

Stress and Psychological Well-Being among Single Parents

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ABSTRACT

Single parenting is a situation in which one of the two individuals either mother or father is solely responsible for the upbringing of their children. Thus the study was undertaken with an objective to know the problems, general stress and psychological well-being of the single parents. The data was collected from two villages of Dharwad taluk during the year 2017-18. The samples comprised of 15 single mothers from each village who were randomly selected. Total the sample comprised of 30 single mothers. The criterion for selecting the single mothers was they should have at least one child/ children age ranged from 6-18 years. The data was collected by using general information schedule regarding personal information and problem faced by the single mothers, SES status was collected using socio-economic status scale developed by Agarwal et. al., (2005), General Stress Inventory by Ivancevich and Matteson (1980) and Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being developed by Tricia (2005). The results indicated that majority of the single mothers expressed about the death of the spouse (53.33 %) was the main reason for single mothers followed by divorce (26.66%) and separation (20 %). Single mothers expressed that parents (66.66%) and children (33.33 %) were the support system. About 50 per cent reported that they had added responsibility after being single and 86.66 per cent had financial problem. The single mothers reported average general stress (90%) and psychological well-being (86.70%) and there was significant association and relationship of SES with general stress and psychological well being.

Key words: Single Parent, Stress, Psychological Well-Being and Single mothers

INTRODUCTION

Life of a single mother is associated with great demands and many challenges. Single mothers are more likely to accounts higher level of chronic stress and episodes of depression as compared to married mothers. A single parent faces doubled responsibilities requiring time, attention and money of the parent. Single

parent family may be defined as “A family comprising of a single mother or father having their dependent children”.

Single parenting is a situation in which one of the two individuals (i.e., mother or father) involved in the conception of the child becomes solely responsible for the upbringing of the child.

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Single parenthood arises when either the male or female parent decides to produce and raise a child or children. Thus, leaving the responsibility of raising the children to the 'surviving' partner

In the absence of a spouse or cohabiting partner, single parents must negotiate child care and other care giving responsibilities alongside personal work and leisure schedules, a task that requires physical, emotional, and financial capital. Single-parent families have become the fastest-growing family and added responsibility hamper's the mental health and the psychological well-being of the single parent is hampered due to the added responsibility.

Psychological well-being refers to individuals who are mentally healthy and able to maintain harmonious relationships with others, get involved in community activities and can contribute in the community consists of positive relationships with others, personal mastery, autonomy, a feeling of purpose and meaning in life, personal growth and development². Psychological well-being is attained by achieving a state of balance affected by both challenging and rewarding life events but in case of single parent their well-being is affected due to imbalance in their life events which in turn leads to stressful life events. Hence the present study was taken with an objective to know the challenges faced, stress experienced by single parent and its relationship with psychological well-being of single parents.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The samples were drawn from two villages of Dharwad District. Among each village 15 single parent were selected for the study. Which comprised of totally 30 single mothers. The criterion for selecting the single mothers was they should have at least one child/ children aged from 6-18 years. The data was collected through personal interview using the general information schedule and problem faced by the single mothers. The socio-economic status of the family was assessed by using socio-economic status scale developed

by Agaarwal *et. al*¹. The scale consists of 22 statements which assess education, occupation, monthly per capita income from all sources, family possessions, Number of children, Number of earning members in family, education of children, domestic servants in home, possession of agricultural land and non-agricultural land along with animals and social status of the family. General Stress inventory questionnaire developed by Ivancevich and Matteson⁶ was employed to assess the general stress levels of the parents. It consists of 20 items with scores of '1' for the responses 'yes' and '0' for 'no'. The total score ranges from 0 to 20. The Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being developed by Tricia⁹ consists of 84 questions with long and medium forms with a series of statements reflecting the six areas of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The table 1 indicates the demographic characteristics of the single parent, where 46.66 per cent belonged to 30-39 years and 53.33 per cent belonged to 40-49 years. Majority of single parents (80%) belonged to other backward caste (OBC), followed by Hindu (10%) and scheduled tribe (10%) respectively. Whereas 26.66 per cent of single parents were illiterates and completed their secondary education respectively. While 23.33 per cent completed their primary education, followed by graduation (10%) and remaining 6.66 per cent completed their PUC/Diploma and post- graduation respectively. In case of occupation majority of single mothers (53.33%) were self employment with income more than Rs.5, 000 per month followed by 33.33 per cent service at shops, home, own cultivation, while 3.33 per cent service in private sector or independent business and worked at central/ state/public undertaking or owner of a company employing or professional respectively. With regard to Socio-Economic Status 43.30 per cent belonged to the lower middle Socio Economic

Status, followed by poor middle (36.70%), upper middle (13.30%) and high SES (6.67 %). In case of reason for singlehood in 53.33 per cent was due to death of the spouse, followed by 26.66 per cent were divorced and remaining 20 per cent were separated from their partners. A study conducted by Boyle *et al.*, Sender and Oya; Pujar *et al.*⁷, also indicated that most of the single mothers were widows.

