

# Study of Profile of Sexually Related Unnatural Deaths

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## Abstract

Sexual crimes against women are on the rise. It has been well documented that sexual assault cases are under reported. The study was conducted in the Department of Forensic Medicine, M.S. Ramaiah Medical College, Bangalore during the period from September 2008 to February 2010, a period of 18 months where in 52 cases were due to sexually related deaths.

**Keywords:** Unnatural Deaths, Sexual assault, Autopsy.

## Introduction

Sex is a natural phenomenon and is necessary for the continuity of human race on this planet of earth and sexual exploitation is the worst form of degradation of those who indulge in it. The rising trend in the sexual offence cases is a reflection of the western influence in our society. Chastity is very important in the life of an Indian woman. Virginity is considered as an essential prerequisite for a girls to become a bride. The violation of virginity subjects a woman to considerable shame and humiliation. A study reveals, only about 10-50% of the female victims reported about their assaults.<sup>1</sup> Incidence of sexual abuse and death particularly among young and adolescent girl is reported almost daily. It not only humiliates and makes a woman powerless, but for many, the effects are long lasting.<sup>2</sup> The present study was conducted with the objectives to know the age, sex, marital status and socioeconomic status of the victim.

## Materials and Method

The study was conducted in the Department of Forensic Medicine, M.S. Ramaiah Medical College, Bangalore during the period from September 2008 to February 2010, a period of 18 months. Out of 1062 unnatural deaths during the study period 52 cases were due to sexually related deaths. All the cases subjected for medico legal autopsy with alleged history of death being sexually related, when there is evidence or acknowledgments of sexual activity in the causation of death were studied. Detailed information regarding the circumstances of death was sought from the police, victim's relatives, friends, and visit to the scene of occurrence or by the photographs of the scene of occurrence. Unnatural deaths due to sexual harassment, sexual offence, premarital affairs /sexual relationship based on circumstantial evidence and deaths due to sexual asphyxia are included in the study. Deaths due to sexually transmitted disease, natural disease and due to dowry related were excluded.

## Results and Observation

In present study out of 1062 unnatural deaths, 52 cases were due to sexually related. Among them 43 cases were female (82.7%) and 09 cases were male (17.3%).

The most vulnerable age group is between 20-29 years (50%) of the total deaths followed by those in 10-19 years (21.17%). Least number of deaths in the age

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group of  $\geq 50$  years (1.92%) followed by age group of 0-9 years (3.84%). The maximum number of victims (57.69%) were from the middle socioeconomic status followed by lower socioeconomic status (34.62%).

The maximum number of deaths were observed in married victims (50%), more so during the early period

of their marriage and followed by unmarried victims (46.16%).

The maximum number of victims (57.69%) were from the middle socioeconomic status followed by lower socioeconomic status (34.62%).

**Table no. 1: Distribution of sexually related unnatural deaths according to sex**

Sex	Count	Percentage (%)
Male	09	17.3%
Female	43	82.7%
Total	52	100%

**Table no. 2: Distribution of victims based on age**

Sl. No.	Age group	Total	Percen-tage
1	0-9 years	02	3.84
2	10-19 years	11	21.17
3	20-29 years	26	50
4	30-39 years	09	17.3
5	40-49 years	03	5.77
6	$\geq 50$ Years	01	1.92
		52	100

**Table No.3: Distribution of victims based on marital status**

Sl.No.	Marital status	Number	Percentage
1	Married	26	50.00
2	Un married	24	46.16
3	Not Known	2	3.84
Total		52	100

**Table No. 4: Distribution of victims based on socioeconomic status**

	S-E Class	Number	Total	Percent-tage
Upper	I	03	03	5.77
Middle	II	15	30	57.69
	III	15		
Lower	IV	17	18	34.62
	V	01		
	Not Known	01	01	1.92
		Total	52	100

### Discussion

The present study was conducted with the objectives to know the age, sex, marital status and socioeconomic status of the victim. Out of 52 unnatural sexually related deaths, 43 cases were female (82.7%) and 09 cases were male (17.3%). Females outnumbered the males which is quite understandable as in most of the cases the females are vulnerable on account of their guilable age, physical built as against the strong physique and androgenic behaviour of the dominant male. Similar findings were observed by J Mc Namara<sup>3</sup> where most of them are females and were aged between 11 to 45 years.

The most vulnerable age group is between 20-29 years (50%) of the total deaths followed by those in 10-19 years (21.17%). As these age groups are sexually more active and hence are vulnerable. Least number of deaths in the age group of  $\geq 50$  years (1.92%) followed by age group of 0-9 years (3.84%). Similar findings were observed by Mc Cook A<sup>4</sup> on African-American women, most of them were in the age group between 15 to 34 years.

The maximum number of victims (57.69%) were from the middle socioeconomic status followed by lower socioeconomic status (34.62%), as India is a developing country and much of the people fall in this group, also the changing social trends of nuclear families, unemployment, illiteracy, financial problems etc. Similar findings were observed by AK Srivastava<sup>5</sup>, where the most of the victims were belonged to middle

or lower socioeconomic status.

The maximum number of deaths were observed in married victims (50%), more so during the early period of their marriage – extramarital affair was the main reason and followed by unmarried victims (46.16%). Similar findings were observed by AK Srivastava<sup>5</sup>, where more deaths were seen in newly married victims (86%).

### Conclusion

Sexually related deaths constituted 4.8% of autopsies conducted. Maximum number of sexually related deaths occurred in the age group 20-29 years (50%) followed by 10-19 years (21.17%). Females constituted 82.70% of the victims. Most of the victims were married and were from middle socio economic status. The findings of this study may only be the tip of the iceberg as many sexually related deaths might never be detected, due to various reasons like cover up by the victims own family, improper investigation or because of false history furnished. An awareness must be created in the community to motivate the victims to report and more reporting centers must be opened to overcome the fear of victims.

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