

A STUDY ON FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLD IN EKANGIPURAM SLUM- PERAMBUR, CHENNAI

G SHARMILA, M.S.W, NET
Assistant Professor
Department of Social Work
Nazareth college of Arts and Science - Chennai

Abstract

In India, the majority of households that are headed by women have many economic and social problems. Female Headed Houses often faced with issues such as cultural discrimination, lack of access to job opportunities, low literacy and lack of regular income. Socio-Economic factor of poverty directly and indirectly affects on the cultural, social and ecological condition of Female Headed Houses. The feminization of poverty is the key concept for describing Female Headed House's social and economic level. The feminization of poverty is the process whereby poverty becomes more concentrated among individuals living in female-headed households. Feminization of poverty has some familiar features. Women experience a higher incidence of poverty than men. Women experience greater depth/severity of poverty than men (i.e. more women are likely to suffer 'extreme' poverty than men). Women are prone to suffer more persistent/longer-term poverty than men. Women's disproportionate burden of poverty is rising relatively to men. Women face more barriers for lifting themselves out of poverty. The 'feminization of poverty' is linked with the 'feminization of household headship'. Women-headed households are the 'poorest of the poor'. Female household headship transmits poverty to children ('inter-generational transmission of disadvantage').

Keywords: Households, Feminization, Poverty, Job Opportunities, Socio-Economic.

INTRODUCTION

A single parent is an uncoupled individual who shoulders most or all of the day-to-day responsibilities for raising a child or children. A mother is more often the primary caregiver in a single-parent family structure that has arisen due to divorce or unplanned pregnancy. Historically, death of a partner was a major cause of single parenting. Single parenting can also result from the breakup or divorce of coupled parents. Custody battles awarded by the court or rationalized in other terms; determine who the child will spend majority of their time with. In western society in general, following the separation of a heterosexual couple, a child is placed with the primary caregiver, usually the mother, while the secondary caregiver is usually the father, though the reverse does happen and joint custody is on the rise. Fathers have

been the less common primary caregiver in the recent past, presumably due to the father working most of the day resulting in less bonding with the children, or possibly a young child needing to still nurse, or if childcare was necessary while the father works, the mother would be seen to be better suited while fathers work. This scenario has shifted in recent years, as many fathers are taking an active parental role as a stay-at-home father as more mothers are in the workforce and being the sole provider to the family, resulting in fathers bonding and connecting more to their children.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Researcher chooses to study about Female headed household because, the researcher found that many women in the community, donated blood quite often. The study interviewed a few women in the community and found that, majority of the women in the community were single parents. They were deserted, widowed or separated and choose to donate blood for money. With that money they had to take care of their children and their daily living. They only drank beverages like tea and coffee for two meals and had food only once a day. Their children were sent to Balwadi which was inside the community, mainly because food was offered for the children. None of the house in the community had restrooms. There was a government toilet and they were charged to use it, where it was actually supposed to be free of cost. Since they were charging Rs.20/- for a person to take bath they don't take bath for days. This reason drew the researcher's attention and hence the researcher wanted to study on the challenges faced by the women as a single parent.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tanzima Zohra Habib (2010) pointed out the burden of multidimensional poverty, arising from the absence of support from an adult male and struggle to earn a livelihood as females and as heads of the households. Female headship may bring women some escape from male subordination within the household, but it also brings a range of disadvantages. Female heads are managing their life with some sort of social support but the financial challenges are mostly difficult to overcome. Therefore, in view of the above discussion, it could be suggested that in order to improve the condition of the female heads and to help them cope better with the adverse situations, it is necessary to provide education and skills oriented training for the female heads, and expand the opportunities for more remunerative employment for them.

Ranjay Vardhan (20104) studied that inflation is a rise in the general level of prices of goods and services in an economy over a period of time. When the general price level rises, each unit of currency buys fewer goods and services. Consequently, inflation also reflects erosion in the purchasing power of money a loss of real value in the internal medium of exchange and unit of account in the economy. Though inflation affects all, but it affects women more. Feminization of poverty describes a phenomenon in which women represent disproportionate percentages of the world's poor. Women increasing share of poverty is related to the rising incidence of female headed households.

Nobuhiko Fuwa (2000) suggested that some of the issues involved in the analysis of female households in developing country contexts. Due to the heterogeneity among self reported female household and methodological issues involved in poverty comparisons. Such as adjustments of per capita consumption. Therefore, in order to obtain more conclusive results on the poverty of female household, the issues addressed here include the confusion between female headship analysis and gender analysis of poverty.

