

Social Support and Coping Mechanism of Destitute Widows in Nagapattinam District, Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Widows in a society like India with its stringent social norms governing them at various stages of their lives, encounter fundamental changes in their socio-ritual status that can be far different and disturbing compared to their husband's pre-death phase. Besides emotional loss, their experiencing consequent neglect by family members is a major issue to be considered. A low social status apart, an important dimension of widows' lives is their poor economic condition. Considering that many of them are from poor and middle class families that are numerically larger than affluent families besides many being engaged in non-productive or menial jobs, widowhood thrusts a burden in terms of dependence on others. Lacking in economic resources, many of them live in abject poverty to lead a life of a destitute. Widows' perceptions about their life whether difficult or manageable are associated more with various socio-cultural events that occur in the lives of widows that influence the way they view their own life in terms of old age and widowhood, a journey into the realm of uncertainties. The socio-economic status of widows reveals that many widows lead a life of challenges with varied implications for their lives. It is observed that they encounter financial constraints along with a low legal access to economic property. Socially, widows lead a life of dependency, totally or partially. They also lack a full control over the household decision-making process unless they have some hold on the economic resources. A South African feminist namely Bernadette Mosala quotes "When men are oppressed, it is a tragedy, when women are oppressed, it is a tradition".

Keywords:widows, PerceptionsSocio-economic status

Introduction

Widow is a woman whose husband is dead and who has not married again. Widows in every society face multiple and conflicting social challenges. Their status is defined by a diverse group of interrelated and intersectional factors - social, religious, cultural as well as economic, all of which not only isolate them from their families and community, but also leave them responsible for the care and support of their children. This is particularly true for India, where the life of an individual is governed by certain socio-cultural norms which determine a person's social standing as well as purpose and function in life. Developed over centuries, these socio-cultural norms are mainly responsible for the subordination of women within the family. Traditionally, widowhood in India has been characterized by certain distinct and deplorable social norms. For instance, in earlier times a widow

was burnt alive on her husband's funeral pyre in a custom known as "sati".

Apart from these traditional practices related to widowhood, loss of husband has a social, cultural, economic, physical as well as psychological impact on a woman. A widow is often vulnerable to physical, sexual and mental abuse. She is socially marginalized and culturally ostracized in societies where life revolves around the male. The loss of her husband results in her withdrawal from reproduction and sexuality and debarment from the functioning social unit of the family. She is expected to lead a life of austerity, social segregation and devotion. She is excluded from all auspicious ceremonies for even her shadow is considered to be a bad omen (Rai, 2007).

Socio-Cultural Traditions, Religion and Status of Widows

Hinduism and Socio-Religious Cultural precepts of Widowhood

Hindu widows are also referred to as *vidhva*. Remarriage was allowed to Hindu widows by the ancient texts, viz. Vedas. Over the centuries various cultural traditions concretized giving widows a severely subordinated status, wherein their life is little more than existence till death. Widows are not allowed to take part in any marriage or religious ceremonies like child birth as according to Orthodox Hindu thinking if their (Widows) shadow is cast upon anything it will be a bad omen and bring bad luck on all present, as they are considered inauspicious. Widows are not even allowed to attend the auspicious occasions because it was considered to be a bad omen. In case the widow is sighted at the beginning of an auspicious venture, the venture must be postponed because she is considered inauspicious. Widows were banned from attending auspicious ceremonies, visiting auspicious places, or being seen by auspicious persons such as brides & grooms.

Hindu widows are strictly warned to wear only white saree after her husband's death as her life is colorless without husband as it was through him that she derived her personality. On receiving the news of her husband's death, she has to break her bangles, remove her jewellery and *Sindoor* (i.e. the red powder which denotes the married status) as now they are valueless for her. Restrictions were also imposed on the diet of widows. Widows were allowed to eat only vegetarian food because it was considered that the hot foods would arouse sexual desire in them. In order to control the widow's sexuality, widows had to follow rigorous eating habits such as, a vegetarian diet without hot food was allowed (Chen, 2000).

Widows comb their hair only once a day and tie it in a knot. They wear a single silver bangle on each wrist, a simple chain around their neck, and simple ear studs. They are not allowed to wear the auspicious red mark on their foreheads, rings on their fingers and toes, or any nose ornaments. They wear simple sarees and blouses. They work hard as they possibly can and knowingly let people take advantage of them as a kind of penance for their past sins. They deny themselves the basic comforts of life, not to mention any luxuries or entertainment. They spend most of their time in prayer to God (Dhruvarajan, 1989).

Islam and Socio-Religious Cultural precepts of Widowhood

Women in Islam held a high position due to the positive attitudes of Muslim men who were guided by the injunctions. Hence the status of the widow too was high as she was not discriminated against. Women in general participated in various activities and she had a respected role to play in Muslim society. Widowhood in Islam is not a matter of great significance as marriage in Islam is not a sacred vow or a sacrament. It is a civil contract, which can be broken but generally by the male. A

widow was considered a part of her husband's property to be inherited by his male heirs and she was, usually given in marriage to the deceased man's eldest son from another wife. The Quran scathingly attacked and abolished this degrading custom. It regarded it as illegal and sinful to cohabit with any woman except one's own wedded wife. Accordingly Quran states: Marry not women whom your fathers married (**Pinto, 2002**).