The Table 2 indicated the problems faced by single mothers, where 53.33 per cent of the single mothers get income from agriculture followed by 43.33 per cent reported pension was one of the source of livelihood, 33.33 per cent from their own job and 20.00 per cent from rents of house/ shop or lease from their agricultural property. In case of support system majority of single mothers got support from their parents (66.66 %) followed by children (33.33 %), relatives and friends (20%), neighbor and co-workers (6.66 %). With regard to change in life style after being single about 50 per cent reported that there is increase in their responsibilities followed by less entertainment than earlier (36.66%), no change in life style (33.33%), changes in their food habits (32.33%) and change in dressing style (30%). With regard to problem faced by single mothers majority had financial problems (86.66%), educating their children (60%), emotional problems (40%) and household problems (36.66%). The reason for financial problem was the single parents were the only bread winner of the family due to which it was difficult for them to balance the work and family which also added emotional problems to their life. A study by Pujar *et al.*⁷, indicated that majority of them had financial followed by household and emotional problem. With regard to source of income agriculture was the major source of income. Weldegabreal¹⁰ pointed out that majority of the respondent had economic hardship, difficulty in educating their children and some of the respondents also got support from their family members and few good friends.

The table 3 indicated general stress and psychological well-being of single parent. In case of general stress 90 per cent had high

stress and only 10 per cent had average stress. The mean (\pm SD) scores was found to be 13.03 ± 3.08 . The reason for high stress could be that majority of single mothers in the present study belonged to lower middle (43.33 %) and poor middle (36.70%) socio-economic status (table 1) due to the other multiple responsibility of household/office work as a mother, health issues, arguments amongst family members and lack of stress management. Cakir⁴ also found that financial problems, in completing their children needs and wishes, lack of father involvement, added responsibilities, and cultural attitudes toward widowhood were some of the common causes which made single mothers more stressful.

With regard to psychological well-being majority of the single mothers had average (86.70%) and low (13.30%) level of psychological well-being with mean scores was (145.46 ± 14.93) . The table 4 showed the relationship between general stress and psychological well-being of single mothers indicating that higher the stress levels (13.33 %) of single mothers lower will be the psychological well-being. The reason could be that majority of the single mothers had high stress which was associated mainly by financial and emotional problems and these stressful events can hamper their psychological well-being. A study conducted by Sahu and Kiran⁸ revealed low psychological well-being of the children of divorced family as well as children from the single parent due to death of the partner.

The Table 5 pointed out the relationship of age, SES with General Stress. With respect to 30-39 age group 43.33 per cent of single mothers had high stress and only 3.33 per cent had average stress. Similarly single mothers belonged to 40-49 years had high stress (46.66%) and 6.66 percent had average stress. There was significant relationship and association of age with general stress. Which indicated that older single mothers had more stress compared to the younger single mothers, as the age of the mothers increases they were more prone to health problems, added responsibilities along with day-to-day activities of the family which adds up the stress level. With regard to socio-economic

status single mothers belonged to poor (6.66 %) and lower middle (13.33 %) SES had high stress, while single mothers from upper middle had high stress (36.66%) and average stress (6.66 %). The single mothers belonged to high socio-economic status had high stress (33.33 %) and average stress (3.33 %). It is interesting to note that there was significant relationship and association of SES with general stress. A study conducted by Broussard *et al.*³, found that low-income single mothers belonged to vulnerable population and are more stressed about housing, work, food insecurity, child care problem, discrimination, stigma and illness.

The Table 6 pointed out the relationship of age, SES with psychological well-being. It is clear from the table that single mothers belonged to the 30-39 age group had average (43.33 %) and low psychological well-being(3.33 %). Similar trend was observed in the 40-49 years of age group. However, there was no significant relationship and association of age with psychological

well-being. With regard to socio-economic status the single mothers belonged to poor middle SES had average (6.66 %) and low (3.33 %) psychological well-being. From the lower middle SES, 13.33 per cent had average psychological well-being. While from upper middle SES had average (36.66 %) and low (6.66 %) psychological well-being and 36.66 per cent had average psychological well-being found in high socio-economic status. There was significant relationship and association of SES with psychological well-being. The reason could be that majority of the single mothers belonged to all the levels of middle socio-economic status and the major reason for singlehood was the death of the spouse and additional responsibility of running the family with lower socio-economic condition leads to emotional and financial problem. Dziak *et al.*²⁰, found that single mothers belonged to middle socio-economic status had financial hardship, work family conflict and poor psychological well-being as compared to parented mothers.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of single parent

