



WIDOWS OF ALCOHOLICS AND THEIR SOCIAL SUPPORT- A STUDY

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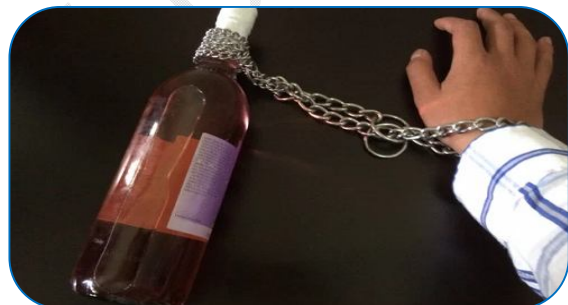
ABSTRACT :

Objectives: The objective of the present study is to ascertain the level of social support and how it correlates with selected demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of widows of alcoholics in the study area. **Methods:** Data were collected among 256 individuals between the age group of 19 to 65 using a simple random sampling procedure. The social support scale developed by Zimet & Zimet 1988 was used for collection of data. Data were analysed using a structural equation model (SEM). **Results:** Result shows that the average social support score is 35.56, the minimum score is 14 and the maximum is 79. The overall social support score is found to be at low level (78.1 per cent) among the respondents. **Conclusion:** Social support and quality of life has been positively correlated with socio demographic characteristics.

KEYWORDS : Widows of alcoholics, Social Support.

INTRODUCTION

It was reported that 1,40,686 people died between the years 2002 to 2013 in Tamil Nadu. (Dhinamani, 2014), moreover, it was also reported that there were 150 young widows, as a result of their husbands dying due to alcohol addiction, in the Madapalli Panchayat of the Tirupattur Block, located in Vellore district of Tamil Nadu. This is a shocking revelation that warrants a study as these widows are bound to be in a very miserable state. Widowhood in our country is associated with stigma and as a result they are vulnerable to all kinds of discriminations such as not being allowed to participate in religious and other social events, which make them feel less than human. It may be noted that if this is the type of treatment given to all widows in general, those who have lost their husbands due to alcohol addiction are bound to be treated even more poorly. The poor and miserable state of a widow's life is likely to receive low level of social support and they suffer from mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety and stress which could have a negative impact on their quality of life. These aspects have raised certain questions in the mind of the researcher. They are: what are the socio-demographic characteristics of widows of alcoholics like? What are the support they receive and from whom?



REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various studies have been conducted on widows of alcoholics. Only most relevant findings of the studies conducted by various researchers are presented here. Bankoff (1983) carried out a study to examine the effects of social support on the psychological well-being among 245 women who had been widowed for three

years or less. The findings of the study indicated that the role of such support is important but complex. Whether social support is helpful, harmful, or inconsequential to widows' psychological well-being seems to depend on such factors as where the widows were in the adjustment process and the type of support given to the widows. Miller et al. (2004) in their article aimed to evaluate the relationship between social support and adjustment from 19 previous widowhood studies. Contrary to intuition and most researchers' assumptions, the majority of relationships did not show that social support positively impacted adjustment. Scott et al. (2007) through a study to explore the nature of social support among widows. The findings of this study were integrated to contribute to a more detailed description of social support in the transition to widowhood. A study was carried out by Kanacki et al. (1996), to examine the relationships between social support and depression among 31 widows and 35 widowers. The researcher adopted the Beck Depression Inventory to assess the level of depression. Findings indicated that a significant negative relationship was observed between perceived social support and depression. They also reported that there was no difference in the amount of depression experienced by widows and widowers and there were no significant differences in the two groups' perceptions of support received from their environment or in the number of supportive contacts identified in their social networks.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives: The objective of the present research is to study the socio – demographic background characteristics of the widows of alcoholics in Madapalli village. 2. To assess the level of social support received by the widows of alcoholics and its correlates with selected socio-economic and demographic characteristics. *Universal and Sampling:* The researcher purposively selected Madapalli village in the Thirupathur Block of Vellore district, A benchmark survey conducted by the researcher revealed that there were 585 widows of alcoholics in the said village in the age group of 19-65 years. This constitutes the universe of the study. Using the Krejice and Morgan formula, the researcher selected, 256 widows as sample for the present study. *Tools of data collection:* An interview schedule consisting of socio-demographic characteristics, and social support of the respondents. To measure Social support of the respondents the Social Support scale developed by Zimet & Zimet 1988 was used for collection of data. Data were analysed using a structural equation model (SEM). (Reclin, 2018)

RESULTS

The findings revealed that the average current age of the sample widows of alcoholics was 41.36 years, with the minimum age being 16 years and the maximum being 65 years their average age at the time of marriage was 15 years and all the selected respondents belong to Hinduism. A vast majority (84.8 per cent) of the widows belong to Scheduled Caste. Their average size of the family was 2.25, with a minimum of one member and a maximum of five members, most of them were illiterates (61.3 %), and majority (87.9 %) of them were agricultural labourers, their average family monthly income was Rs. 5915. Vast majority (96.5%) of the widows of alcoholics live in own houses which are huts with a single room. All the selected respondents have access to potable water and electricity. Majority (89.9%) of them do not have access to toilet facilities, a greater number of (99.2%) them have free colour Television offered by the government. The average number of mobile phone used in their family was 1.2 with the minimum number of one and the maximum number of cell phones being four. Their average age at widowhood was 30.33 and the average number of years they lived together with their spouses was 14 years, majority (94.9 %) of the respondents live in separate families and only one third of them availed the widow pension. Result also revealed that the average social support score is 35.56, the minimum score is 14 and the maximum is 79. The overall social support score is found to be at low level (78.1 per cent) among the respondents.

