p<0.001$; Highly significant

However, suicide was the most common manner of death in cases of deaths due to asphyxia and poisoning (Table 7). In the cases of deaths alleged to occur due to poisoning, cause of death could not be ascertained and therefore, viscera, were preserved for toxico-chemical analysis to establish the identity of poison and hence, the cause of death.

Most common cause of death in large proportion of deaths due to burn was septicaemia (47.96%) and suffocation was the least common cause of death. Asphyxia with cerebral congestion caused death in 44.74% cases that died due to asphyxia. Hypovolaemic shock followed by coma as a result of ante-mortem injury to brain were the most common cause of death in cases of deaths due to transportation injuries (Table 8).

In case of deaths due to burn, quarrel with spouse/in-laws was the reason of death in 8.61% cases followed

by dowry demand which became the reason for the death of 6.79% cases. In cases of deaths due to asphyxia and poisoning, quarrel with spouse/ in-laws, dowry demand and condition of rage were also the common reasons for the death of deceased females.

In the present study, a total of 35 deaths were labelled as alleged dowry deaths in which maximum 15 cases (42.86%) cases died of burning and minimum 1 case (2.85%) died of domestic violence or assault/ battery (Table 9).

DISCUSSION

The state of Uttar Pradesh has become infamous with the increasing incidence of crime and violence against women and in particularly, a potential crematorium for young brides. The Allahabad has the dubious distinction of being the worst affected city from the point of view of

Table 6: Distribution on the basis of number of years since marriage

No. of years since marriage	No. of deaths due to burn (%)	No. of deaths due to transportation injuries (%)	No. of deaths due to asphyxia (%)	No. of deaths due to poisoning (%)	Others (%)	Total
Within 7 years of marriage	97(52.15%)	44(47.31%)	53(56.38%)	29(46.77%)	18(56.25%)	241(51.61%)
After 7 years of marriage	89(47.85%)	49(52.69%)	41(43.62%)	33(53.23%)	14(43.75%)	226(48.39%)
Total married cases	186(100%)	93(100%)	94(100%)	62(100%)	32(100%)	467(100%)

$\chi^2=2.42$; $df=4$; $p>0.005$; Not significant

Table 7: Distribution on the basis of manner of death (probable)

Manner of death	No. of deaths due to burn (%)	No. of deaths due to transportation injuries (%)	No. of deaths due to asphyxia (%)	No. of deaths due to poisoning (%)	Others (%)	Total
Accident	142(64.25%)	109(78.42%)	10(8.78%)	02(2.35%)	12(35.30%)	275(46.37%)
Suicide	42(19.00%)	08(5.75%)	88(77.19%)	82(96.47%)	00(0.0%)	220(37.11%)
Homicide	18(8.15%)	00(0.0%)	14(12.28%)	00(0.0%)	11(32.35%)	43(7.25%)
Unexplained	19(8.60%)	22(15.83%)	02(1.75%)	01(1.18%)	11(32.35%)	55(9.27%)
Total	221(100%)	139 (100%)	114(100%)	85(100%)	34(100%)	593(100%)

$\chi^2=405$; $df=12$; $p<0.001$; Highly significant

Table 8: Distribution on the basis of cause of death ***

Cause of death	No. of deaths due to burn (%)	No. of deaths due to transportation injuries (%)	No. of deaths due to asphyxia (%)	Others (%)
Asphyxia with cerebral congestion	00(0.0%)	00(0.0%)	51(44.74%)	00(0.0%)
Asphyxia without cerebral congestion	00(0.0%)	00(0.0%)	41(35.97%)	00(0.0%)
Suffocation	11(4.98%)	00(0.0%)	02(1.75%)	00(0.0%)
Coma	00(0.0%)	49(35.25%)	11(9.65%)	03(8.82%)
Hypovolaemic shock	37(16.74%)	51(36.69%)	00(0.0%)	11(32.35%)
Primary Neurogenic shock	67(30.32%)	21(15.11%)	00(0.0%)	01(2.94%)
Septicaemia	106(47.96%)	18(12.95%)	00(0.0%)	01(2.94%)
Others	00(0.0%)	09(7.89%)	09(7.89%)	18(52.95%)
Total	221(100%)	114(100%)	114(100%)	34(100%)

$\chi^2=764$; $df=21$; $p<0.001$; Highly significant

Table 9: Distribution of alleged dowry death cases in relation to the modes of death

Mode of death	No. of alleged dowry deaths	Percentage
Burn	15	42.86
Poisoning	11	31.43
Asphyxia	08	22.86
Battery/assault	01	02.85
Total	35	100

molestation, rape, women cruelty, violence and unnatural deaths of young girls and newly married women.