Quranic injunctions relating to widows nevertheless encourage widow remarriage. There is no stigma attached to widow remarriage. Widowhood practices across different religions are not identical. Widowhood in Islam is a non-issue. This is because marriage in Islam is not a sacred vow or a sacrament. It is a civil contract. The prophet himself married a twice widowed lady. Positive Quranic injunctions provide for inheritance of property by widows and their children. Thus widows enjoy a comparatively better social status in Islam (**Kareem, 1988**). Islam does not impose restrictions on the diet of a widow. She could drink cold water and sleep according to her will. Muslim widows are not barred from wearing jewellery, fine dresses and shoes. No restriction was imposed by Islam on such matters. She could grow long hair and use scented oil (**Kausar, 1992**).

Christianity and Socio-Religious Cultural precepts of Widowhood

The Bible advises the faithful to show generosity to the widow. God warns do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge also when you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all work of your hands. The Bible asserts that God looks after the weak and the unfortunate and prohibits any person from taking advantage of them do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. Remarriage, as stated earlier, is permissible within Christianity. The Church took the responsibility of providing material assistance to a widow where there was nobody to take care of and support her. Widows are not ostracised and are free to attend the religious, social or any other functions of the Church.

However, in India, Christianity has imbibed many of the influences of Hinduism and one will often come across a Christian woman wearing the symbols of a Hindu married woman such as Sindoor, mangalsutra and bangles. It is customary for the Christian widow in India to remove her mangalsutra and break her bangles as soon as her husband dies because of Hindu influences. Nevertheless, the Christian widows do not suffer from the cultural practices which predominate widowhood in Hinduism and culturally are better situated. Similarly, Christianity also does not place a boos on widows. Christian Church, all over and even in India gives freedom to widows for remarriage. They are free to attend religious and social functions. However, the influence of Hinduism has led to the Christians adopting many of the pernicious practices of Hindus pertaining to widows (**Jogula, 1988**).

Sikhism and Socio-Religious Cultural precepts of Widowhood

Regarding the clothes of the widow do not wear dirty clothes, nor those which are made from fine-spun cloth. Her clothing should be of coarse white cloth. Restrictions were also imposed upon the jewellery, diet and clothes of widows. The woman who is left a widow must not wear a nose-ring. She should eat unsalted food, and only once every 24 hours. This meal she should take half an hour after the close of day (ghariratigudari). A widow who is unable to eat without salt should take a little. She should prepare and drink rice-water gruel; and she should repeat Vahiguru's name of

Guru Sri Akal Purakh. She should focus her thoughts on her departed husband and should not grieve (McLeod, 2006).

The practice of remarriage of widows was permitted in Sikhism. Remarriage is generally preferred with the younger brother (dewar) of the deceased husband and in the absence of dewar, the elder brother (jeth) is preferred. This kind of remarriage is called karewa/ chadarpauna./chadardalna (placing the sheet of cloth over her head in presence of relatives and members of biradari). However, the reasons have nothing to do with women's rights-to protect the honour of the family and to keep the land within the family. As J. S. Grewal -To obviate property passing out of the family, a Jat widow would be married by one of the brothers of the deceased husband. Land had to be retained by the immediate family if at all possible'. It is significant that the practice had a forcible thrust. In Sikh society, a widow is called a vidhwa or randi (it is used as a swear word for wicked women and prostitutes). The status of widowhood condemns a Sikh woman to a state of perpetual ritual pollution. The status of widowhood is referred to as randepa in the Sikh/Punjabi community. The participation of widows in wedding rituals is regarded as inauspicious but her participation in the religious activities is not forbidden. At the death of her husband, she does not wear colorful clothes and wears a white chuni (long scarf) that signifies the status of widowhood and a state of being in mourning. Then there is a custom of syaapa. The women surround the widow, clasp her in their arms, and weep with her, beating their heads and breasts in measured times crying and sobbing as loud as they can (Rose, 1997).

Statement of the problem

Many times, a widow faces difficulty in adjusting to her new status because the social norms and taboos place her in most disadvantaged position and restrict her social interactions. A widow has to perform many rituals. She has to follow lot many restrictions leading to social isolation and social inferiority, resulting in a feeling of dejection and depression. Widows in all communities suffer from limited freedom to participate in religious and social functions. They carry the stigma of inauspicious and hence have to keep away from functions. For instance, they are not allowed to touch objects used during marriage or religious ceremonies. In fact, a widow is not even entitled to perform the ritual to welcome her own daughter-in-law (Sarkar and Banerjee, 1998). In a number of demographic studies, marital union and determinants of age at marriage have been given more attention as they have implication on fertility. But, not enough attention has been given to study the marital dissolution, and further the status and problems of widowed. Most of the widows in rural India are subject to economic hardships, social isolation and related deprivation. They face restrictions on mobility, social participation, inheritance, employment and the kind of social support they receive from relatives and the community, the researcher conducted a study on with the following objectives.

