

Coping Strategies among Employed Widows in Lalgudi Taluk, Trichy District

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Abstract

A widow can be especially socially vulnerable in some countries due to the lack of protection of a male figure, and sometimes face significant economic problems as a result. It is estimated that there are over 245 million widows across the globe with over 500 million dependent children. A widow's economic dependence is a severe threat to her self-esteem and her sense of identity. The stigma of widowhood itself negatively affects a woman and she falls in her own esteem. The aim of this study is to describe the coping pattern among the widows working in informal sectors in Trichy. The present study is descriptive in nature. The universe of includes all the population of widow women workers in Lalgudi taluk of Trichy district and the researcher used the non-probability snow ball sampling method for collecting the sample. Results revealed that low level coping is seen among the dimensions like instrumental social support, active coping, denial, behavioural, emotional social support, acceptance, suppression and planning. High level of coping is seen among the dimensions like Positive, mental disengagement, religious coping, focused, substance, Restraint and Humor.

Keywords: women, widow, problems, workers and coping.

1. Introduction

A widow is a woman whose husband has died. A widow can be especially socially vulnerable in some countries due to the lack of protection of a male figure, and sometimes face significant economic problems as a result. In other societies, widows can carry on her late husband's business and consequently be accorded certain rights, such as the right to enter guilds. HIV/AIDS, poverty, ethnic cleansing and armed conflict are the most common causes of widowhood.

It is estimated that there are over 245 million widows across the globe with over 500 million dependent children. According to the United Nations, as of 2010, the countries with the highest amount of widows are: China with 43 million, India with 42.4 million, the United States with 13.6 million, Indonesia with 9.4 million, Japan with 7.4 million, Russia with 7.1 million, Brazil with 5.6 million, Germany with 5.1 million, and Bangladesh and Vietnam with about 4.7 million each.

In developing countries, the economic position of widows is an important social issue in many societies. When the death of the husband, who was the sole bread winner, could push his family into poverty and the widow has to manage or tackle the hardships along with her children. The attitude towards widowed and her children who were deprived of sufficient support systems were socially outcast when the husband dies and are targeted for or subjected to rape, prostitution, forced marriage, property theft, eviction, and physical and psychological abuse.

Widows were considered inferior to men and so they face various issues and problems in their life. They need to work hard and put 200 percent extra effort to prove themselves equivalent to men. People in the middle age were considering women as key to destruction so they never allowed women to go outside and participate in the social activities like men. Still in the modern age, there are parents who prefer boy child than girl baby and practice gender discrimination at home in aspects of education and recreation options. Women for them are only medium to keep family happy and healthy.

Problems faced by women widow in modern times were like child marriage, widow remarriage and abuse of widows by in-laws. Although the problems for widows during early times are decreasing gradually from the society while issues are pops up. In spite of acquired self-assurance, independence, self-worth, improved personality, ability, talent, and efficiency more in comparison to man widows are facing many problems. Widow neither gets counseling nor socio-economic and emotional support at times of distress from embers of family and society at large. Widows across the globe are often imperceptible in spite of their economic contribution and unpaid family work in household are equal to other bread winners in the family. In our country widows are not given enough priority for getting pension schemes benefits unless they 'cooperate' with middleman.

The manifold problems that the widow faces are Inheritance Rights, Prohibition of Remarriage, Observation of Mourning Rites, victim of violence and Economic Problem. Women widowed at young age say the one in type one category were to face humiliation, abuse, physical and mental torture, exploitation in the hand of their own family members like in-laws. The three most important motives for victimization were power, property and sex. Though the authoritarian personality of the mother-in-law and the maladjustment of siblings-in-law are

important etiological factors in the widow's victimization, the most important factor is widow's passive timidity. The problems faced by widows will not be similar problems due to the category under which they fall. A recently widowed with no issue and who has been widowed one or two years after her marriage; or the one widowed after a period of 5 to 10 years of marriage life and has one or two small children to support, or the one who widowed at 50 years of age and above.

Though all these three categories of widows have to face the problems of social, economic and emotional adjustment, the first and the third type of widowhoods have no liabilities while the second type of widows have to execute the role of a father for their children. The recently widowed and the one widowed after five years of marriage life with children to support have to face the problem of biological adjustment. The low role status given to the widows by their in-laws and others family members was sure to bring their self-esteem to the pitch. The stigma of widowhood itself negatively affects a woman and where the widow herself lowers her own esteem. If all types of widows were taken together, violence faced by widows includes physical battering, emotional neglect/torture, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, deprivation of legitimate share in property, and abuse of their children.

2. Review of Literature

An analytical study was conducted on Appraisals of bereavement, coping, resources, and psychosocial health dysfunction in widows and widowers. The purpose of the study was to test a model, based on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress-coping framework, on widowed persons' psychosocial health dysfunction after conjugal bereavement. Older widows (n = 100) and widowers (n = 59) were identified through church burial records and interviewed using the Ways of Coping Checklist, Sickness Impact Profile, and questionnaires to assess appraisal of bereavement and resources. Path analysis indicated that lower threat appraisal, more problem-focused and less emotion-focused coping, greater resource strength, and younger age had direct effects on reducing psychosocial health dysfunction, explaining 30% of the variance. Higher threat appraisal influenced the use of more problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies.

