

Depression Among Widows and Widowers



Psychology

KEYWORDS : Depression, Widows and Widowers.

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ABSTRACT

Widowhood is a transitional event because the loss of a spouse is typically accompanied by high levels of psychological distress as the newly bereaved person adjusts to life without one's spouse. The critical factors related to depression in widowhood include social support, health, and survivor's financial situation, sudden versus anticipated death, gender and marital quality.

Aim: The aim of the study is to investigate the depression among widows and widowers.

Method: For the purpose of the study which consists of 30 widows and 30 widowers from rural and urban areas of Hyderabad. The sampling was based on purposive sampling method. The age range of the widows and widowers is 40yrs-70yrs. The Hospital anxiety and depression scale was used in this study.

The result show that widows showing significant depression than widowers and older widows and widowers experiencing significant depression than younger age groups.

INTRODUCTION

The death of a spouse is one of the most profound and life-altering events adults will ever experience. Widowhood often is accompanied by emotional distress, physical symptoms, compromised health behaviors, potentially disruptive residential relocations and economic strains triggered by both the direct costs of medical care and funeral arrangements at the end of a spouse's life, as well as the loss of the spouse's income. A study revealed that the single elders are having significant depression and suicidal ideation than coupled elders (Sridevi, 2014a). Depression is the common mental problem in elderly widows and it is viewed as a serious outcome of the feelings of loneliness and it presents with depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, low energy and poor concentration. The rates of depression are found to be still high two years after a loss of a spouse (Turvey et al., 1999). A study concluded that the non-institutionalized single elders are showing significant death depression than coupled elders (Sridevi, 2014b). In addition the experiencing the loss of a spouse has a negative impact on widows wellbeing up to four years bereavement (Bennet et al., 2005). A study revealed that the institutionalized elders are having significant death depression, geriatric depression and suicidal ideation than non-institutionalized elders and there is no significant difference in death anxiety and death depression among institutionalized elders based on gender but non-institutionalized male elders are having significant death anxiety than female elders (Sridevi & Swathi, 2014). Cultural and religious organizations help to become socially integrated into the larger society in which they live and as a result, these ties control or regulate older men's help-seeking, health habits (Balaswamy et al., 2004) and coping (Lund & Caserta, 2001) thus mediating the negative effects of widowhood. The present study has been carried out to understand the relationship between depression among widows and widowers belonging to different age groups.

METHODOLOGY

Aim of the study: Aim of the study is to examine the depression among widows and widowers.

Sample: For the purpose of the study 30 widows and 30 widowers were examined. The sampling was based on purposive sampling method. The age range of the widows and widowers is 40yrs-70yrs. The data was collected from both rural and urban areas of Hyderabad city through personal contact by visiting their residing places.

Inclusive Criteria: The widows and widowers age range from

40-70yrs, bereavement period ranging from 6 to 24 months, who are able to read and write and those who are ready to participate in the study were included.

Exclusive Criteria: The widows and widowers who had current or past history of mental illness and having chronic physical illness other than those related to old age were excluded from the study.

Tools used: Demographic data sheet designed for the purpose of this study, and Hospital anxiety and depression scale (Zigmond & Snaith, 1983) to detect adverse depressive states were used in this study.

Procedure: The sample was collected from urban and rural areas of Hyderabad city. Through personal contacts, the families of bereaved persons (widows and widowers) were selected those who meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for the purpose of the study. Informed consent was taken from those who are willing participate in this study. The participants were administered using HADS-Depression scale individually. Keeping in view the aims of the study data was analyzed using SPSS software, the means and standard deviations for scores on different variables were calculated for the two groups separately.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table-1: Socio demographic characteristic of the study sample (N=60)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Range		
40-49yrs	20	33.3%
50-59yrs	20	33.3%
60-69yrs	20	33.3%
Gender		
Male	30	50%
Female	30	50%
Domicile		
Rural	40	66.6%
Urban	20	33.3%
Economic Status		
Low income	10	16.6%
Low middle	15	25%
Middle	35	58.33%
Living arrangements		
Staying alone	5	5.33%
Living with children	45	75%
Living with relatives	10	16.6%
Bereavement period		
6-12 months	25	49.6%
12-18 months	20	33.3%
18-24 months	15	25%

