

Virginity Misinterpretation as a Phenomenon of Female Abuse in Yemen

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Abstract

This study was conducted on 230 females to reflect the magnitude of this serious phenomenon, Cases were divided into 3 groups, group I(164 newly married females), group II(16 cases of rape assaults) and group III (50 young females submitted to orphanages and role of social welfare).All cases were referred to Al-Sabeen maternity hospital and Kuwait teaching hospital in the last 3 years (2010-2012), in Sana'a. These cases were examined by the forensic expert, department of forensic medicine Sana'a University. Most of examined hymens did not cause bleeding or only trivial bleeding occurred after penetration leading to misinterpretation of virginity by the husband and his family at wedding night. During examination some rare types of hymens were discovered. Hymens of medicolegal importance causing wedding night problems in newly married females were classified into 71 fibrous hymens forming 43.292% of the total number of examined hymens considered extremely high explaining the absence of bleeding after penetration, 30 wide opening (attenuated) hymens and 55 intermediate thickness hymens forming 18.292% and 33.536% respectively, explaining the lack of bleeding after a single penetration, 7 fleshy hymens 4.268% and 1 cartilaginous hymen forming 0.609% of the total number of hymens were extremely difficult to be deflorated. The condition of hymens at wedding night were found totally or partially ruptured in 58 cases forming 35.365% and the none ruptured were 106 hymens forming 64.634%. This means that the type of hymen is the cause of the non-rupture. Concluding that virginity at wedding night is misinterpreted by husbands. Most of hymens ruptures coincide with the marriage date supporting the virginity of such cases. Examination and evaluation of virginity due to problems other than trauma or rape assaults is considered inhuman and against females will.

Key Words: Virginity, phenomenon, female abuse

Introduction:

Regardless of immense modernization, civilian development and the increasing knowledge attitudes, female abuse is becoming an increasing phenomenon as a discrimination based on human gender (1).

Every society has its own habits and traditions; Yemen has strict traditions, considered to be a part of the Yemeni cultural bases. The closed Yemeni society particularly in rural areas and illiteracy have participated in the appearance of some undesired and repelled beliefs, virginity is considered one of these.

Women's experiences of abuse are shaped by the social and cultural contexts in which they live. Of particular concern are the ways in which common are constrained in their efforts to combat abuse as they experience the harsh and alienating effects of racism, classism and other forms

of social injustice. Despite increasing public, professional, and scientific interest in the problem of wife abuse and battering, little has been written

about the importance of socio-cultural sensitivity in intervention with abused women and battered women in Arab society (2). Sexual violence is a significant public health problem, and has been linked to adverse effects on women's physical and mental health (3). As well as being a violation of human rights, violence against women can be regarded an "emerging health problem" of the late twentieth century (4,5).

Intimate partner violence (IPV) involves an interrelated combination of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, usually directed against women (6).

Virginity examination in Yemen is a real conflict emerging clearly in the last few years (7). Many hospitals

allover Yemen receive daily cases of virginity assessment, these difficult cases are being referred to main hospitals in Sana'a. The purpose of virginity assessment is not only for newly married females, but as well for other females exposed to trauma or rape. Indeed it is becoming a phenomenon with serious bad consequences not only on the female herself, but as well for her family and even their tribe. Feeling insulted, trying to wash the shame the female is exposed to unexpected violence either physical, psychological and even verbal abuse (8, 9,10, 11).

It is sad that young females are being exposed to virginity assessment before being admitted to orphanages and role of social welfare. It is time to change such wrong beliefs discarding oppression and further insults of female abuse.

Aim of Work

- Assessing virginity through the verification of different types of hymens among Yemeni females.
- Reflecting the magnitude of female abuse due to virginity assessment.
- Elaboration of facts of virginity to minimize female insults.

Subjects and Methods

Examination of virginity was arranged in cooperation with the colleagues in the departments of obstetrics and gynecology in Al-Sabeen and Kuwait teaching hospitals as they are considered referral hospitals for such cases from other hospitals allover Yemen.