In our study, unnatural deaths were more common in females and this observation is found to be consistent with previous works of Sharma *et al.*^[3] and Pathak and Sharma^[4]. This study showed that incidence of unnatural female deaths peaked in the age group of 15–25 years with 321 cases (54.13%) and the least number of 85 cases (14.34%) in the age group of 36–45 years. This finding was consistent with the findings of Kulshrestha *et al.*^[5] and Chandra *et al.*^[6]. Rao^[7] concluded that incidence of female unnatural deaths was highest in 20–25 years followed by 15–25 years. In Bhullar’s^[8] study, majority of victims were from 23 to 26 years. Average age of incidence was 24.8 years, which was in variance with this present study. Agnihotri *et al.*^[9] in their study had however showed that the age group most vulnerable was 23–26 years followed by 27–30 years age group and then 18–22, which is in disagreement with that of the present study.

The maximum number of unnatural female deaths in the present study took place by the way of burning (37.27%) followed by transportation injuries including road traffic accidents and railway track injuries (23.44%). There were 14.34% unnatural deaths of females due to poisoning. Other minor causes like electrocution, mechanical violence, etc., constituted 5.73% only. Burns as a major cause of death in females was also concluded by other authors in their study^[3,5,10–13], but this was invariance with the study of Lalwani^[14] who in his study observed vehicular accidents 395(32.6%) followed by hanging 209(17.3%), poisoning 152 (12.6%) and burns 123(10.2%) as the common modes of unnatural deaths in females. But findings of Sinha *et al.*^[15] were similar to the present finding and in this study it was observed that majority of female deaths occurred in the age group of 23 30 years and most common cause was burns. In

another study, poisoning was most common cause of death followed by thermal injuries. The difference in the observation and result with other studies could be due to the fact that in our study, more victims belonged to rural areas and constituted a large number from lower sections of the society.

In our study, maximum deaths due to burn were in the age group of 26–35 years followed by the age group of 15–25 years and this was in consistency with the observations of Chawla *et al.*^[16] and Memchoubi and Nabachandra^[17].

In case of asphyxial deaths also, females in the age group of 26–35 years were most vulnerable and the finding was similar to the studies of Singh *et al.*^[18] and Yadav and Gupta^[19].

In our study, among 114 cases of unnatural deaths of female due to asphyxia, majority (66.67%) were due to hanging, whereas only 2.63% asphyxia deaths were due to ligature strangulation. A significant number of asphyxial deaths (15.79%) were attributed to drowning. Throttling cases were 8.77% and stampede cases were 6.14%. This profile of asphyxia deaths was similar to the observations of Sharma *et al.*^[3] and Uzun *et al.*^[20]. The study by Singh *et al.*^[21] was not complying with our study because our study is conducted in Allahabad city which is situated at the confluence of rivers the Ganges and the Jamuna ji which makes the inhabitants more prone for committing suicide by drowning. Moreover, *Mahakumbh* was organised in Allahabad during the study period which increased the chances of deaths due to drowning and stampede.

In our study, out of 139 unnatural female deaths due to transportation injuries, 117 cases (84.17%) were due to road traffic accidents and only 22 cases (15.83%) were due to railway track accidents. Out of 139 cases of transportation injuries, maximum of 41.01% cases fall in the age group of 26–35 years followed by 38.85% cases in the age group of 36–45 years while only 20.14% cases were in the age group of 15–25 years. Pathak *et al.*^[22] and Kaul *et al.*^[23] also found the similar results. This may be due to the fact that people of these age groups lead a more active life, work outdoors and are involved in many types of manual and technical work.