Objectives

- i) To describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the childless destitute widows;
- ii) to know about the living arrangement and socio-economic status of the respondents;
- iii) to analyze the social support and coping mechanism of the study population;
- iv) to understand the socio-psychological feelings of the respondents and elicit suitable suggestions to mainstream in the society.

Operational Definition

Widows: Widows are those whose husband have died, irrespective of their age of widowhood and have not married again.

Social Care: Providing the destitute widows with social care in terms of maintaining their respect and dignity within the family and also the society at large.

Economic Support/Care: Providing the destitute widows financial care i.e., covering their basic needs, when they become unproductive or when they are not able to work this may differ across individuals.

Psychological Care: Making destitute widows people happy emotionally through constant personal interactions and talking.

Health Care: Helping the destitute widows during medical emergencies or during health problems i.e. keeping a check on their medicines, visit to doctors etc.

Methodology

Since, this is a pioneer research in the field of social support and coping mechanism of destitute widows, the researcher adopted an exploratory research design to study this problem so as to fulfill the research gap and suggest for suitable solutions. The present study was conducted based on the primary data collected through field survey with the well structured interview schedule to collect the primary data with the application of purposive sampling techniques in Nagapattinam District of Tamil Nadu. The primary data was collected between the periods of October to December 2020 and analyzed with the help of using SPSS package to draw suitable statistical analysis.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPERTITION

Table - 1

Distribution of the Respondents by their Age, Religion and Caste

S. No	Age	No. of Respondents (N*=100)	Percentage (100%)
1.	18-28	13	13%
2.	29-33	40	40%
3.	34-38	17	17%
4.	39-43	19	19%
5.	Above 44	11	11%
S. No	Religion	No. of Respondents (N*=100)	Percentage (100%)
1.	Hinduism	49	49%
2.	Islam	15	15%
3.	Christianity	28	28%
4.	Buddhism	8	8%
S. No	Caste	No. of Respondents (N*=100)	Percentage (100%)
1.	Backward Castes	47	47%
2.	Scheduled Castes	31	31%
3.	Scheduled Tribes	12	12%
4.	Most backward Castes	7	7%
5.	Other castes	3	3%

*Source: Computed from Primary data

Age

The age plays a pivotal role to determine one's status and role in the society. It is seen from the above table show that out of the total 100 respondents, more than one third 40 (40%) of the respondents belong to the age group of 29-33 years; followed by that less than one third 19 (19%), less than one third 17 (17%), less than one third 13 (13%) and little 11 (11%) of them were age group of 39-43 years, 34-38 years, 18-28 years and 44years and above respectively.

Religion

It is obvious from the study of the data given in the above table that out of the total 100 respondents, nearly half 49 (49%) of the respondents followed the Hinduism religion; followed by that more than one fourth 28 (28%), less than one third 15 (15%) and few 8 (8%) of them were followed the Christianity, Islam and Buddhism respectively.

Caste

It is clear from the study of the data given in the above table reveals that the less than half 47 (47%) of the respondents were belong to Backward castes; followed by that less than one third 31 (31%), less than one third 12 (12%), few 7 (7%) and very few 3 (3%) of them were belongs to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Most Backward castes and other castes respectively.

Table - 2
Distribution of the Respondents by their Educational Status

S. No	Educational Status	No. of Respondents (N*=100)	Percentage (100%)
1.	Research Degree	3	3%
2.	Post Graduate Degree	13	13%
3.	Under Graduate	15	15%
4.	Technical Degree	13	13%
5.	Higher Secondary Level Education	19	19%
6.	Diploma	5	5%
7.	High School Education	11	11%
8.	Middle School Education	9	9%
9.	Primary School Education	7	7%
10.	Illiterate	5	5%

**Source: Computed from Primary data*

Educational Status

The above table reflects that the educational status of the respondents. Out of 100 respondents less than one third 19 (19%) of them were studied Higher Secondary Level Education; followed by that less than one third 15 (15%), 13 (13%), 13 (13%), 11 (11%), few 9 (9%), 7 (7%), 5 (5%), 5 (5%) and very few 3 (3%) of them were studied Under Graduate such as B.A., B.SC., and B.Com etc; Post Graduate Degree such as M.A., M.SC., and M.Com etc; Technical Degree such as Medical, Engineering etc; High School Education; Middle School Education; Primary School Education; Diploma; Illiterate and Research Degree such as Ph.D., M. Phil., etc respectively.

More than half 56 (56%) of the respondents were more importance attached and attach importance to education; followed by that less than one third 31 (31%) and little 13 (13%) of them were less importance attached and No importance to education due to financial problems, family restrictions etc respectively.