230 cases were examined, according to their own request or brought by their guardians or through legal authorities. Cases were divided into 3 groups; group I (164 newly married females 18 to 31 years old). Group II (50 young females 5 to 13 years old examined before their admission to the orphanages and role of social welfare to rule out any sexual assaults prior to admission in order not to be responsible or blamed for any assault occurred before admission. Group III was 16 cases of rape victims examined in the above mentioned hospitals. Examination was carried out in the presence of the duty gynecologist

and the attending responsible nurse, performed in lithotomy position with clposcope, magnifying lens and good light. Examination was carried out during duty hours except for the cases of rape, which were examined as urgent cases regardless of duty day hours. Records of hymen ruptures and their ages, records of cases of rape and the specific investigations were done.

Results and Discussion

230 females 5 to 31 years old were examined for virginity assessment, Of the total number of examined cases 164 females 18 to 31 years old were newly married, 50 young females 5 to 13 years old were examined prior to admission to orphanages and role of social welfare and 16 victims of rape Table 1, Figure 1a and Figure 1b.

Hymens were classified according to their types into 114 annular forming 49.56% of the total number of examined hymens which was surprisingly considered to be high 78 crecentric hymens forming 33.91% of the total, 9 dentate hymens forming 3.91% and 29 septate hymens forming 12.60% of the total Table 2, Figure 2a and Figure 2b.

Hymens of medicolegal importance causing wedding night problems in newly married females were classified into 71 fibrous hymens forming 43.292% of the total numbers of examined hymens considered extremely high explaining the absence of bleeding after penetration This study is in agreement with that of VV Pillay and Dineman J (12,13), 30 wide opening (attenuated) hymens and 55 intermediate thickness hymen forming 18.292% and 33.536% consecutively explaining the lack of bleeding after a single penetration, 7 fleshy hymens 4.268% and 1 cartilaginous hymen forming 0.609% of the total number of hymens were extremely difficult to be deflorated Table.3, Figure 3a and Figure 3b.

The condition of hymens at wedding night were found totally or partially ruptured in 58 cases forming 35.365% and the non-ruptured were 106 hymens forming 64.634% of the total considerably high means that the type of

hymen is the cause of the non-rupture, Table 4, Figure 4a and Figure 4b.

It was documented as well that trauma to hymens due to other causes was reported in 66 cases, where 48 hymens were ruptured accidentally due to direct or indirect trauma by falling down, 16 ruptured hymens due to rape forming 24.242% of the total, is a considerably low percentage as compared with those of Fenslow et al; (1998) (14), Girudin et al; (1997) (15) and that of Reade (1985) (16). 2 ruptured hymens during medical examination by gynecologist through P/V occurred un-intentionally table 5, Figure 5a and Figure 5b.

Regardless of whether visible injury is evident, examiners must proceed with the most thorough, nonjudgmental history, physical examination, and evidence collection.

A nonjudgmental attitude helps to provide compassionate care and improves the examiner's credibility as a witness. The judicial system decides if sexual assault actually occurred based on a multidisciplinary effort of which the examiner's history and examination are a part (17). Mega et al.; (2000) reported that intimate partner violence involves an interrelated combination of physical, sexual and psychological abuse, usually directed against women. In this study it is evident that abuse in domestic relationships has become an epidemic, this is in consistence with Shalansky et al., (1999) (18).

Conclusion

Requests of virginity examination have increased in the last few years. It is well understood to examine the patency of a hymen in cases exposed to trauma or rape, but unfortunately most of examined cases were newly married females referred to Al-Sabeen maternity hospital and Kuwait teaching hospital in Sana'a. 230 females were examined in the last 3 years (2010-2012), these cases were considered difficult and ambiguous i.e. much more cases were examined in the above mentioned hospitals, Examination most of the time was a group work between forensic medicine. and gynecology depts.

Of the total number of examined cases 50 young girls 5 to 13 years old were also examined for determining the virginity for the purpose of being admitted to orphanages and role of social welfare considered to be a compulsory investigation before being accepted in such houses to rule out the responsibly of being sexually assaulted prior to admission.

16 other cases of rape victims were examined as well.

Reports were issued and forwarded officially and confidentially to legal authorities which requested such investigations.

