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A STUDY ON SOCIO - ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FACED BY WIDOWS AT THELY, VILLUPURAM DISTRICT OF TAMIL NADU.

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ABSTRACT

Widows are facing innumerable problems in India. Discrimination, abuses, insults and neglect are the major forms of issues and problems that widows face even today in the society. As a result the widows are struglling to live in. The objective of this study is to bring out the Problems of Widows at Thely of Villupuram District. Primary data were collected from 50 widows by adopting a convenient sampling method. The Descriptive Research Design was used in this study. Data was systematically analyzed and interpreted using SPSS. The results of the study revealed that the widows face problems in their socio-economic living. Suggestions were streamlined towards the empowerment of widows which will bring about a change in their socio-economic conditions.

Key Words: Widows, abused, neglected, Socail problems, Economic Problems

INTRODUCTION

Women are created in the image of God. In many countries, a woman's social status is inextricably linked to her husband, so that when her husband dies, a woman no longer has a place in society. As a result widows remain amongst the most vulnerable members of society. Mallick Anupriya states that widowhood is both a crisis and a problem. "Widowhood is a state of social death, even among the higher castes," says Mohini Giri, a veteran activist in the fight for women's rights who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005.

Widows have always been regarded as symbols of misfortune, and their presence was thought to be inauspicious at happy occasions forgetting that widows are mothers, caregivers and heads of households. Consequently widows in India are facing a lot of problems and hardships in the family and society because of traditional norms, cultural practices and beliefs in the society.

They were forced to withdraw completely from the social life of the community. Widowed women are harassed, abused, and denied land and livelihood. Widows are often evicted from their homes and physically abused, killed even by members of their own family. The present study attempts to find out the problems faced by widows in the socio-economic spheres of life.

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METHODOLOGY

Objectives

- To study the socio demographic background of the respondents.
- To find out the Socio - economic Problems among Widows.

Hypotheses

There is a significant relationship between Type of the family, Income, Educational Status, Occupation and the Socio Economic Problems of Widows.

Research Design

The researcher has adopted descriptive design for the present study as the study attempts to describe particular phenomenon. It describes the socio economic and problems of widows.

Universe and Sampling

All the widows in the Thely panchayat constitute the universe of this study. The 50 widows were the sampling of this study. There are 130 widows. This researcher studied 50 widows who were chosen by convenient sampling method. The primary data were collected using self-structured interview schedule.

Tool

Interview schedule was employed as a tool for collecting data from the respondents. This contains various questions concentrating on demographic data, social, economic and problems. The tool was developed by discussions and Pre testing in five widows.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2011 Census reports that 5.6 crore i.e 4.6% people are widows in India.Widows are thought to be cursed in some cultures. K.Padmanabhan (2006) revealed that the society has been very harsh towards women particularly widows, who lost their husbands and live without remarriage. They have been ill-treated, insulted, molested and considered them as 'amangalis' and bad woman. The cruelty to widows has been very severe if they belong to socially and economically well-off. Obulesu C. M (2003) in his study found that age has influenced the social and psychological problems of widows. In the case of caste, it only influenced the economical problems of the widows. In the case of job holders and non job holders, their economic independence showed its influence on economic and psychological problems. Agarwal Kuntal (2003) asserts that most of the widows are living in old age homes as a result of non-adjustment with family members and due to a feeling of unwantedness at home. Economic dependence is also one of the major causes of their neglect at home. K. Malathi (2008) states that the widows are the neglected and the voiceless segment of the society. They are denied even the basic human rights like attending ceremonies, writing letters to the friends and relatives. They are provided low protein food and they have to be confined to backyards of the house and they are forbidden from appearing in public. Martha Alter Chen (1998) states that widowhood confers a peculiar new struggle on women, rife with contradictions: they are expected to conform to an enormous burden of restrictive customs that marginalise them from their community and family. Chen (2000) points out that social mores often discourage widows from remarriage and dictate changes in their diet and behavior, and widows are often unwelcomed at social events and religious festivals and avoided by others because they are considered bad luck. Swain et al (2004) says that the state of widows is characterized by pangs of separation and consequent mental agony, social isolation and economic dislocation. Gopang. N, et al (2012) states that the household headed by widows suffer dramatic decline in per capita income and that the mortality risk of widowhood is higher. Hence it can be concluded as a concept that widowed women face problems in their socio-economic life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

<div align="center">Table - 1</div>

<div align="center">**Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**</div>

S.No	Variables with Values		Number of respondents (n=50)	Percentage (100%)
1.	Age	30 – 40 Years	12	24
		41 – 50 Years	16	32
		51 – 60 Years	14	28
		61 – 70 Years	8	16
2.	Educational Status	Primary	45	90
		High	4	8
		Higher Secondary	1	2
3.	Religion	Hindu	6	12
		Christianity	4	88
4.	Community	SC	6	12
		BC	44	88
5.	Years of Widowhood	1- 4 Years	6	12
		5- 8 Years	24	42
		9 – 12 Years	40	80
6.	Type of Family	Nuclear family	38	76
		Joint family	12	24
7.	Monthly Income	Rs. 1000 – 3000	44	88
		Rs. 4000 – 6000	5	10
		Rs. 6000 – 8000	1	2
8.	Occupation	Government Job	1	2
		Private Job	2	4
		Entrepreneur	2	4
		Daily Labourer	45	90