Table - 3

Distribution of the Respondents by their Occupation and Husband's Occupation

S. No	Occupation	No. of Respondents (N*=100)	Percentage (100%)
1.	Teacher	3	3%
2.	Nurse	6	6%
3.	Clerk	3	3%
4.	Typist	12	12%
5.	Accountant	16	16%
6.	Fourth grade employee	4	4%
7.	Factory labourer	19	19%
8.	Cleaner	10	10%
9.	Sweeper	9	9%
10.	Worker engaged in agriculture	7	7%
11.	Domestic servant	9	9%
12.	Unemployed depend on others	2	2%

**Source: Computed from Primary data*

Nature of Occupation

The above table reveals that less than one third 19 (19%) of the respondents were working as Factory labourers; followed by that 16 (16%), 12 (12%), 10 (10%), few 9 (9%), 9 (9%), 7 (7%), 6 (6%), 4 (4%), 3 (3%), 3 (3%) and very few 2 (2%) of them were working as Accountants in government and private bank, grocery shop, shopping mart, textile shops; Typists in government sectors, court, VAO office and Taluk office; Cleaners in colleges and schools; Sweepers in shopping mall, Textiles show rooms, Marriage hall, private schools and colleges; Domestic servants, Workers engaged in agriculture, Nurses in government hospitals, private eye hospitals, Nursing home and home care; Fourth grade employees, Clerks in Private bank, Taluk and VAO office, Teachers in government and private High and higher secondary schools and Unemployed depend on others respectively.

Table - 4

Distribution of the Respondents by their Occupation and Husband's Occupation

S. No	Husband's Occupation	No. of Respondents (N*=100)	Percentage (100%)
1.	Daily wages	41	41%
2.	Carpenter	3	3%
3.	Business Men	5	5%
4.	Electrician	7	7%
5.	Mechanic	6	6%
6.	Welder	8	8%
7.	Caters	2	2%

8.	Supervisor	11	11%
9.	Tailor	10	10%
10	Manager	7	7%

**Source: Computed from Primary data*

Husband's Occupation

The above table shows that less than half 41(41%) of the respondents were working as Daily wages; followed by that less than one third 11 (11%), few 10 (10%), 8 (8%), 7 (7%), 7 (7%), 6 (6%), 5 (5%), 3 (3%) and very few 2 (2%) of them were working as Supervisors in Garments, Textiles shops and Industries; Tailoring works in garments, tailoring shops and own tailoring shops; Welders in Industries; Managers in Private Bank, Garments and Textiles shops; two wheeler and four wheeler Mechanic working in car and bike service center and own mechanic shops; Business Men such as Textiles, electrical and electronic parts, Boutique, Hotels, Owning a bakeries, Selling Handcrafted Items; Carpenter and Caters Catering Food respectively.

Table - 5
Distribution of the Respondents by their Monthly Income

S. No	Annual Income	No. of Respondents (N*=100)	Percentage (100%)
1.	Rs.5000-8,000	52	46
2.	Rs. 9000-13,000	39	34
3.	Rs. 14,000-18,000	10	9
4.	Above Rs.19,000	7	6

**Source: computed from primary data*

Monthly Income

It is evident from the above table that less than half 52 (46%) of the respondents' monthly income between Rs.5000-8,000/-; followed by that more than one third 39 (34%), few 10 (9%) and 7 (6%) of them were Rs. 9000-13,000, Rs. 14,000-18,000 and above Rs.19,000 respectively. From the above discussion it reflects that the varying economic situation of the respondents and cannot have their days meals without work.

Table - 6
Distribution of the Respondents by their Housing Particulars

S. No	Type of House	No. of Respondents (N*=114)	Percentage (100%)
1.	Hut	29	29%
2.	Tiled	42	42%
3.	Pucca	18	18%
4.	Destitute Homes	11	11%
S. No	Nature of House	No. of Respondents (N*=114)	Percentage (100%)
1.	Own	61	61%
2.	Rented	30	30%
3.	Leased	9	9%

**Source: computed from primary data*

Housing Particulars

As far as their types of house is concerned that the majority 42 (42%) of the respondents were living in Tiled house; followed by that more than one fourth 29 (29%), less than one third 18 (18%) and 11 (11%) of them were living in Hut, Pucca and Destitute homes respectively.

Out of 100 respondents majority 61 (61%) of the respondents were living at their own houses and the remaining more than one fourth 30 (30%) and few 9 (9%) of them were living in rental and leased houses respectively.

Table - 7

Distribution of the Respondents by their social support and coping mechanism

S. No	Social support and coping mechanism	No. of Respondents (N*=100)	Percentage (100%)
1.	Relation with Parents		
	Very Intimate	21	21%
	Intimate	57	57%
	Somewhat good	19	19%
	Slightly strained	03	03%
	Total	100	100
2.	Relation with In-laws		
	Very Intimate	9	9%
	Intimate	31	31%
	Somewhat good	47	47%
	Slightly strained	13	13%
	Total	100	100
3.	Relation with Siblings		
	Very Intimate	3	3%
	Intimate	21	21%
	Somewhat good	42	42%
	Slightly strained	34	34%
	Total	100	100
4.	Relation with Relatives		
	Very Intimate	6	6%
	Intimate	27	27%
	Somewhat good	49	49%
	Slightly strained	6	6%
	Very strained	12	12%
	Total	100	100
5.	Relation with friends		
	Very Intimate	16	16%
	Intimate	63	63%
	Somewhat good	21	21%
	Total	100	100
6.	Relation with Neighbours		

	Intimate	23	23%
	Somewhat good	76	76%
	Very strained	01	01%
	Total	100	100

**Source: computed from primary data*

Relation with parents

The above table reflects that more than half 57 (57%) of the respondents were very intimate relation with parents; followed by that less than one fourth 21 (21%), less than one third 19 (19%) and very few 3 (3%) of them were very intimate, somewhat good and slightly strained relation with their parents respectively.