Poisoning was most common mode of death in the females of the age group of 15–25 years followed by those of the age group of 26–35 years and the least in the age group of 36–45 years. In every case of death due to poisoning, viscera were preserved and sent to Forensic Science Lab for the presence and identification of poison. The death was suspected to be due to poisoning on the basis of history taken, information from inquest papers, hospital records and supportive and corroborative findings during autopsy.

Maximum unnatural female deaths by every mode of death occurred in Hindus. Maximum share of Muslim females was amongst the deaths due to transportation injuries (29.50%) followed by 28.24% deaths due to poisoning. No unnatural death was reported at the mortuary of S.R.N. Hospital, Allahabad from Sikh religion community! Only 2 unnatural deaths were reported from Christian religion community and those died due to asphyxia. These observations are consistent with studies of Agnihotri *et al.*^[9] and Satpathy^[24] all of which have shown that the incidence is maximum in the Hindu religion. However, the findings were in slight variance with the work of following authors. Kulshrestha *et al.*^[5] had also observed in their study that 88% affected females belonged to Hindus, followed by 10.25% Muslims and 1.7% Sikhs. Muslims comprised of second largest category (10.25%). Only two victims belonged to the Sikh religion while no victim belonged to Christianity. Very low population and higher and professional qualification and cultural differences may be responsible for no case having been reported from the Sikh religion.

Burning was the most common mode of unnatural female death in rural population and holds a share of 169 cases (41.94%) out of 403 cases (100%). Out of total 167 (100%) urban cases of unnatural female deaths, maximum 52 deaths (31.14%) occurred due to transportation injuries. This was consistent with the findings of Mohanty *et al.*^[25], Geeta *et al.*^[26] and Kailash *et al.*^[27]. But findings of Sharma *et al.*^[3] and Prajapati *et al.*^[28] were totally in disagreement with those of the present study in which there were more cases seen in the urban region (68.84%) than rural (31.16%) and this contradiction could be attributable to the difference in the place and material of studies.

Burning was the most common mode of unnatural death among the married females (184 out of 457 cases), whereas transportation injuries were the most common mode of unnatural death among unmarried females and widows. Also, more married women die in comparison to the unmarried women through every mode of death. This observation was similar to the findings of Mohanty *et al.*^[25], Geeta *et al.*^[26] and Kailash *et al.*^[27]. The proportions of deaths due to burn and asphyxia were more amongst the victims who died within 7 years of marriage whereas those due to transportation injuries and poisoning were more amongst the victims who died after 7 years of marriage. The most of the newly married females saw an early dreadful end in the initial years of their marriage. Young females, who come to their husband's house with fancy dreams of marriage, get shockers of being physically and mentally tortured and shattered dreams, leading to maximum number of deaths among these young ladies. Kulshrestha *et al.*^[5] and Radhika and Ananda^[29] also found maximum number of married female deaths in the initial 7 years of marriage and the results were similar to those found in our study.

The high incidence of unnatural death in young Hindu females, within 7 years of their marriage was probably due to widely prevalent dowry system amongst Hindus of upper and middle class of Northern India, where the newly married victims were tortured for 'cash/kinds' in such a way that no option was left except to end their unhappy married life^[30]. For this, they preferred burning, hanging or poisoning whatever may be easily available at the time. For the same reason, few of them were killed by their husband or in-laws by the means of strangulation or burning. Here in some cases, bodies were also burned to tamper the evidences of murder. Srivastava *et al.*^[31] in their study of fatal strangulation cases found that victims were killed and then burnt to hide the crime in 38.46% cases. Thus, the perpetrators get enough opportunity to tamper with or destroy the circumstantial evidences.

Accident was the most common manner of unnatural female deaths (46.37%) in this study and homicide was the least common manner of death. However, in 9.27% cases, it was not possible to comment upon the manner of death after taking history and post-mortem examination. Almost similar findings were observed by Kulshrestha *et al.*^[5]. Sharma *et al.*^[3] have observed accidental deaths

in 49.6% cases, suicidal deaths in 38.5% cases, homicidal in 4.4% cases and indeterminate deaths in 7.4% cases, while Srivastava and Arora^[32] have observed more suicidal deaths (50.35%) in their study as compared to accidental deaths (23.08%) and homicidal deaths (25.17%).