Table 1 represents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. It revealed that more than one third (32 Per cent) of the resondents are from the age group between 41 – 50 years old. With regard to the educational status, a vast majority (90 Per cent) of the respondents have completed their primary education. It was noted that a vast majority (88 Per cent) of the respondents are christians. A vast majority (88 Per cent) of the respondents are from Backward Community of the social heiarchy. It was found that a majority (80 Per cent) of the respondents are widowed for 9 – 12 years. With regard to the type of family, a majority (76 Per cent) of the respondents are living in a nuculear family system. It was infered that a vast majority (88 Per cent) of the respondents are earning between Rs.1000 – 3000 per month. It was also significant to note that a vast majority (90 Per cent) of the respondents are daily labourers. From the demographic profile of the respondents it is evident that the respondents are in a low social and economic state of life.

Table 2:

Karl Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation between Educational Status and Occupation of the respondents and their Social Problems.

Variable	Correlation value	Extent of Relationship	Statistical Inference
Educational status	0.419	Positive Correlation	P <0.05 Significant
Occupation	0.237	Positive Correlation	P > 00.5 Not Significant

The above table shows the relationship between educational status and occupation of the respondents and their social problems. Karl Pearson's Co-efficient of Correlation Test was applied in order to find out the relationship. Regarding the   social problems of the respondents and their occupation, significant difference was not found. Hence research hypothesis is rejected and null hypothesis is accepted. The results of the Correlation value indicate that difference is significant at 0.05 level with regard to the Educational Status of the respondents and their Social Problems. This proves that the social problems of widows is positively correlated to their educational staus. Hence the research hypothesis is accepted and the Null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3:

Chi-square test between the respondent's type of the family and their problems.

	Type of family		Statistical Inference
Social Problems	Nuclear	Joint	
Medium	33	12	$X^2 = 1.754$ Df = 1 p > 0.05 Not significant
High	5	0	
Economic Problems	Nuclear	Joint	
Low	17	7	$X^2 = 6.75$ Df = 1 p > 0.05 Not significant
Medium	21	15	

Table – 3 shows the result obtained by Chi-square test between the respondent's Type of Family and their problems. H0 states that there is no relation between type of the family and the problems of widows. H1 states that there is a relation between type of the family and the problems of widows. Above result shows that the chi square value for Social Problem is 1.754 with the degree of freedom of 1. The p value is higher than the commonly accepted value 0.05. Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected. Similarly the chi square value for Economic Problems is 6.75 with the degree of freedom of 1. The p value is higher than the commonly accepted value 0.05. Thus Null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, it can be confered that there is no relationship between Responden's Type of family and their socio-economic problems.

Table 4:

Karl Pearson's Coefficient of Correlaton between Monthly Income of the respondents and their Economic Problems.

Variable	Correlation value	Extent of Relationship	Statistical Inference
Monthly Income	0.128	Positive Correlation	P >00.5 Not Significant

The above table shows the relationship between Monthly Income of the respondents and their Economic Problems. Karl Pearson's Co-efficient of Correlation Test was applied in order to find out the relationship. Regarding the Economic Problems of the respondents and their Monthly Income, significant difference was not found. Hence research hypothesis is rejected and null hypothesis is accepted.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- More than one third (32 Per cent) of the respondents are from the age group between 41 – 50 years old.

- Vast majority (90 Per cent) of the respondents have completed their primary education.

- Vast majority (88 Per cent) of the respondents are christians.

- Vast majority (88 Per cent) of the respondents are from Backward Community of the social heirarchy.

- A majority (80 Per cent) of the respondents are widowed for 9 – 12 Years.

- A majority (76 Per cent) of the respondents are living in a nuclear family system.

- Vast majority (88 Per cent) of the respondents are earning between Rs. 1000 – 3000 per month.

- Vast majority (90 Per cent) of the respondents are daily labourers.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING FINDINGS

1. There is no relationship between and Occupation of the Respondents and their Social Problems.

2. There is a relationship between Educational Status of the Respondents and their Social Problems.

3. There is no relationship between Responden's Type of Family and their Socio-Economic Problems.

4. There is no relationship between Monthly Income of the respondents and their Economic Problems.

SUGGESTIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Having analyzed the data and based on the findings, some of the recommendations are given below for the problems of widows.

1. Compulsory Higher Education for Women

2. Employment to Widows.

3. Formation of SHG for widows.

4. Giving free Vocational Training Program exclusively for the widows based on their educational qualifications.

5. Providing loan from bank without surety for Widow's Entreprenurship.

6. Financial aid of Rs. 1,00,000 for the Marriage of Girl Child of the Widow.

7. Special Health Care Insurance for the Widows and their children need to be implemented.

CONCLUSION

The society is not treating the widow as the normal married women. There is also the major difference between the widow and man who loss his wife. Attitude towards widows should be changed in the society.

Different sensitization programme needs to be organized at the family, school, college, and community level etc as the intervention process by the Professional Social workers. Positive view towards the widows should be develped in order to treat them as human beings. NGOs also need to concentrate on the rehabilitation of the distressed widows and their children. Above all, Strong policy for the socio-economic development of the widows needs to be revived and implemented.

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