Relation with In-laws

Out of 100 respondents, less than half 47 (47%) of the respondents were somewhat good relation with In-laws; followed by that less than one third 31 (31%), 13 (13%) and few 9 (9%) of them were intimate, slightly strained and very intimate relation with their In-laws respectively.

Relation with siblings

The above table depicts that less than half 42 (42%) of the respondents were somewhat good relation with siblings; followed by that less than one third 34 (34%), less than one fourth 21 (21%) and very few 3 (3%) of them were slightly strained, intimate and very intimate relation with their siblings respectively.

Relation with relatives

Out of 100 respondents, nearly half 49 (49%) of the respondents were somewhat good relation with relatives; followed by that more than one fourth 27 (27%), less than one third 12 (12%), few 6 (6%) and 6 (6%) of them were intimate, very intimate and very strained relation with their relatives respectively.

Relation with Friends

The above table indicates that more than half 63 (63%) of the respondents were intimate relation with their friends; followed by that less than one fourth 21 (21%) and less than one third 16 (16%) of them were somewhat good and very intimate relation with their friends respectively.

Relation with Neighbours

Out of 100 respondents, significance 97 (97%) of the respondents were familiar with ladies only; and the remaining 3 (3%) of them were familiar with both gents and ladies for friendly in the study area. Out of 100 respondents, more than three fourth 76 (76%) of the respondents were somewhat relation with neighbours; followed by that less than one fourth 23 (23%) and very few 1 (1%) of them were intimate and very strained relation with their neighbours respectively.

Table - 7**Distribution of the Respondents by their social adjustment inventory**

S. No	Social adjustment inventory	No. of Respondents (N*=100)	Percentage (100%)
1.	Friends easily	72	72%
2.	Disliking	74	74%
3.	Unpleasant arguments and disagreements	86	86%
4.	Bored with people quickly	74	74%
5.	Preferred to be alone	61	61%
6.	Hesitated to speak out	86	86%
7.	Organize social gathering and functions	96	96%
8.	Difficulty in conversation with a person	74	74%
9.	Find it easy to ask others from help	86	86%
10.	Felt that others carry grudges against	74	74%
11.	Become angry	61	61%
12.	Few close friends	74	74%
13.	Generally unsympathetic	67	67%
14.	Felt that not understand them	74	74%
15.	Entertainment	76	76%

**Source: computed from primary data*

*** Multiple Responses*

The above table reflects that Less than three fourth 72 (72%) of the respondents were not make friends easily; followed by that nearly three fourth 74 (74%), vast majority 86 (86%), nearly three fourth 74 (74%), more than half 61 (61%), vast majority 86 (86%), significance 96 (96%), nearly three fourth 74 (74%), vast majority 86 (86%), nearly three fourth 74 (74%), more than half 61 (61%), nearly three fourth 74 (74%), more than half 67 (67%), nearly three fourth 74 (74%) and more than three fourth 76 (76%) of them had no more people disliking them than liking them; had unpleasant arguments and disagreements with friends and neighbours fairly often; got bored with people quickly; had preferred to be alone rather in the company of people; often hesitated to speak out in front of others; had not often organize social gathering and functions; difficulty in conversation with a person to whom they had just been introduced; were not find it easy to ask others from help; felt that others carry grudges against them; become angry when their friends did not agree with them; found that they had few close friends rather than many casual acquaintances; thought that people were generally unsympathetic towards them; felt that many of their friends did not understand them; were not go out with their friends for any entertainment such as Park, cinema, drama, shopping etc respectively.

Table - 8
Distribution of the Respondents by their Socio-psychological feelings

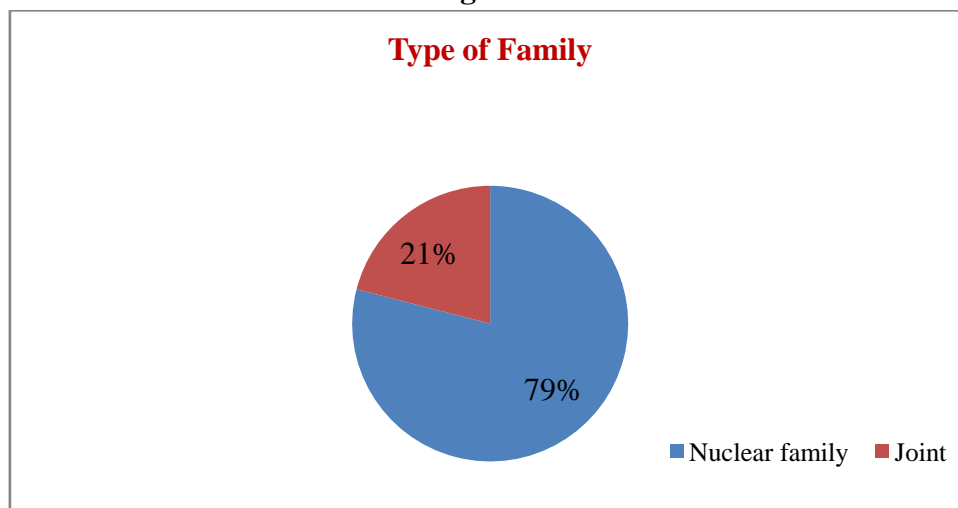
S. No	Socio-psychological feelings	No. of respondents (N*: 100)	Percentage
1.	Felt sad	82	82%
2.	Felt lonely	98	98%
3.	Affected by stress	61	61%
4.	Affected by anxiety	47	47%
5.	Affected by depression	31	31%