Mwangi S. Kimenyi and John Mukum Mbaku (1995) explain that the role of welfare benefits in influencing female headship. Preliminary results using standard estimation procedures confirm the claim that transfers do not influence female headship (as measured by birth rates to unmarried women) significantly. The discussion in this paper has shown that standard estimation procedures are erroneous because they ignore differences in propensities to establish mother-only households. Adjusting for differences in the propensities to establish female-headed households, we find that the generosity of welfare benefits is an important factor in explaining the variation in the changes in the birth rates to unmarried women. The use of a weighted measure suggests that welfare benefits, by increasing female headship of women who otherwise have low propensities to be female heads, has played a significant role in the feminization of poverty.

Hakizimana Emmanuel (2018) concluded that the empowerment of female headed households through community development projects faced many challenges during the implementation process. Majority of respondents identified lower level of education and lack of self-esteem at the first rank. As previously presented, girls did not get the chance to study massively as their brother in the ancient Rwanda, which impacted negatively on the professional competences of women in the aftermath of genocide when they were left on their own by the killings of their husbands. They lack self-esteem and competition with men was at very low level because of their educational background. Although, they are changing their mind and integrate the so-called boys and men's professions, the proportion is still down. Small plots and family size were also a problem for community development project managers due to disproportion between the number of family and the portion of land they had to exploit.

OBJECTIVES

1. To know the demographic profile of the women respondent who head the family household in Ekangipuram Slum- Perambur, Chennai.
2. To understand the socio economic status of the respondents.
3. To critically assess the challenges faced by them with regards to parenting and managing household chores.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research is used to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. It does answer questions about how/when/why the characteristics occurred. The research design adapted for

the study includes survey, study and research work results from secondary sources. And information gathered by using Interview Schedule. The main objective of study is to acquire knowledge on the challenges faced by the women in female headed houses and describe it through data and analysis.

Tool for data collection

Data is a set of information by different means subject to analysis for a definite purpose. In this study the main tool used for data collection is Interview Schedule, which consists of both open and close ended questions.

Sample size

Sample size determination is the act of choosing the number of observations. The sample size is an important feature of any empirical study in which the goal is to make inferences about a population from a sample. The population of Egankipuram consists of 600 household and in which the researcher has chosen 50 respondents who head the family with no male support as a sample size.

Sample Design

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of population to participate in the study. In this study the researcher has chosen single mother in the community as the respondents.

Limitation of the Study

Limitations are influences that the researcher cannot control. They are the shortcomings, conditions or influences that cannot be controlled by the researcher that place restrictions on the methodology and conclusions. Any research will have its own merits and limitations. The limitations of the study were, the study is restricted to a particular area Ekangipuram slum in Jamalia because of short period of time. The Findings cannot be widespread as it was conducted in only one Area. From this research the researcher could not find the challenges faced by all the single mothers.

Table No.:1
Age of the Respondents

| Age of the Respondents | Total no of respondents | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| 18 – 28 | 27 | 54 |
| 28 – 38 | 23 | 46 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |
| Educational Qualification | | |
| Illiterate | 2 | 4 |
| Primary | 23 | 46 |
| Middle | 23 | 46 |
| High school | 1 | 2 |
| Higher Secondary | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Source: Primary Data

The above Table No.1 shows that the age of the respondents. Single parent families are those families that may have been the products of divorce or some other separation or widowhood. From the above table it

is inferred that 100% of the respondents fall under the age group 18 to 38. The reasons for single parent may be due to separation, divorce, widowhood etc. And then majority of the 46 percentage of respondents belongs to educational qualification primary level.

Table No.:2
House of the respondents

| House | Total no of respondents | Percentage |
|---------------|-------------------------|------------|
| Own house | 3 | 6 |
| Rented house | 46 | 92 |
| Leased house | 1 | 2 |
| Type of house | | |
| Thatched | 1 | 2 |
| Asbestos | 49 | 98 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Source: Primary Data

The above table no.2 explains that the house of the respondent whether owned, rented or leased. It shows that 92 percentages of the respondents lived in a rented house. That is, according to the study majority of the respondents did not own a house. Major reason being most of them have not had proper education (as inferred from Table 1) because of which they work in jobs, which helps them hardly earn money that will satisfy the family's basic need. It is difficult for the respondents to have three meal a day, it is obvious that they can not save money for owning a house.

Table No.:3
Opinions of the respondents on different aspects

| Opinion on various aspects of lives of women | Percentage | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | No opinion | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
| Discriminated | 20 | 66 | 8 | 6 | - |
| Opinion on widow remarriage | 4 | 58 | 20 | 18 | - |
| Extra marital relationship | 18 | 32 | 10 | 40 | - |
| Without company of men | 4 | 50 | 8 | 34 | 4 |
| Wearing ornaments and flowers | 2 | 96 | - | 2 | |
| Talking to any man | - | 72 | 2 | 22 | 4 |

Source: Primary Data

The above table no.3 explains that 66percentages of the respondents either agree or strongly agree that they are discriminated in the society because they are single mother. Society views them as failures. But they are actually brave people to say no to their marital life if it becomes a mess. Many women still survive with their partner with whom they know that they cannot survive with happily. People feel sorry for children of the single mothers. But accepting them without discrimination is what is needed.

