

An Autopsy Study of Socio-Etiological Aspects in Dowry Death Cases

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Abstract: Violence affects lives of millions of woman worldwide, in all societies, one of the most heinous and shocking forms among them is **DOWRY DEATH**, is one among the various reasons for suicidal (i.e. abetted suicide) and homicidal deaths of women in India, other being marital infidelity, sexual jealousy etc. This study done at Government Mohan kumaramangalam Medical College, Salem , was conducted during the period January 2014 – December -2015. Aims and objectives were to know the magnitude, socio etiologic profile and methods used for committing suicide/homicide, and various other factors affecting the alarming rise in incidence of dowry death and also to lend valuable suggestion to concerned authorities to prevent this heinous social evil of our society. Most of the victims were aged between 20 to 24 years of age, maximum of the victims died within three years of married life, most commonly between 1 to 2 years of married life. Burns is the most common method used for dowry deaths.

Keywords: Bride burning, Dowry deaths, dowry death, Unnatural female deaths.

INTRODUCTION

Even after years of campaigning by voluntary organizations against the menace of dowry and their efforts to create awareness on it, the number of dowry deaths and dowry harassment cases were increasing. The dowry related harassments and deaths are increasing day by day due to prevailing socio-economic lifestyle.

The dowry is closely interlinked to many crimes committed against women, viz, female infanticide, domestic violence, and neglect of the girl child, denial of educational and career opportunities to daughters, rape, extortion, homicide and discrimination against women. In a case report, one of the variant of the typical Indian phenomenon of greed circumventing sanity and inventing ways to evade the law while still is gaining the objective, i.e., the death of the wife. Author also says that this was the first instance to their knowledge, where a person has indulged in cannibalism [1].

Legal and medical people must be aware that such an event has occurred in an out of the way part of India. The evil of the dowry system is a matter of serious concern to everyone in view of its ever increasing and disturbing proportions. They are well planned crimes, executed within the four walls of a house by the family members. Most of the victims die on the spot and those who survive hesitate to make a statement before a magistrate either due to fear psychosis on account of lack of alternative support, or they are persuaded or threatened not to do so.

The present study is undertaken to evaluate the magnitude and study various socio etiological factors of dowry deaths in Government Mohan Kumaramangalam Medical College, Salem and various other factors affecting the alarming rise in incidence of dowry death.

METHODOLOGY

Autopsy cases of dowry deaths within 7 years of married life were conducted at Department of Forensic Medicine, Government Mohan Kumaramangalam Medical College, Salem during the period January 2014 – December - 2015

All dead bodies of married women dying within 7 years of married life, brought to Government Mohan Kumaramangalam Medical College, Salem Mortuary, cases being booked under Section 176 Cr.P.C, 174 Cr.P.C, 304(B) IPC, 498(A) IPC, where inquest is conducted by Executive Magistrate were the inclusive criteria. Death of women within 7 years of marriage due to road traffic accidents, natural cases and Homicide victims within 7 years of marriage, unrelated to dowry were excluded in the study.

Proforma was filled in each case regarding the history given by relatives, Information obtained during Magistrate’s inquest and by the Investigative Officer, Post mortem findings with particular reference to manner of death, Histopathology and Chemical Analysis Reports to establish the cause of death [2].

RESULTS

With reference to the age of victim, the dowry death occurred at any age from 16 to 33 years. Most of the victims are aged between 20-24 years (42.59%) cases, followed by 33.33% cases in 16 - 19 years, 18.51% cases in 25-29 years and only 5.5% case has occurred in 30- 33 years of age [3].

With regard to methods used for dowry deaths like hanging, poisoning, burns, drowning., burns constituted the maximum number of dowry deaths i.e. 28 (51.8%) cases out of 54 cases, followed by hanging 26 (48.14%) cases, poisoning 8 (14.8%) cases, drowning 3 (5.55 %) case, in figure 2 [4].

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Unnatural deaths of married women amongst the total female deaths have been an increasing trend in Indian society during the recent past years, which may be suicide, homicide, or even accidents [5]. But these suicides and homicides are currently more commonly associated with the dowry disputes. Magnitude of dowry deaths in each year of my study period shows increase incidence being steadily increasing with time, indicating that stringent anti dowry laws remain insignificant and hence these dowry related crimes cannot be curbed with law alone, they need to be tackled by other means too.

Most of the victims are aged between 20-24 years (42.59%) cases, followed by 33.33% cases in 16-19 years, 18.51% cases in 25-29 years and only 5.5% case has occurred in 30- 33 years of age, findings were not similar to studies by Sharma B.R et al. [6] study who report 56% of victims belong to the age group of 18-25 years, and also Virendra Kumar et al. [7], Kusa Kumar Saha and Sachidananda Mohanty [8] reported similar findings.