Sl.No	Particulars	Dharwad
1	Age(In Years)	
	30-39	14 (46.66)
	40-49	16 (53.33)
2	Caste	
	Hindu	03 (10.00)
	SC	-
	ST	03 (10.00)
	OBC	24 (80.00)
3	Education	
	Illiterate	08 (26.66)
	Primary	07 (23.33)
	Secondary	08 (26.66)
	PUC/Diploma	02 (6.66)
	Graduation	03 (10.00)
	Post-Graduation	02 (6.66)
4	Occupation	
	Service in central/ state/public undertaking or owner of a company employing or professional	01 (3.33)
	Service in private sector or independent business	01 (3.33)
	Service at shops, home, own cultivation	10 (33.33)
	Self employed with income >Rs 5000	16 (53.33)
	Laborers<Rs 5000 income, housewives	02 (6.66)
5	Socio-Economic Status	
	Poor Middle	11 (36.70)
	Lower Middle	13 (43.30)
	Upper Middle	04 (13.30)
	High	02 (6.70)
6	Reason for singlehood	
	Death	16 (53.33)
	Divorced	08 (26.66)
	Separation	06 (20.00)

Figures in the parenthesis indicates percentage

Table 2: Percentage distribution of problems faced by single mothers

Sl.No	Challenges	Frequency (%)
1	Source of Income	
	Pension	13 (43.33)
	Job	10 (33.33)
	Agriculture	16 (53.33)
	Property (Rents or Lease)	06 (20.00)
	Salary of children	03 (10.00)
	Business	02 (6.66)
	Bank Balance	00 (0.00)
	From Parents	00 (0.00)
2	Support System	
	Children	10 (33.33)
	Parents	20 (66.66)
	In-Laws	06 (20.00)
	Relatives	06 (20.00)
	Friends	05 (16.66)
	Neighbors	02 (6.66)
	Co-workers	02 (6.66)
	NGO's	00 (0.00)
	No Body	07 (23.33)
3	Change in life style after being single	
	Dressing	09 (30.00)
	Food Habits	10 (32.33)
	Less entertainments	11 (36.66)
	Added responsibilities	15 (50.00)
	No change	10 (33.33)
4	Problems	
	Emotional	12(40.00)
	Financial	26 (86.66)
	Education	18 (60.00)
	Household	11 (36.66)

Figures in the parenthesis indicates percentage

Table 3: General Stress and Psychological Well-Being of single parent

Variables	Category	Frequency (Percentage)
General Stress	Low	-
	Average	03 (10.00)
	High	27 (90.00)
	Mean (\pmSD)	13.03\pm3.08
Psychological Well-Being	Low	04 (13.30)
	Average	26 (86.70)
	High	-
	Mean (\pmSD)	145.46\pm14.93

Figures in the parenthesis indicates percentage

Table 4: Relationship between General Stress and Psychological Well-Being of single parent

Psychological Well-Being	General Stress			Modified χ^2	r
	Low	Average	High		
Low	-	0	4 (13.33)	5.13*	0.05*
Average	-	3 (10.00)	23 (76.66)		

Figures in the parenthesis indicates percentage

*Significant at 0.05 level

Table 5: Relationship of age, SES with General Stress

Variables	General Stress			r	Modified χ^2
	Low	Average	High		
Age				0.03*	2.60*
30-39	-	1 (3.33)	13 (43.33)		
40-49	-	2 (6.66)	14 (46.66)		
SES				0.01*	2.81*
Poor Middle	-	-	2 (6.66)		
Lower Middle	-	-	4 (13.33)		
Upper Middle	-	2 (6.66)	11 (36.66)		
High	-	1 (3.33)	10 (33.33)		

Figures in the parenthesis indicates percentage

*Significant at 0.05 level

Table 6: Relationship of age, SES with Psychological Well-Being

Variables	Psychological Well-Being			r	Modified χ^2
	Low	Average	High		
Age				1.21 ^{NS}	8.17 ^{NS}
30-39	1 (3.33)	13 (43.33)	-		
40-49	3 (10.00)	13 (43.33)	-		
SES				0.04*	4.58*
Poor Middle	1 (3.33)	2 (6.66)	-		
Lower Middle	-	4 (13.33)	-		
Upper Middle	2 (6.66)	11 (36.66)	-		
High	-	11 (36.66)	-		

Figures in the parenthesis indicates percentage

*Significant at 0.05 level

NS – Non-Significant

CONCLUSION

The reason for singlehood in most of the single mothers was due to death of the spouse. Among the single mothers agriculture was the major source of income followed by widow pension and their job. Parents and children were the major support system for single mothers. About half of the single parent reported that they had added responsibility after being single and faced financial problem. The single mothers reported average level of stress and psychological well-being. There was significant relationship and association of age and SES with general stress. While there was significant interrelationship between of general stress and psychological well being.

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