**Source: Computed from Primary data*

**** Multiple Responses**

Out of 100 respondents, vast majority 82 (82%) of the respondents were felt that sad; followed by that significance 98 (98%), more than half 61 (61%), less than half 47 (47%) and less than one third 31 (31%) of them were felt that lonely, affected by stress, anxiety and depression respectively.

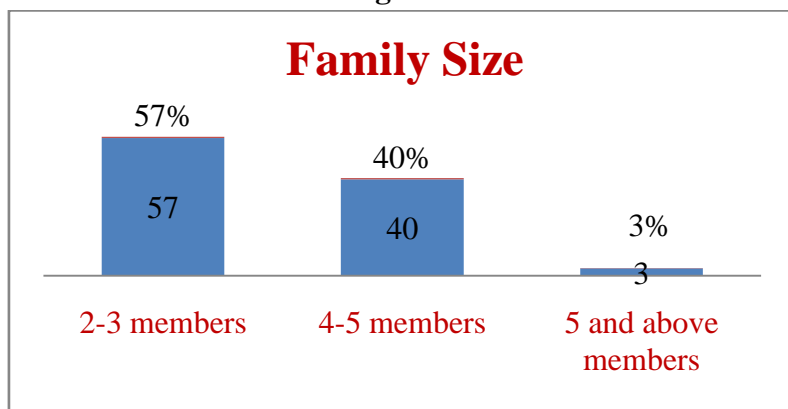
Diagram: 1



** Source: Computed from Primary data*

From the chart the researcher explains while analyzing the more than three fourth 79 (79%) of the respondents were living for nuclear families and the remaining less than one fourth 21 (21%) of them were living for joint families in the study area.

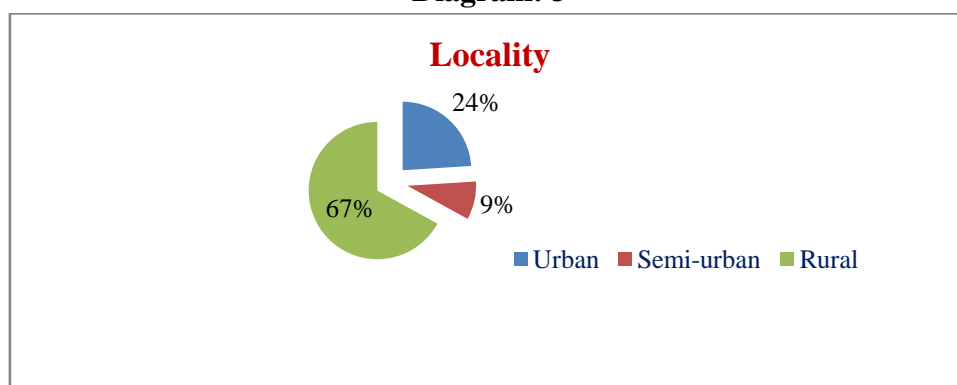
Diagram: 2



* Source: Computed from Primary data

The above diagram expressed about the Family size of the respondents. More than half 57 (57%) of the respondents' family members were 2-3 members; followed by that more than one third 40 (40%) and very few 3 (3%) of them family members were 4-5 members; 5 and above members respectively.

Diagram: 3



* Source: Computed from Primary data

The above diagram expressed about the locality of the respondents most of them were coming from all the three localities such as urban, semi-urban and rural in the study area. There were three types of localities from where the students are coming to school. The majority 67 (67%) of the respondents were living in Rural areas; followed by that nearly one fourth 24 (24%) and few 9 (9%) of them were from urban and semi-urban areas respectively. Most of them rural areas destitute widows were faced the social life, remarriage and financial problems compared to urban and semi-urban areas destitute widows in the study area respectively.

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Findings of the Study

Socio-Demographic characteristics

- ❖ The age plays a pivotal role to determine one's status and role in the society. Out of the total 100 respondents, more than one third 40 (40%) of the respondents belong to the age group of 29-33 years; nearly half 49 (49%) of the respondents followed the Hinduism religion; less than half 47 (47%) of the respondents were belong to Backward castes.

- ❖ Out of 100 respondents less than one third 19 (19%) of them were studied Higher Secondary Level Education; More than half 56 (56%) of the respondents were more importance attached and attach importance to education; less than one third 19 (19%) of the respondents were working as Factory labourers.

