

Original Article

Pattern of Deaths in Females – A Retrospective Study

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ABSTRACT

How do we treat a woman who gives birth to us, and whom we see as a mother, wife or as a daughter? When we open any newspaper, one of the most common things we read about females is less of their achievements and more of their dowry harassments, sexual assaults, suicides or murders. Therefore, we conducted a study to determine the pattern of deaths in females at the District Hospital, Tumkur, which is a place that is rapidly urbanising, so that preventive measures can be taken. In our autopsy study, we found that there were a total of 643 female deaths. In all, 17 deaths were due to natural causes and 626 deaths were unnatural. Suicide was the most common of unnatural deaths and dowry was the most common cause. Deaths were more common in the 21-30 years age group.

Keywords: Females, Dowry Harassment, Autopsy, Suicide, District Hospital

INTRODUCTION

Females along with males were created by God as per ancient beliefs, and in the olden days were treated with respect; however, as time passed, females were reduced from being equal to males to just housemaids and son-bearing women to the family. Today, females have to fight for their rights and equality and hence have to face many problems. They have achieved what has been deprived to them, and most of today's women are educated and can work and earn to share the responsibilities of the men in the family and at workplace; sometime they are the sole breadwinners of the family. However, men cannot accept this, and they still feel that women are dependents and try to oppress them by abusing, assaulting and harassing at them at workplace, sexually assaulting or killing them and causing female foeticide. Men have also found an easy way to make wealth by asking for dowry, which has become a menace to women. Many laws have been formed to protect the interests of women, but their implementation is lacking because we live in a male-dominated society. Hence, an attempt has been made to study the pattern of female deaths and causative factor, so as to suggest preventive measures.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Autopsies conducted at the District General Hospital, Tumkur, between the years 2006 and 2010 were considered for this study. Out of the 2288 autopsies conducted during this period, 643 (28.10%) deaths were observed in females. Data were collected from police inquests, post-mortem reports, as well as from forensic science lab and histopathology reports to determine the age, cause and manner of their deaths. This being a retrospective study, the causative factor could not be elicited.

RESULTS

There were 643 deaths involving females, out of the 2288 autopsies conducted during this period accounting for 28.10%. Of this, 17 (2.64%) deaths were natural and 626 (97.35%) deaths were due to unnatural causes.

Among the unnatural deaths, suicidal deaths were 396 (63.25%), most followed by 178 (63.25%) accidental and 52 (8.30%) homicidal deaths. Of the suicidal deaths, asphyxial deaths were 136 (34.34%) and poisoning were 132 (33.33%), the most common cause, followed by 104

(26.26%) suicidal burns, 20 (5.05%) train deaths and 4 (1.01%) deaths due to fall. Among the asphyxial deaths, 113 (83.08%) were due to hanging, followed by 23 (16.91%) due to drowning. Organophosphorus poisoning deaths were 92 (69.69%) and the most common, and 40 (30.30%) due to other poisons accounted for the remaining of the poisoning deaths.

There were 178 accidental deaths, of which 110 (61.79%) were due to road traffic accidents, followed by 18 (10.11%) due to snake bites, 17 (9.55%) due to accidental drowning and 14 due to (7.86%) burns. Nineteen (10.67%) deaths were due to miscellaneous causes like train accidents, falls, electrocutions, hospital deaths and deaths due to animal attacks.

Fifty-two deaths were homicides. Of these, nineteen (36.53%) deaths were due to strangulation, followed by eight (15.38%) deaths due to smothering, which were of asphyxial cause, fourteen (26.92%) deaths were due to assault by blunt weapons and eleven (21.15%) deaths were due to sharp weapon injuries.

Among the female deaths, most deaths were seen in the age group of 21-30 years (217), followed by 11-20 years (128), 31-40 years (125) and 41-50 years (69). The other groups accounted for 104 deaths.

DISCUSSION

In our study, we found that deaths in females were more in the 21-30 years age group, followed by 11-20 years and 31-40 years. Our studies were more or less similar to studies by in which the age group of 21-30 years is mostly involved.

There were seventeen (2.64%) natural deaths. Of the natural deaths, cardiovascular diseases and tuberculosis were the main causes of death. In our study, we found that among unnatural deaths, suicidal deaths were 396 (63.25%), most followed by 178 (63.25%) accidental and 52 (8.30%) homicidal deaths. In the study by Dere R⁶ it was found that suicidal deaths (burns followed by poisoning) were the most, followed by road traffic accident deaths. In study by Ali³ found Homicidal deaths were the most in the study.

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deaths, asphyxial deaths were 136 (34.34%) and poisoning were 132 (33.33%), the most common cause, followed by 104 (26.26%) suicidal burns. Among the asphyxial deaths, 113 (83.08%) deaths were due to hanging, followed by drowning 23 (16.91%). Organophosphorus poisoning deaths of 92 (69.69%) were the most. Our study differed from other studies like that by Byard⁷. Their study found that drug overdose was the most, followed by hanging and death due to inhalation of carbon monoxide. The studies by death due to poisoning were most followed by hanging and burns⁸. In the studies^{9,10} deaths due to burns were more, followed by poisoning. In the studies^{11,12} death by poisoning was the most preferred by females. In another study, death due to poisoning was the most common due to consumption of organophosphorous compounds.¹³

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Esan found that road traffic accident deaths were the most, which is similar to our study.¹⁴

There were 52 (8.30%) homicidal deaths among females of which strangulation was the most common manner of death, followed by death due to assault with blunt weapons. Studies conducted in Pakistan^{3,15} found that deaths in female were the most common due to firearms.

CONCLUSION

A female being the weaker sex, should try to become strong physically and mentally by training from a young age. Men also should be taught from childhood to treat females as equals and be trained to control their anger by yoga and meditation, which is one of the most common controlling factors. Females should be made self-sufficient by providing them with education, employment and pre-marital counselling. Stringent laws should be made and be strictly enforced on women perpetrators. Dowry taking and giving should be banned, and action should be taken against those who give, because they are the ones who promote it by giving, and this should have been stopped at the first stage itself. There should be media campaigns against such practice.

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