Hymens were classified according to the type of hymen, site of rupture and the age of rupture. Accordingly it was found that most of the hymens were fibrous, thick hymens in 71 cases forming 43.292 % of the total, Wide opening attenuated either crecentric or annular hymens were 30 forming 18.292% of the total. Most of examined hymens unfortunately cause no bleeding or trivial bleeding leading to misinterpretation by the husband and his family at wedding night. During examining virginity some rare types of hymens were accidentally discovered, 7 fleshy hymens forming 4.268% of the total and 1 cartilaginous hymen forming 0.609 % of the total number of examined hymens, 55 were intermediate thickness forming 33.536 % of the total number.

In conclusion virginity at wedding night is misinterpreted by husbands due to the minimal amount of blood appearance after the penetration of hymens or absence of bleeding. All ruptures noticed mostly coincide with the marriage date supporting the virginity of such cases.

Examination and evaluation of virginity due to problems at wedding night as well as for those admitted to orphanages and role of social welfare is considered un-human and against females will, it is considered a human right violation and against religious concepts.

Table 1: demonstrates total No. Of cases examined for virginity assessment In relation to age

Females examined	No. Of cases	Age/years	% of total
Total number of cases	230	5 to 31	
Number of newly married females	164	18 to 31	71.30
Number of females admitted to orphanages and role of social welfare	50	5 to 13	21.34
Number of cases of rape	16	5 to 31	6.95

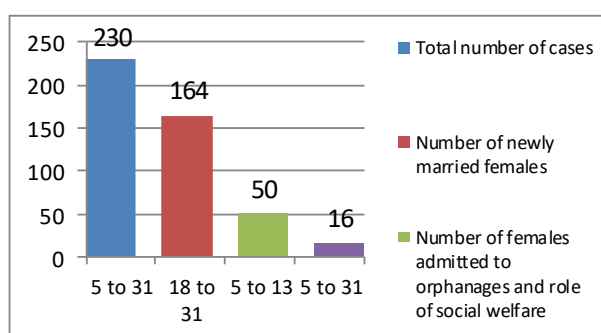


Figure 1.a: Total No. Of cases examined for virginity assessment

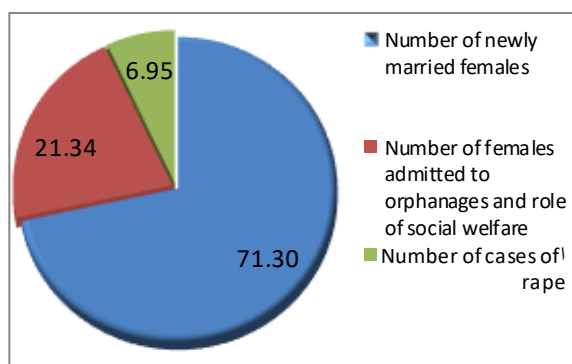


Figure 1.b: Percentage of cases examined for virginity

Table 2: demonstrates types of hymens according to their shape

Type of Hymen	No. of cases out of 230	% of total
Annular	114	49.56
Crecentric	78	33.91
Dentate	9	3.91
Septate	29	12.60

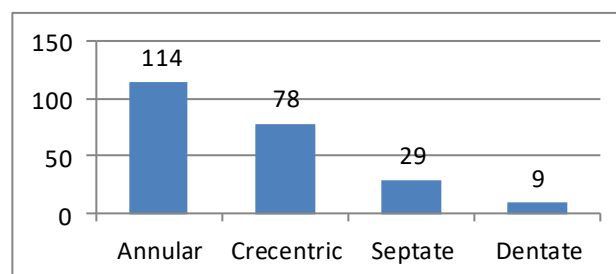


Figure 2.a: Types of hymens according to their shape

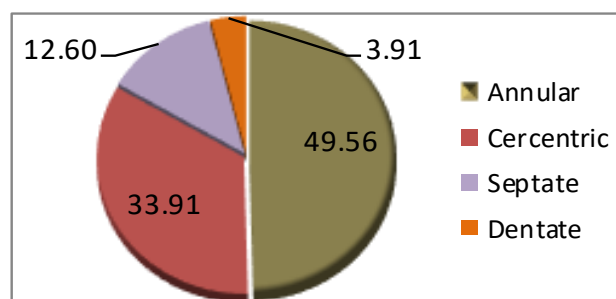


Figure 2.b: Percentage of hymens according to their shape

Table 3: demonstrates hymens of medicolegal importance (causing wedding night problems in newly married females)