Living arrangements and Socio-Economic status

- ❖ Less than half 41 (41%) of the respondents were working as Daily wages; less than half 52 (46%) of the respondents' monthly income between Rs.5000-8,000/-; From the above discussion it reflects that the varying economic situation of the respondents and cannot have their days meals without work.
- ❖ More than half 53 (53%) of the respondents' income enough to meet their day to day requirements in the life; less than half 41 (41%) of the respondents' economic conditions were average; majority 63 (63%) of the respondents were some accumulation wealth for the future; more than half 66 (66%) of the respondents were not taken loans and borrowed from bank and others.
- ❖ The majority 67 (67%) of the respondents were living in Rural areas; More than three fourth 79 (79%) of the respondents were living for nuclear families; More than half 57 (57%) of the respondents' family members were 2-3 members.
- ❖ More than half 56 (56%) of the respondents were living for individual; majority 67 (67%) of the respondents had one brother; more than one third 39 (39%) of the respondents had two sisters; As far as their types of house is concerned that the majority 42 (42%) of the respondents were living in Tiled house; Out of 100 respondents majority 61 (61%) of the respondents were living at their own houses; more than half 67 (67%) of the respondents were one water tap facility at their home.
- ❖ Significance 98 (98%) of the respondents had kept television; less than half 41 (41%) of the respondents had kept refrigerator; less than one third 32 (32%) of the respondents had kept washing machine; few 9 (9%) of the respondents had kept air-conditioned at their houses; more than one third 37 (37%) of the respondents were land.
- ❖ More than half 61 (61%) of the respondents were not financially depend on anybody; more than half 56 (56%) of the respondents were meet their economic needs from self earnings such as working in government and private, interest of savings from bank and rental from house; significance 96 (96%) of the respondents were savings account in the private and government bank; less than half 43 (43%) of the respondents were savings account in the post office.
- ❖ Significance 98 (98%) of the respondents was not financially depending on others because they were earning income work; more than one third 36 (36%) of them were getting various level of pension such as Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme and Destitute Widow Pension Scheme.

Married life

- ❖ Less than half 47 (47%) of the respondents had got married within same caste; less than half 47 (47%) of the respondents had got married between the age group of 18-23 years; more than one third 40 (40%) of the respondents had enjoyed their married life for ten years; more than half 51 (51%) of the respondents were age at the time of widowhood 24-28 years.
- ❖ Less than half 44 (44%) of the respondents were the time of their marriage paid dowry for cash; less than one third 31 (31%) of the respondents were cause of their husband's death excessive drinking; less than one third 31 (31%) of the respondents were living for individual after widowhood.

- ❖ Majority 67 (67%) of the respondents were the source of their income wholly depend on husband's income before widowhood; majority 70 (70%) of the respondents income source were employed after widowhood; majority 61 (61%) of the respondents were source of their help from parents immediately after the death of their husband; majority 60 (60%) of the respondents were travelling by bus to work place in the study area.

Social Support and Coping Mechanism

- ❖ More than half 57 (57%) of the respondents were very intimate relation with parents; significance 96 (96%) of the respondents were sharing their feelings with parents; more than three fourth 80 (80%) of the respondents were spend time with their parents for 6-8 hours weekly once in their house; vast majority 86 (86%) of the respondents were go out to meet their parents sometimes; and vast majority 84 (84%) of the respondents' parents visit house sometimes.
- ❖ Less than half 47 (47%) of the respondents were somewhat good relation with In-laws; significance 93 (93%) of the respondents were not sharing their feelings with in-laws; more than three fourth 82 (82%) of the respondents were not spend time with their in-laws; vast majority 88 (88%) of the respondents were not go out to meet their in-laws; and vast majority 81 (81%) of the respondents' in-laws not visit house.
- ❖ Less than half 42 (42%) of the respondents were somewhat good relation with siblings; more than half 57 (57%) of the respondents were sharing their feelings through mobile with siblings; more than three fourth 83 (83%) of the respondents were spend time with their siblings for 2-4 hours occasionally in their house; vast majority 83 (83%) of the respondents were go out to meet their siblings occasionally; and vast majority 80 (80%) of the respondents' siblings visit house occasionally.
- ❖ Nearly half 49 (49%) of the respondents were somewhat good relation with relatives; significance 98 (98%) of the respondents were not sharing their feelings with relatives; vast majority 88 (88%) of the respondents were not spend time with their relatives; vast majority 89 (89%) of the respondents were not go out to meet their relatives; and vast majority 85 (85%) of the respondents' relatives not visit house.
- ❖ More than half 63 (63%) of the respondents were intimate relation with their friends; significance 91 (91%) of the respondents were sharing their feelings with friends; more than three fourth 76 (76%) of the respondents were spend time with friends for 3-5 hours a day at working place; vast majority 82 (82%) of the respondents were go out to meet their friends sometimes; and vast majority 80 (80%) of the respondents' friends visit house sometimes.
- ❖ Significance 97 (97%) of the respondents were familiar with ladies only; and more than three fourth 76 (76%) of the respondents were somewhat relation with neighbours.
- ❖ Vast majority 82 (82%) of the respondents were not participated in any wedding, functions and celebration festivals due to widow; more than half 56 (56%) of the respondents were participated in family get together; more than three fourth 78 (78%) of the respondents were participated in death and funerals; more than half 59 (59%) of the respondents said that parents and friends hesitate invite to any wedding, engagement, religious functions like pooja, religious places, birth of a child and ceremony etc due to widow.