A descriptive study was conducted on the health of conjugally bereaved older widows: the role of appraisal, coping and resources Relationships between bereavement, coping, resources, and health dysfunction were investigated in 100 older women (M age = 71.3 years) widowed from 1 to 12 months prior to the interview. Differences in coping for those who appraised their bereavement as either (a) harmful loss, but without major accompanying losses, (b) harmful loss with other anticipated threats, or (c) a challenge were hypothesized. Data collection included use of the Ways of Coping Checklist, Sickness Impact Profile, and appraisal of bereavement and resources. The appraisal groups differed significantly in overall problem-focused coping, wishful thinking, help seeking/avoidance, self blame, and growth-oriented coping. There was no difference in use of emotion-focused coping and ways to minimize threat and seek social support. Social support, strong religious beliefs, practice of rituals, belief in control over bereavement, and good prior mental health were related to less psychosocial and/or physical dysfunction. Greater numbers of resources, but not greater numbers of coping strategies, also were related to less psychosocial and/or physical dysfunction.

A study was conducted on Mood and stress disorders in widowhood: a systematic review, the association between widowhood and mental health problems, such as depressive symptomatology and stress, has been examined extensively. Eleven studies were identified, exploring the prevalence and incidence of mood and anxiety disorders in 3,481 widowed individuals and 4,685 non-widowed controls. As expected, the prevalence of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) and anxiety disorders were considerably elevated in widowed individuals, especially in the first year after the loss of a spouse. During the first year of bereavement, almost 22% of the widowed were diagnosed as having MDD; almost 12% met diagnostic criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; and there were higher risks of Panic Disorder and Generalized Anxiety Disorder. The incidence rate of MDD and several anxiety disorders ranged from 0.08-0.50. The relative risk of developing a mood or anxiety disorder ranged from 3.49-9.76, in the widowed, compared to control subjects.

3. Methodology

The aim of this study is to describe the coping by the employed widows in the informal sectors living in Lalkudi taluk of Tiruchirappalli District. The study objectives are to find out the Socio-economic conditions of the widow women workers, to understand the pattern of coping among the employed widow and to find out the association and difference between the socio-economic conditions and various dimensions of coping.

The hypothesis are (1) There is no significant difference between the age of the respondents and the various dimension of coping and (2) There is no significant difference between the educational status of respondents and overall coping.

The present study is descriptive in nature as it describes the problems and the coping pattern among women widow workers. The universe of the present study includes all the population of widow women workers in Lalgudi taluk of Trichy district. Though the population is limited, the researcher had used the non-probability

sampling method for selecting study subjects. The researcher adopted snow ball sampling method for collecting the sample since the widow women workers details was not available with the village head. Women widow workers from Lalgudi taluk were selected. The sample size of the present study is 47. The researcher used self-prepared Interview schedule for collecting data on demographic details. For the purpose of this research work, standardized tool on **COPE**, to assess the response of single women workers on confront with the problem of stress. The collected data analyzed using percentage analysis for demographic details and statistical analysis were done to find the relationship, association between the selected dependent and independent variables in the study. Interpretation based on data analysis with a help of SPSS software was made.

4. Findings

1. More than one fourth (29%) of the respondents are of the age group 36 to 45 years of age, each of 27% of the respondents are between 26 to 35 years and above 45 years of age respectively.
2. More than one third of the respondents (34%) have completed their class X education, less than quarter of the respondents (23%) has attended till the middle school education and 19% of the respondents are illiterates.
3. Majority of the respondents (78%) belong to the Hindu religion and 19% of the women respondents are Christians.
4. More than one third of the respondents (34%) monthly salary is below Rs. 3000 and one fourth of the respondents (25%) monthly salary is between Rs. 5001 to 7000. A merger number of the respondents (2%) earn more than Rs. 9000 per month.
5. Majority of the respondents (85%) save their money in banks and least number of the respondents have saved their money in post office (4%), invested in chit funds (4%) and in insurance (4%). There exist different pattern of saving among the respondents.
6. Majority of the respondents are satisfied with their work as they get more money, utilizing their time usefully and to get satisfaction. Also 21% of the respondents are not satisfied with their work as they do not get good wage, too much work pressure, management compulsion and poor work environment.
7. Most of the respondents (63%) job involves standing and 36% of the respondents do their job in sitting posture.
8. Majority of the respondents (70%) said that no complaints are registered or filed regarding sexual harassment at workplace but though less than one third (29%), have said that complaints are registered on sexual harassment.
9. More than half of the respondents (59%) accept the existence of harassment like mental, verbal at work place but 40% of the respondents said that such incidents did not occurred.
10. The pattern of coping among the women widow workers in relation to various dimensions of coping shows that: Low level coping is seen among the dimensions like instrumental social support, active coping, denial, behavioural, emotional social support, acceptance, suppression and planning. High level of coping is seen among the dimensions like Positive, mental disengagement, religious coping, focused, substance, Restraint and Humor.
11. Using the ANOVA test the calculated value less than the table value. So the research hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence there is significant difference between the age of the respondents and the various dimension of coping.
12. Using the ANOVA test the table value less than the calculated value. So the research hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore there is no significant difference between the educational status of respondents and overall coping.

5. Conclusion

The employed widow may be given counseling once in a while to cope with their emotional support and social support. The near and dear ones have to be told to give psychological support to women who are separated or widow to overcome the suppression of their emotions. The widow women workers may be guided to accept the fact of decision making by their family members if they reside in joint family. The study shows that the age of the widow workers have direct impact with the various dimensions of the study like instrumental social support, active coping, denial, behavioural, emotional social support, acceptance, suppression, planning, Positive, mental disengagement, religious coping, focused, substance, Restraint and Humor.

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