

## Profile of Unnatural Death of Adult Females in and Around Akola – A Medico-Legal Study

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### Abstract

*Even in present era of women liberalization, empowerment and education, there is increase in crimes against women is deeply embedded in our society which is matter of great social concern. This study was conducted to determine unnatural deaths of adult females in age group of 18-60 years. It was a retrospective study which autopsy data from January 2013 to December 2013 was studied. A total 180 female cases were autopsied in this one year period. Among them majority of victims were married [79.4%], Hindu [65%] and most of the victims were from age group 21-30 years [37.7%]. Burns were commonest cause of death [49.4%] in which majority of deaths were accidental [52.2%] in nature. The findings of present study show that how women of adult age group are susceptible to unnatural deaths. Henceforth, it is the need of hour to take some concrete steps to reduce or prevent the potentially preventable unnatural deaths among adult females of the region.*

**Keywords:** Accidental female deaths, Unnatural deaths, Medico-legal deaths.

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### Introduction

Unnatural deaths are not uncommon in present century. It may be accidental, suicidal, homicidal or undetermined. Among all unnatural deaths female deaths are also common from the known human history. But since last few decades time has changed drastically specifically in last two decades in which female liberalization achieved significantly and females are equally treated as male in most of the countries globally. Now a day in era of social media we are talking about women empowerment liberalization but on the other hand we should not forget that crime against women has also increased in society. It is fact that since immemorial time crimes against women existed and women always been at receiving end in male dominated society. Types and trends kept changing from time to time,

place to place and community to community. It exists in every part of country irrespective of social class or status.

Now a days since last two decades women from different sections of societies are coming out of confines of their homes for studies, job and for social works so that there is phenomenal spurt in crimes against women. So crimes against women have become a phenomenal concern of contemporary society, law enforcing agencies and judiciary of this country also. In present study an attempt has been made to study the incidence of unnatural deaths of females in this part of country so that it will be beneficial to make preventive strategies to reduce incidence in future.

### Materials and Methods

It was a retrospective study, carried out in the department of Forensic Medicine and

Toxicology (FMT) of Government Medical College (GMC), Akola, Maharashtra, India. In this retrospective study, the data of study was analyzed from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013. The study comprises of total 180 cases autopsied at mortuary, department of FMT GMC Akola. The study includes all cases of unnatural deaths of females between the age group 18 years to 60 years. The autopsies were conducted in all the cases. The data collected from autopsy report, police inquest report and hospital record of each individual case. Data collected were put into the master chart then subjected to computer, analyzed and presented in the form of tables and pie charts.

## Results

There were 1324 autopsies conducted between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013, out of those 989 [74.69%] were unnatural deaths, out of which 180 [18.20%] cases were of adult females between 18-60 years. Unnatural deaths of adult females comprises of 13.59%. All deaths autopsied at mortuary of GMC Akola. Most of the incidence in female were in between the age group of 21-30 years [37.7%] followed by 31-40 years [27.7%], together of them comprises [65.4%] of unnatural deaths (Table-1). Present study revealed large number of victims were Hindu [65%] followed by Buddha [21.11%] and Muslims [10%] while in [1.6%] of cases religion was undetermined (Table- 2).

**Table- 1: Age group wise distribution of cases**

| Age group | No. of cases | Percentage |
|-----------|--------------|------------|
| 18-20     | 19           | 10.5%      |
| 21-30     | 68           | 37.7%      |
| 31-40     | 49           | 27.7%      |
| 41-50     | 23           | 12.7%      |
| 51-60     | 21           | 11.6%      |
| Total     | 180          | 100%       |

**Table- 2: Religion wise distribution of cases**

| Religion  | No. of Cases | Percentage |
|-----------|--------------|------------|
| Hindu     | 117          | 65%        |
| Muslim    | 18           | 10%        |
| Buddha    | 38           | 21.11%     |
| Christian | 04           | 2.2%       |
| Unknown   | 03           | 1.6%       |
| Total     | 180          | 100%       |

**Table- 3: Cause of death wise distribution**

| Cause of Death    | No. of Cases | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------|------------|
| Burns             | 89           | 49.4%      |
| Poisoning         | 32           | 17.7%      |
| RTA               | 12           | 6.6%       |
| Railway accidents | 05           | 2.7%       |
| Hanging           | 21           | 11.6%      |
| Strangulation     | 02           | 1.1%       |
| Drowning          | 04           | 2.2%       |
| Assault           | 03           | 1.6%       |
| Animal bite       | 05           | 2.7%       |
| Others            | 07           | 3.8%       |
| Total             | 180          | 100%       |

Majority of victims died due to burns [49.4%] followed by poisoning [17.7%] and hanging [11%] only [1.6%] were died of assault (Table-3). In majority of victim's death, manner was accidental [52.2%] followed by suicidal [43.8%] and only [2.7%] of the cases manner was homicidal (Table-4). Study revealed that maximum number of victims were married [79.4%] followed by widows [10.5%] and only [8.8%] victims were unmarried (Table-5).