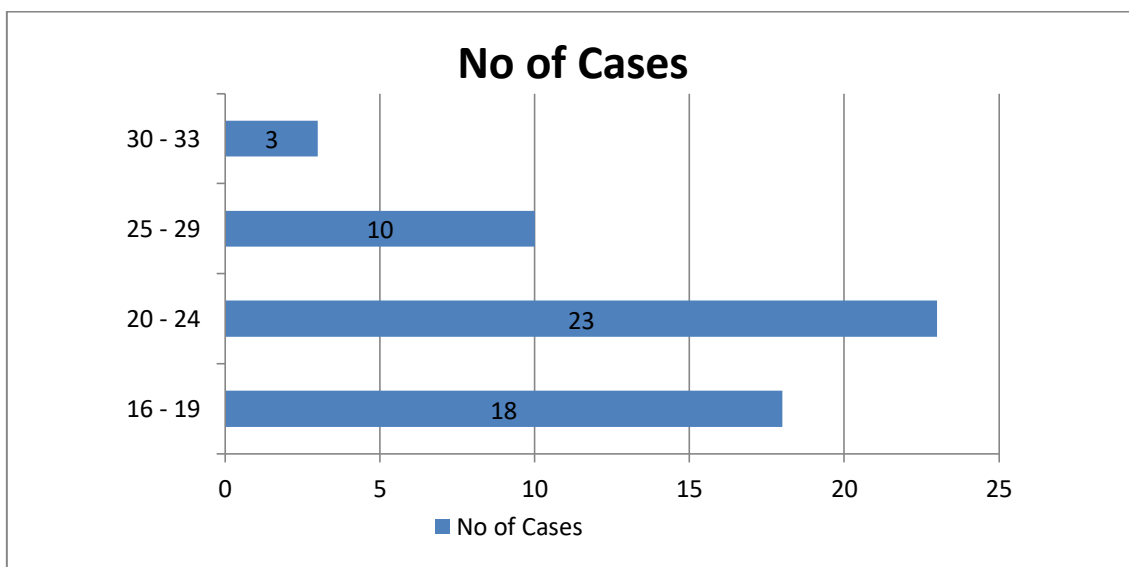


Fig-1: Age of dowry death victims

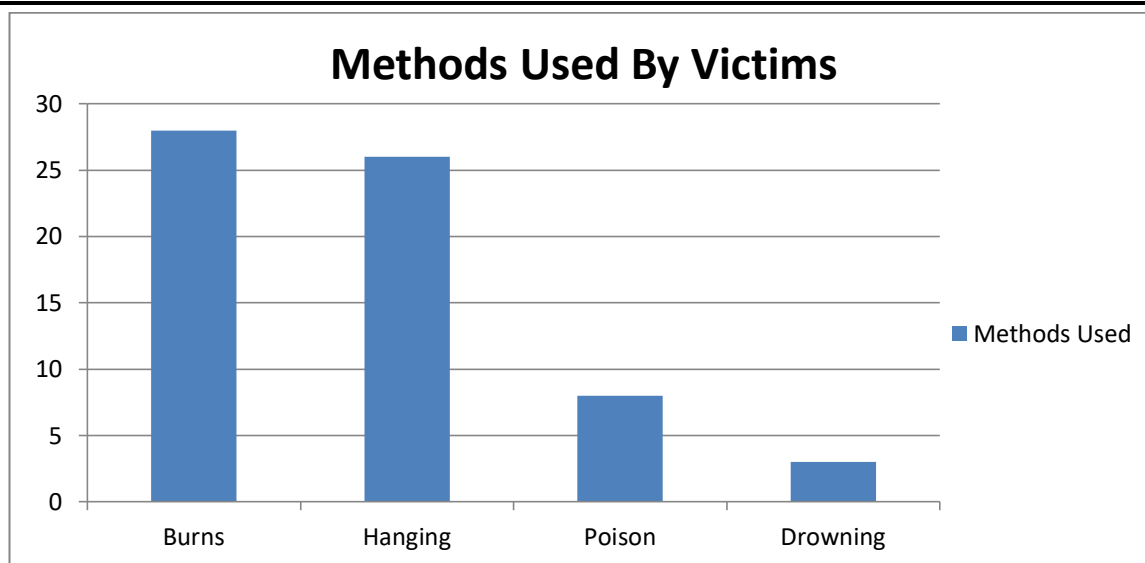


Fig-2- Methods used by victims

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