Table-1 shows demographic data of the participants based on the gender. The sample consists of 30 (50%) widows and 30(50%) widowers. In this sample consists equal number of widows and widows and widowers. It also gives the age range of the widows and widowers. It gives 40-49yrs age range widows and widowers are 20 (33.3%), 50-59yrs age range widows and widowers are 20 (33.3%) and 60-69yrs are 20 (33.3%). In this sample all three age groups having same number of widows and widowers. The table-1 provides the domicile of the widows and widowers. It gives that widows and widowers from rural background are 40 (66.6%) and from urban background are 20 (33.3%). In this sample most of the widows and widowers belongs to rural background. It shows the educational background of the widows and widowers. It gives that the widows and widowers educational background uneducated are 10 (16.6%), up to primary education are 12(20%) and high school and above are 38 (63.33%). In this sample most of the widows and widowers are educated up to high school and above. The widows and widowers from low income are 10 (16.6%), low middle income are 15(25%) and middle income are 35 (58.33%). In this sample middle income widows and widowers are more than low middle and low income widows and widowers. The widows and widowers staying alone are 5 (5.33%), living with their children are 45 (75%) and living with their relatives are 10 (16.6%). In this sample most of the widows and widowers are living with their children. It also shows the bereavement period of widows and widowers. It gives the widows and widowers bereavement period such as 6-12months are 25 (49.6%), 12-18months are 20 (33.3%) and 18-24 months are 15 (25%).

Table-2: Mean (±SD) score on depression in the participants based on the age range and gender

Variable	Depression		t/f	Sign (p)
Gender	Mean	SD		
Men	8.76	2.34	-2.7	0.000**
Women	44.23	8.08		
Age range				
40-49yrs	8.6	1.78	6.71	0.01*
50-59yrs	9.1	2.44		
60-69yrs	10.8	1.6		

***= p< 0.001 level and **=p< 0.05 level

Table-2 gives the Means, SD and significance on depression of participants based on gender and age range of widows and widowers. It shows that there is significant difference in widows and widowers with respect to depression (p<0.001). The Mean(+SD) scores of depression in men is 8.76(+2.34) and in women is 10.23(+1.73). It shows that widows reported more intensive depression than widowers.

It also shows there is significant difference in widows and widowers with respect to depression (p<0.001) based on age groups. The Mean(+SD) scores of depression of widows and widowers in the age group of 40-49yrs, 50-59yrs and 60-69yrs are 8.6(+1.78), 9.1(+2.44) and 10.8(+1.6) respectively. It shows that widows and widowers with the age group of 60-69yrs had reported more intensive depression than 50-59yrs and 40-49yrs age group widows and widowers. It suggests that older widows and widowers are experiencing significant depression than younger widows and widowers.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study was to understand relationship between depression in widows and widowers with bereavement period and age range of the widows and widowers. The results indicated that widows showing significant depression than widowers. The similar finding suggested by Lee et al (2001) who found that widowed men were less depressed compared to widowed women though widowers score higher on loneliness scale compared to widows. It also suggested that older widows and widowers are experiencing significant depression than younger age groups. These findings are in agreement with a previous study by Zisook et al, 1994 which reported an increased risk of psychological morbidity following a loss of partner up to two years and physical health symptoms by Hawkey et al., in press. Jylha, 2004 suggested that older adults generally become lonelier as time passes and run risk of developing depression. Loss of the partner and incapacity to maintain social contacts due to physical and cognitive limitations have been further attributed to the cause of depression.

CONCLUSION

- There is a significant difference on depression for widows as well as for widowers.
- The widows are more depressed compared to the widowers.
- The older widows and widowers were significantly suffering with depression compared to the younger widows and widowers.

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