- ❖ Out of 100 respondents, significance 98 (98%) of the respondents expressed their feelings nobody will not invite to wedding, engagement, religious functions like pooja, religious places, birth of a child and ceremony; more than three fourth 77 (77%) of the respondents were always attend the religious activities before becoming widow; vast majority 89 (89%) of the respondents were sometimes attend the religious activities before becoming widow; more than half 69 (69%) of the respondents were believe in God; vast majority 83 (83%) of the respondents were occasionally visit religious places.
- ❖ Vast majority 86 (86%) of the respondents said that family and relatives were treated with respect before the death of husband and looked well; more than half 51 (51%) of the respondents said that family and relatives were not treated with respect after the death of husband and looked bad; vast majority 90 (90%) of the respondents said that parents loved, cared and financial supported after death the death of husband.

Social Adjustment Inventory

The above table reflects that Less than three fourth 72 (72%) of the respondents were not make friends easily; followed by that nearly three fourth 74 (74%), vast majority 86 (86%), nearly three fourth 74 (74%), more than half 61 (61%), vast majority 86 (86%), significance 96 (96%), nearly three fourth 74 (74%), vast majority 86 (86%), nearly three fourth 74 (74%), more than half 61 (61%), nearly three fourth 74 (74%), more than half 67 (67%), nearly three fourth 74 (74%) and more than three fourth 76 (76%) of them had no more people disliking them than liking them; had unpleasant arguments and disagreements with friends and neighbours fairly often; got bored with people quickly; had preferred to be alone rather in the company of people; often hesitated to speak out in front of others; had not often organize social gathering and functions; difficulty in conversation with a person to whom they had just been introduced; were not find it easy to ask others from help; felt that others carry grudges against them; become angry when their friends did not agree with them; found that they had few close friends rather than many casual acquaintances; thought that people were generally unsympathetic towards them; felt that many of their friends did not understand them; were not go out with their friends for any entertainment such as Park, cinema, drama, shopping etc respectively.

Socio-psychological feelings

Out of 100 respondents, vast majority 82 (82%) of the respondents were felt that sad; followed by that significance 98 (98%), more than half 61 (61%), less than half 47 (47%) and less than one third 31 (31%) of them were felt that lonely, affected by stress, anxiety and depression respectively.

Suggestions

- ❖ Government and non-government bodies like voluntary agencies and NGOs must take realistic measures to formulate and implement socio-economic security schemes for upliftment and rehabilitation of the widows.
- ❖ Rehabilitation of widows could be through certain measures like remarriage, education, vocational training, employment, welfare programmes to protect widows from exploitation, victimisation and legal said for inheritance of property.

- ❖ Widow remarriage should be encouraged to enable young and childless destitute widows and provide them with financial and emotional support in their life.
- ❖ All destitute widows should strive to change the society and its outlook through education and social awakening and action in order to raise their status.
- ❖ Educational institutions through their extension services should come forward to educate the masses and mould their socio-religious attitude towards widows. The right type of education to help widows to face the problems of life and build up the right attitude towards life is essential.
- ❖ Government and non-governmental organisation should provide vocational training in various trades and vocational studies to widows. It must be imparted to make the widows economically independent.
- ❖ Mass media, educational institutions, voluntary agencies and political parties should formulate for protection of widows and create a favourable environment for these widows to remarry and settle down.
- ❖ GOs and NGOs should be created awareness among the widows regarding their legal rights in the ancestral and acquired property of the deceased husband. Free legal aid should be made available and every widow should be made aware of this facility by publicity.
- ❖ Voluntary organisations should take up education and opinion building programmes in favour of widow rehabilitation programme and establish secular homes for widows. Mass media like radio, television, newspaper and films should be utilised to elevate the status of widows. People should be educated about new values and efforts should be made to put an end to the archaic ideas about widows in the modern society.

Conclusion

It is evident from the analysis of primary data that it has been concluded that apart from the religious customs and traditions, destitute widows in modern society continue to be regarded as a bad omen at auspicious occasions and so are left out of the rites and rituals. The youngest ones are simply left at home may not participate. Again, it is primarily the General Category widows who are excluded from auspicious occasions. Employment and education have very little relation with this as it was found that even employed and educated respondents were excluded from participation in auspicious ceremonies. Such social exclusion and deprivation also leads to violence against widows. They continue to be subjected to numerous forms of violence at the hands of their own family members, be they marital or natal family members. None of these provisions will have any effect until there is a change in mindset. The cultural tenets need to be changed. Societal mindset needs to be altered. A widow, as a human being, has human rights and these should not be denied in the name of culture and tradition. Gender Sensitization Programmes should be made a part and parcel of every scheme of the Government, particularly schemes aimed at welfare of widows. It must be asserted that inhumane treatment of human beings will not be tolerated.

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