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Research Paper

A Descriptive Study To Assess Psycho-Social Adjustments of Young Widows in Mangalore

Nursing

KEYWORDS : Psycho-social problems, young widows, Mangalore

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ABSTRACT

Background: The death of a spouse is one of the most profound and life-altering events adults will ever experience. Aim: to determine the psycho-social adjustments faced by young widows. Methods: Descriptive survey design with 100 widows was selected from Mangalore district through purposive sampling. A 3- point scale scale to assess the Psycho-social adjustments was developed with 35 items. The tool was given to seven experts for the content validation. Reliability of the tool was established by using Cronbachs Alpha(r = 0.75).The tool was translated into Kannada. Results: The collected data was analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings show that 69% of the young widows have average adjustment and 31% have poor adjustments. Occupation and living with children had significant association with psycho-social problems among young widows. Conclusion: assessing the psycho-social problems among young widows will help to develop strategic welfare schemes to young widows, a area totally neglected by our society.

Introduction

A well adjusted family/marriage is the dream of every couple and it is one in which each spouse is a course of emotional and economic support, companionship, sexual gratification and physical protection for the other.

The marital adjustment of couples could be affected by death. The death of a spouse is one of the most profound and life-altering events adults will ever experience. While the loss of a spouse is traumatic at any time, the experience of spousal bereavement at a young age brings with it unique challenges. Young widows grieve not only the physical loss of a companion but also the loss of dreams and expectations.

Widowhood is defined as the status of an individual who was legally married to someone who subsequently died. Widowhood is considered a . "invisible" group of women. They are painfully absent from the statistics of many developing countries, and they are rarely mentioned in the multitude of reports on women's poverty, development, health or human rights published in the last twenty-five years.

Almost worldwide, widows comprise a significant proportion of all women, ranging from 7 per cent to 16 per cent of all adult women. According to the 1991 census, there are 33 million widows in India. The prevalence of widowhood in India is among the highest in the world for all age groups. Among younger Indian women (15-35), 1% are widows. 12% of middle aged women (36-59) are widows and 55% of all women above the age of 60 are widows.

Although many countries throughout the world have social rules that regulate widows' lives during a specified mourning period, in India, strict codes of dress, demeanor and diet are imposed upon widows for the remainder of their lives, often with dire consequences. Hindu widows especially are faced with a battery of societal taboos; the general rule of thumb is that the higher their caste, the more restrictions widows face.

The woman, after the death of her husband has to suddenly adjust from a marital status to a widowed status. She has to make adjustments to physical, psychological, social, financial as well as sexual adjustments and in addition live with the memories of the husband.

Objectives:

- To assess the level of psycho-social adjustments of young widows.
- To find the association of level of adjustments with selected demographic variables.

Methods and materials:

A descriptive survey design was adopted. Hundred young female widows were selected from Mangalore district by using purposive sampling. Women who became widows before the age of 40 years were included in the study. Women who lost their husband but are re - married again were excluded from the study. A scale was developed to assess the psycho social adjustments among widows. It is a 35 item 3- point scale (Never, sometimes and always) consisting of five domains i.e. Adjustments to daily routines, Social adjustments, Adjustments to Leisure activities, Adjustments to the future and Sexual adjustments. The tool was given to seven experts for the content validation from the field of Psychiatric nursing, clinical psychologist, sociologist and community health nursing. Reliability of the tool was established by using Cronbachs Alpha(r = 0.75).The tool was translated into Kannada by language experts. . Permission was obtained from the concerned authorities as well as subjects. The Data was analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results and interpretation:

The data is analyzed and presented under following headings.
Section I: Sample characteristics.
Section II: Level of adjustment of young widows
Section III: Association of level of adjustment with selected demographic variables.

Section I: Description of sample characteristics

67% of the young widows were between 31 to 40 years of age. 53% were Christians. 28% of the women were educated until primary level and 35% were unemployed.51% of the women lost their husband in the last five years. Accident (34%) was the main reason for the death of the husband.51% of the women had one child in which 95% of the children were normal. Most of the widows (80%) of them lived with her parents.37% of the widows earned an income of Rs 5,000 to 10,000 and the source of income for this widows was salary (60%).

