



Socio- economic problems of Elderly Widows in Puri Town, Orissa

KEYWORDS

Socio-economic, Widows, problems, Puri Town

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ABSTRACT *This study focused on socio-economic problems faced by elderly widows in Puri town, Puri District of Orissa. Data has collected from 50 elderly women those are coming under 60 years and above. Random sampling and interview schedule, case study and observation method used for data collection. This paper also emphasis on many reviews that types of problems faced which includes physical, psychological, mental during widowhood. So to develop positive attitude towards widows and widowhood, different sensitization programme by the intervention process of professional Social workers in family, school, college, community level is essential. Govt. and NGOs also needs to focus on Spirituality, devotional music, and entertainment and make them busy with different activities as per their skills and maintain discipline life at widows home and old age home.*

Widowhood is both a crisis and a problem (Mallick Anupriya, 2003). It brings about economic and emotional setbacks. In India, widows have a really hard time because of the traditional prejudices prevalent against them. Older widows are facing emotional, psychological, financial problems and also physiological problems. They are neglected, abused, and exploited also

According to 2001 census, 6.9 percent of women in India are widows; every fourth household in India has a widow. In absolute terms, the magnitude of such population has increased from nearly 2 crores in 1971 to 7.2 crores in 2001. Loss of spouse is equally painful for both husband and wife but widows face more problems and hardships under the pressure of gender bias and changing values. The nature of family life and relationship is changing due to increasing consumerism, globalization and growing individual thinking in all walks of life. Migration of younger generation to cities and other countries and breaking of joint family system are leaving elder generations uncared for, especially when there is a single parent. But it is pathetic among the elderly poor especially, uneducated dependent widows.

Hegdewar Samajothan and Kalyan Samiti (2004) conducted a study at two districts of Bihar (Munger, Bhagalpur) and Delhi (South & East) on problems and issues of elderly women. 3.45% single women respondents, 51.5% widows, 3.94% divorces and 0.69% separated women were participated. 41.78% respondents reported that they were not able to walk properly due to osteoporosis, injuries, arthritis, muscular strain etc, 41.55% respondents had weak eye sight, 48.95% had sleep disorders, 8.44 % were suffering from T.B, and 2% respondents had cancer. It was found that about 40% of respondents were not able to manage tension and anxiety.

Sinha, Debotosh (2005) studied on problem of elderly abuse, some reflections and implications for social work practice. About 80% of the elderly population in India lives in rural areas, and 30% elderly are below the poverty line. The physical abuses observed among elderly people were repeated unexplained injuries, bruises or grip marks around the arms or neck and inconsistent explanations of the injuries, emotional/ psychological abuses were verbal assaults, humiliations, threats, harassment or abusive behaviour.

Asothai A & Vasanthi G (2011) mentioned about age-related disease in women "Ageing and Health". With ageing certain biological changes start occurring which outwardly may show as tiredness, breathlessness, joint and muscle aches, forgetfulness, decreased appetite, sleep, sight and hearing. Similar

changes are seen in degenerative diseases, associated with old age like blood pressure, joint and brain disorders, diabetes, cataract, malnutrition etc. A variety of symptoms complained by patients invite multiple- drug treatments which have their own problems. The problem of menopause in the middle-aged women may prolong even during old age for some women with psychological imbalance. The health system is discriminatory against women and the care they get is utterly insufficient. The physically, psychologically and economically dependent older women are more prone to harassment.

Kitchlu N.T conducted a study of "socioeconomic condition of widows" in union territory of Delhi. The study found that the custom of marrying daughters at a very young age is one of the root causes of high incidence of widowhood in India. After widowhood life style affects her dress, food, make up, participation in various social and religious functions. An overwhelming majority (92%) of widows had to face financial problems after widowhood. Continued tension due to the loss of husband and the resulting socio-economic problems wreck the health of many a widows and disturb their mental peace.

Obulesu C. M conducted a study on "Problems of widows – A study". Nandal urban division was selected among 3 revenue division of Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh. An aged widow not only suffers due to widowhood but also due to the old age problem. It was 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 jobholders and non-jobholders, their economic independence showed its influence on economic and psychological problems.

Agarwal Kuntal (2003) conducted a study on 'Elderly widows in old age home' in Meerut. Respondents are elderly Hindu widows varying in age – 20% belong to the age group of 65-75 years and the rest 80% belong to the age group of 76 years and above. Majority of respondents (70%) are illiterate, 20% are literate from primary to X class and the rest 10% are educated upto M.A, Ph.D and retired as teachers. Majority of respondents (80%) 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.

Objectives of the study

- To analyse the socio-economic profile of the respondents
- To know the socio-economic problems of elderly widows

Methodology

The researcher has collected data from 50 elderly widows (60 years age and above) of Puri town, Puri District of Orissa. Random sampling was used for this study. Sample consists of different areas of the Puri town which includes Atharnala, Nabakalebar road, Matiapada, Kumbharapada, Narendra kona, Badasankha & temple side sahis. Interview schedule, case study and observation method have been used for data collection.

Economic Condition of Family

40 % of the respondents mentioned that their financial condition was average but 48% respondents were facing financial problems and they were coming under the category of very poor (18%) and poor (30%). Their life was full of miseries and sorrows and only 12% had good conditions. Even out of 50, 48 respondents (96%) were not able to maintain their livelihood satisfactory.

Psychological condition

Most of widows (96%) were facing psychological problems like tension, mental unrest, many times they find difficult to adjust to the changed environment, more so when they were just being tolerated and were not being treated well in their family. The loneliness also makes them psychologically depressed and they persistently face such psychological problems as old age worries, emotional instability, lack of proper response etc.

Old Age Pension

Out of 50, only 15 (30%) of the senior single women were getting old age pension. But 70% of the respondents were deprived of that.

Faith in God and their religion

All the respondents have extreme faith in God and their hindu Religion. After becoming widows they practiced many fasts, festivals through the year due to respect for hindu religion. They become purely vegetarian, were white saris and attend religious programmes. They told after their husband death, nobody was helping them except God. As Puri is famous and known as Jagannath Dham, so widows were liking to stay there. The most interesting fact is that all most all the people have the wish to die in Puri and want their cremation in Swargadwar. Puri is especially for this reason, most of the widows stay in puri for regular visitor of Jagannath Temple, doing punya karmas and lastly for die in this punya kshetra(Holy Place).

Conclusion

So it can be concluded that there should be changes in the attitude of society towards widows and their widowhood through different sensitization programme by the intervention process of professional Social workers in family, school, college, community level etc. The people must develop positive view towards them to treat them as human beings. Govt. and NGOs also needs to focus on Spirituality, devotional music, and entertainment and make them busy with different activities as per their skills and maintain discipline life at widows home and old age home. It is also necessary to provide different services like counseling and referral services, recreational centre, widows' pension timely, community based care etc.

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