**Table- 4: Manner of death wise distribution**

| Manner of Death | No. of Cases | Percentage |
|-----------------|--------------|------------|
| Accidental      | 94           | 52.2 %     |
| Suicidal        | 79           | 43.8%      |
| Homicidal       | 05           | 2.7%       |
| Undetermined    | 02           | 1.1%       |
| Total           | 180          | 100%       |

**Table- 5: Marital status wise distribution**

| Marital Status | No. of Cases | Percentage |
|----------------|--------------|------------|
| Married        | 143          | 79.4 %     |
| Unmarried      | 16           | 8.8%       |
| Widow          | 19           | 10.5%      |
| Undetermined   | 02           | 1.1%       |
| Total          | 180          | 100%       |

## Discussion

Akola is important Western Vidharbha city of Maharashtra, India. It caters the medical facilities to adjoining three districts of west vidharbha region as well as adjoining areas of neighboring state. Present study was based on

adult females, as in present era due to education, modernization and industrialization, increased number of females are coming out to work, employment and education not only in urban but also in rural region. This situation also exposes them to accidents and other hazards.

Incidence of unnatural deaths among adult females constitutes 18.20% of all unnatural deaths. Sane Mandar et al [1] reported it was 25%, Arora Praveen [2] reported it to be around 4.95%. This disparity might be due to fact that study conducted by Arora was on newly married females.

In present study majority of victims 37.7% were from age group 21-30 years followed by 27.7% from age group 31-40 years, which is consistent with the findings of other studies. This may be due to fact that women of these age groups are married, working, physically and socially active and also females of these age groups takes new responsibilities at home as well as outside.

In this study marital status wise distribution showed that maximum number of victims 79.4% were married which is in consolation with the findings of other studies [1,4,3]. The reason for this is that marriage leads to change in social environment and sometimes it may leads to physical, social and mental stress

This study revealed that majority of victims were Hindus (65%) followed by Buddha (21.11%) and Muslims (10%). Similar findings were also reported by other authors, Sane mandar et al [1], Pawar CK [4]. Pawar CK, in his study reported majority of victims as Sikh. This difference due to fact that the study was carried out in Punjab where majority of the population is Sikh. But in this study region large number of population is Hindu.

Study also revealed that majority of victims died due to burns [49.4%] followed by poisoning [17.7%] and hanging [6.6%]. Similar findings were reported by Pawar CK et al [4] while hanging was commonest cause of death by Sane mandar et al [1] and Prajapati P et al [5] reported poisoning was the commonest cause of death.

In present study, majority of victim's manner of death was accidental 52.2% followed by suicidal 43.8% and only in 2.5% of cases, manner was homicidal. Kumar S et al in their study which was conducted in Lucknow city of Uttar Pradesh, India found 456 cases of unnatural

deaths of females aged between 16 to 30 years during one year period of May 2011 to May 2012. This constituted 62.5% of the total unnatural female deaths. Most of the victims were young Hindu housewives either killed or died within 7 years of their marriage. They found vehicular accidents followed by poisons and burns as most common causes of deaths. As per their findings common reasons for unnatural deaths were mental stress due to various reasons like family quarrel, maladjustment in married life, cruelty by the in-laws and failure in love in unmarried girls etc, [6]. Most of our findings are in the line of other authors who conducted their studies in various other regions [2,6,7,8,9,10]. This is because changing trends in society in modem most of the females are not limit themselves to household but they are come out in numbers in educational fields, office and in our employments. This exposes them to risk of meeting with an accident.

## Conclusion

The development of any state or society is judged by condition of women and children of that region, it is also important in health information system which is needed for health planning and intervention strategies. Our study highlighted high incidence of unnatural deaths among females of the region most of whom are Hindus and belongs to age group of 21 -30 years. Accidental death is another important reason of unnatural deaths among the local females. Such unnatural death can be prevented by education, awareness, change in attitude and mindset of society, also by legislation and most importantly women themselves can lower or prevent such incidences.

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