Table No.:4

Opinions of the respondents about inclusion and ill-treatment

| Variables | Percentage | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----------|--------|-------|
| | Always | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |
| In-laws ill treated | 38 | 26 | 36 | |
| Physical abuse from in-laws | 28 | 46 | 22 | 4 |
| Respected during festivals | 14 | 46 | 36 | 4 |
| Importance in place of worship | 34 | 36 | 30 | |
| Respected in workplace | 50 | 30 | 18 | 2 |
| Feeling lonely | 66 | 18 | 16 | |
| Safe and protected | 14 | 62 | 24 | |

Source: Primary Data

The above table no. 4 shows that the responses of the respondents with regards to the questions on the challenges they faced at the work place, how often they felt safe and protected, were they happy at home, how the in-laws treated them, was there physical abuse from the in-laws. It is found that 50percentages of the respondents are respected in the work place. Which means that in spite of being single, 50percentages of them are treated with respect without being ill-treated or stigmatized? Around 36percentages have felt that they have got importance at the work place. Majority of 54percentages of the respondents rarely face problems at work.

**Table No.:5
Problems faced at work**

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Insecurity | 9 | 18 |
| Fear | 25 | 50 |
| Threats | 6 | 12 |
| Torture | 6 | 12 |
| Others(specify) | 4 | 8 |

Source: Primary Data

The above table no. 5 shows that the different problems the respondents faced at work. It shows that 18% of the respondents faced insecurity at work; this is because most women are maid workers and they feel insecure. 50percentages expressed fear of abuse at work place, 12percentages of the respondents experienced threats and torture. This happens when they fail to come on time they for job, they fear losing their job. They hesitate to take leave for the reasons mentioned above and also for losing payment at the month end.

FINDINGS

- Majority of them (70%) have poor relationship with their family and have good relationship with the neighbours. The study derives that the relatives are not physically present to support them where as the neighbours are present with them in time of need.

- Majority of them (80%) are maid servants. It means only if they work they can earn a living. And they also face problems like very poor salary. This is because in our country there is no fixed salary for domestic workers, so most of them pay very less and in order to earn something the respondents work for very less salary.
- Majority of them (84%) avoid going to religious ceremonies. It infers that because of the ill treatment that they have received in those ceremonies before, the way others talk about them and the sympathy that others show on them because they are single makes them to avoid participating in such functions.

SUGGESTIONS

Self-help groups should contribute by organising skill training programmes and can also create ways for income generation. Awareness about the assistance provided by the government should be given to the people in the community, so that the family headed by single mother may harvest some benefits. There is a greater need to educate the slum dwellers on the advantages and importance of saving. Improving girl's educational levels has been demonstrated to have clear impacts on the health and economic future of young women, which in turn improves the prospects of their entire community. In the study it shows that 22 percentages of the respondents have suggested education for women is a must for better livelihood.

CONCLUSION

Thus, female headship is a concept that attracts policy attention as a social and economic issue in many cases. Since a substantial segment of female-headed households are "man less" households or households with no permanent male resident contributing to household income. Female headship may imply a heavy economic burden on women who have the responsibility of maintaining the households and educating the children. There are legal decisions made favouring single mothers like, it is easier for single mothers to adopt, Single mothers in India find passport making easier, etc. Attention to single mothers who fall under below poverty line should also be considered. Measures on Assistance from the government to single parents should be given. The situation is assumed to be particularly critical in developing countries like India, where social welfare systems which could support this group are non-existent or inadequate.

Reference

Books

Bornstein (2002). Handbook of Parenting by Marc H. Bornstein Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, vol.3, 2002 (2nd edition).

Hetherington (1999). Coping with Divorce, single parenting and remarriage, A risk and resiliency perspective By E. Mavis Hetherington Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999.

Journals

Hakizimana Emmanuel (2018). Persistency of Poverty among Female Headed Households in Rwanda: Case of Huye District, Journal of Humanities and Social Policy Vol. 4 No. 1, pp 25-32.

Mwangi S. Kimenyi and John MukumMbaku (1995). Female Headship, Feminization of Poverty and Welfare, Southern Economic Journal, Vol. 62, No. 1, pp. 44-52.

Nobuhiko Fuwa (2000). A Note on the Analysis of Female Headed Households in Developing Countries, Munich personal RePEc Archive, Paper No. 23401, posted 21, pp 125-135.

RanjayVardhan (20104). An analysis of impact of inflation on female headed households. International Journal of Economic and Business Review, Vol-2, Issue No.5, pp 1-5.

TanzimaZohraHabib (2010), Socio-Psychological Status of Female Heads of Households in Rajshahi City, Bangladesh, Antrocom Online Journal of Anthropology, vol. 6, n. 2, pp 173-186.