In 221 (100%) cases of deaths due to burn, accident was the most common manner of death and homicide was the least common manner of death. In the present study, the higher incidence of accidental deaths due to burn in young, newly married females from lower socio-economic class helps to emphasise the fact that the burn fatalities in India go beyond the meaning implied in the term 'accident' to be aptly termed as a 'social calamity'. These deaths in general and homicidal and suicidal burn deaths in particular have genuinely been termed as 'bride burning' or 'dowry deaths'. Same was the opinion and findings of Ambade and Godbole^[33], Batra^[34] and Singh *et al.*^[35].

In our study, the most common cause of death in large proportion of deaths due to burn was septicaemia, that is 47.96% followed by primary/neurogenic shock (30.32%) followed by hypovolaemic shock (16.74%) and suffocation was the least common (4.98%) cause of death. This was very much in consistency with the studies of Chawla and Chanana *et al.*^[16], Sharma *et al.*^[36] and Zanjad and Godbole^[37].

In our study, hypovolaemic shock followed by coma due to cranio-cerebral damage as a result of ante-mortem injury to brain were the most common cause of death in cases of deaths due to transportation injuries. This was in consistency with the study of Nanaji^[38] but in disagreement with the findings of Singh^[39] who found that most common cause of death was cranio-cerebral damage, followed by haemorrhage and shock. Asphyxia with cerebral congestion caused death in 44.74% cases.

In the cases of deaths suspected to occur due to poisoning, the cause of death could not be ascertained and therefore, viscera were preserved for toxico-chemical analysis to establish the identity of poison and hence, the cause of death.

Out of 35 cases (100%) of alleged dowry deaths, 21 cases (60%) cases were in the age group of 15–25 years while remaining 14 cases (40%) fell in the age group of 26–35

years. Twenty-nine cases (82.86%) were Hindu and 5 cases (14.28%) were Muslim, whereas only 1 case (2.86%) belonged to the Christian community. Twenty-seven cases (77.14%) were from rural area and 8 cases (22.86%) were from an urban area. In 11 (31.43%) cases of alleged dowry deaths, manner of death seemed to be homicide while in remaining 24 cases (68.57%), it met the criteria of suicide. The findings of present study were similar to the findings of many authors like Saha and Mohanty^[40], Sharma *et al.*^[36] and Agnihotri *et al.*^[9].

CONCLUSION

Uttar Pradesh is suffering from one of the worst problems of increasing crimes against women. In spite of many laws and their amendments, awareness programmes and specialised cells, incidence of unnatural female deaths is continuously increasing therefore this issue should also be taken care of and looked at priority basis. The purpose of the present study was to analyse the present situation of unnatural female deaths in Allahabad and to find out the possibilities of decreasing the incidences of unnatural female deaths. Distribution and causes of unnatural female deaths in the present study are more or less similar to the pattern found in most of the other Indian studies. This similarity is there in almost all parameters used in this study. From the present study, it can be concluded that unnatural deaths are more common in males as compared to that in females evident with the male:female ratio of 2.3:1. Amongst 864 female victims, 593 (68.63%) female victims were in the age group of 15–45 years showing that unnatural deaths are more common in the females of reproductive age group. Most of the female victims were in the age group 15–25 years, belonging to the rural area from Hindu community. More of the female victims were married and died in their initial 7 years of marriage. Accidental burn was most common mode of death and also, accidental deaths were encountered to the maximum. The burn fatalities in India go beyond the meaning implied in the term 'accident' and the impact they cause, no longer remains confined to the family but spreads far wide to be aptly termed as a 'social calamity'. The prevailing system of dowry, which is mainly responsible for all such deaths, is a product of emerging capitalist ethos – the offshoot of an unequal society, a result of rampant consumerism, aided and abetted by the

black market economy. Its increasing incidence is symbolic of continuing erosion and devaluation of women's status in independent India. Hanging and poisoning were the most common mode of suicides by females. Frequent quarrels with spouse/in-laws and the dowry demand became the main reasons for the suicidal deaths. Dowry deaths were common in Hindu, rural females of younger ages and within their initial years of marriage.

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