Section II: Level of adjustment of young widows

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of level of adjustment to widowhood

Level of Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
Poor (1-35)	31	31
Average(36- 70)	69	69
Good(71- 105)	-	-

Data in table I show that 69% of the young widows have average adjustment and 31% have poor adjustments. None of the samples have good adjustment.

Table 2: Obtained Range, Mean, Median, Standard Deviation (SD), Mean Percentage (%) of Psycho – social adjustments of widows

n= 100

Obtained Range	Mean	Median	SD	Mean percentage
90 - 42	64.53	60.00	13.00	61.46

Table 2 shows that the mean obtained is 64.53 and the SD is 13.00. The mean percentage obtained for adjustment among widows is 61.46. So the young widows had average adjustment.

Table 3: Area-wise mean, standard deviation and Mean % of areas of adjustments among young widows

n= 100

S:No	Areas of adjustments	Maximum score	Mean	SD	Mean %
1.	Adjustments to daily routines	9	5.7	1.39	63.33
2.	Psychological adjustments	36	21.95	5.11	60.97
3.	Social adjustments	21	11.43	4.15	54.42
4.	Adjustments to leisure activities	15	9.46	2.92	62.66
5.	Adjustments to future	9	6.86	1.36	76.22
6.	Sexual adjustments	15	9.13	2.20	60.86

Data in Table 3 shows the highest level of adjustment is in the area of 'adjustment to future' (76.22) and the least is 'social adjustment'.

Section III: Association of level of adjustment with selected demographic variables. The chi-square test is used to find the association of adjustment score with selected demographic variables like Age, religion, educational status, Occupational status, income of the family, source of income of the young widows.

The following null hypothesis was stated:

H01: There is no significant association between adjustment of young widows and selected demographic variables

Table 4: Chi square test showing association between level of adjustments and selected demographic variables

n=100

Sl no	Variables	χ^2 value	df	Table value	P value	Inference
1	Age	0.952	2	5.99	0.62	Not significant
2	Religion	4.71	2	5.99	0.09	Not Significant
3	Education	2.42	5	11.07	0.78	Not significant
4	Occupation	11.27	4	9.48	0.02	significant
5	Years of widowhood	6.83	13	22.36	0.91	Not significant
7	Number of children	0.18	3	7.82	0.9	Not significant
8	Status of children	0.83	2	5.99	0.65	Not significant
9	Lives with children	4.36	1	3.84	0.03	Significant
10	Ownership of the house	4.56	3	7.82	0.20	Not significant

The data presented in the table 4 shows that there was no significant association between the adjustment level and selected demographic variables like age, Religion, educational level, Years of widowhood, status of the children, Income and source of income. The calculated χ^2 value (11.27) for occupation and living with children (4.36) was more than the table value (11.07) and (3.84) at 0.05 level of significance respectively. So the null hypothesis was rejected for the variable Occupation and living with children and the research hypothesis was accepted.

Conclusion

The study concludes that young widows need to do a lot of adjustments to widowhood. On one hand when it's a time to enjoy the life, she is struck with one of the worst tragedy of losing a husband/spouse. The death of the husband in itself is a trauma and in most cases, it's the sudden death which puts her into the forefront of various adjustments. To her the future is very bleak. The finding of this study would be useful to the government in that it would bring to the fore the plight of widows in our society and to think of some welfare schemes to help them to come out of their shell and lead a worthy life. The most common adjustments which the widow has to do are adjustment to future especially careful in spending, maintaining relationships besides adjustment to daily routines and adjustments to leisure time activities. The adjustments are better if the woman is employed and can manage on her own especially her economic needs. She can support her family and can manage to live on her own with her children. The study also finds that family support is of utmost importance as it helps the widow to adjust to the most difficult time and extend a helping hand to adjust to any future uncertainties. Policy makers and opinion leaders in matters related to widows could benefit from the findings of this study via its submissions on the stress level and adjustment strategies.

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