Type of Hymen	No. of cases out of 164	% of total
Fibrous	71	43.292
Wide opening	30	18.292
Intermediate thickness	55	33.536
Fleshy	7	4.268
Cartilaginous	1	0.609

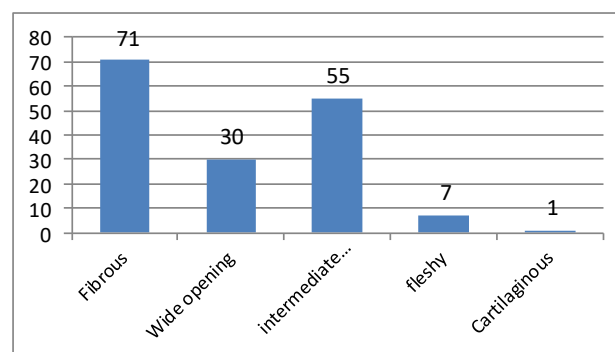


Figure 3.a: Hymens of medicolegal importance at wedding night

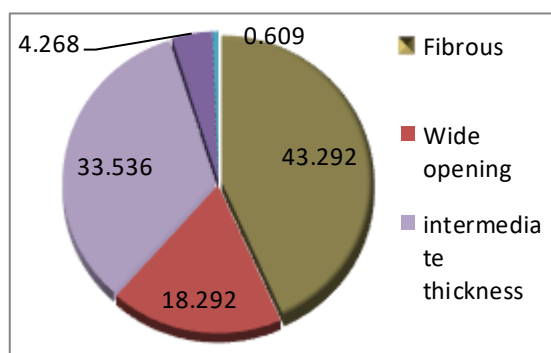


Figure 4.b: Percentage of condition of hymens at wedding night

Table 5: demonstrates other types of trauma causing hymen rupture

Type of hymen trauma	No. of cases out of 66	% of total
Accidental rupture	48	72.727
Rupture due to rape	16	24.242
During P.V exam in hospitals	2	3.030

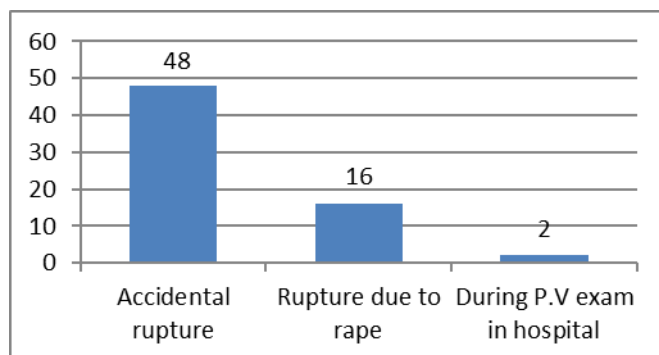


Figure 5.a: Other causes of hymen ruptures

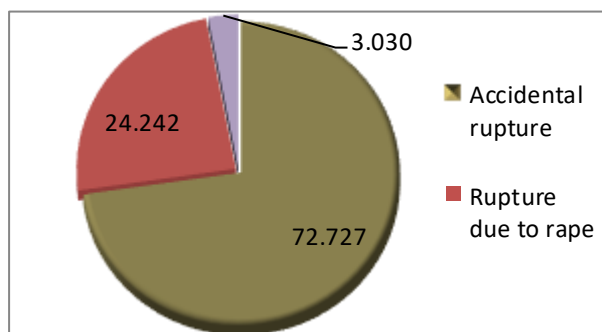


Figure 5.b: Percentage of other causes of hymen ruptures

Recommendations:

- 1.Establishment of rules regulating virginity examination only for cases of medicolegal importance.
- 2.Spreading knowledge of female insults through mass communication tools.
- 3.Enforcement of female rights through judicial systems to minimize female abuse.
- 4.Application of punishment rules against assailants who commit crimes and assaults against female victims.

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