Table - 1: Mean scores of social support across the respondents' socio – demographic background characteristics

S.N	Variables		N	Family	Friends	Others	Social Support
				Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
1	Current Age	Young	84	9.71	9.71	10.07	29.50
		Lower Middle	97	10.77	10.97	11.61	33.35
		Upper Middle	45	19.38	19.56	19.44	58.38
		Old age	30	8.00	9.33	8.10	25.43
		Total	256	11.61	11.88	12.07	35.56
		F –ratio P- level		61.851 .000	59.367 .000	74.571 .000	69.415 .000
2	Age at Marriage	14 yrs or less	51	11.31	11.49	11.49	34.29
		15 – 17 yrs	185	11.60	11.91	12.17	35.69
		18 yrs &>	20	12.50	12.50	12.60	37.60
		Total	256	11.61	11.8	12.07	35.56
		f- ratio P – level		.315 .730	.247 .781	451 .638	.320 .726
		3	Social Standing	BC / MBC	39	11.54	11.90
SC	217			11.63	11.87	12.05	35.54
Total	256			11.61	11.88	12.07	35.56
t- value P – level				.008 .929	.001 .978	.030 .862	.001 .972
4	Type of family			Nuclear Family	217	10.91	11.13
		Joint Family	39	15.51	16.00	15.56	47.08
		Total	256	11.61	11.88	12.07	35.56
		t- value P – level		23.704 .000	27.484 .000	22.271 .000	25.695 .000

The finding in table - 1 revealed that the mean score of social support was found to be higher among the respondents who belong to upper middle age (36-45). The social support score was also found to be higher among the respondents whose age at marriage was 18 years and above, and the finding also shows that the respondents who belong to Backward Caste have a higher mean score of support from friends and significant others. It was also clear that the mean scores of support from family friends and significant others were found to be higher among the respondents who live in joint families. However, The ANOVA results show that there is a statistically significant difference between the current age ($p < 0.001$), and type of families ($p < 0.001$) and there is no significant difference between Age at Marriage, Social Standing and Type of family in the mean score of social support received by the widows of alcoholics.

Table - 2: Mean scores of social support across the respondents' socio – economic background characteristics

S.N	Variables		N	Family	Friends	Others	Social Support
				Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
1	Education	Illiterate	157	10.60	11.06	8.25	32.90
		Primary	80	13.21	13.41	11.75	39.60
		Middle School	19	13.26	13.26	19.50	40.53
		Total	256	11.61	11.88	12.07	35.56
		F –ratio P- level		6.796 .001	4.365 .014	5.523 .004	5.746 .004
2	Occupation	No work	12	7.92	9.58	25.75	25.75
		Agri / Non Agri coolie	228	11.25	11.45	34.45	34.45
		Petty Trade	16	19.56	19.69	58.75	58.75
		Total	256	11.61	11.88	35.56	35.56
		F- ratio P – level		21.804 .000	19.718 .000	23.252 .000	22.521 .000
3	Family Monthly Income	5000 or less	145	10.40	10.66	10.86	31.92
		5001 -10000	80	10.70	11.00	11.36	33.06
		10001 +	31	19.65	19.81	19.55	59.00
		Total	256	11.61	11.88	12.07	35.56
		F- ratio P – level		48.747 .000	48.578 .000	50.416 .000	52.348 .000
4	Family Monthly Expenditure	5000 or less	146	10.47	10.73	10.92	32.12
		5001 -10000	91	11.75	12.08	12.31	36.13
		10001 +	19	19.74	19.74	19.79	59.26
		Total	256	11.61	11.88	12.07	35.56
		F- ratio P – level		27.084 .000	26.087 .000	29.881 .000	29.128 .000

Table - 2 reveals that the mean score of social support was found to be higher among the respondents who have studied up to Middle School level. The study also shows that the score of social support was higher among the respondents who were engaged in petty trade, the respondents whose family monthly income and family monthly expenditure was Rs.10001 and above. The ANOVA results also reveal that there is a statistically significant difference between level of education ($p < 0.01$), occupation ($p < 0.001$), family monthly income ($p < 0.001$) and expenditure ($p < 0.001$) in the mean score of social support received by the widows of alcoholics.

Table - 3: Mean scores of social support across the respondents' widowhood and related aspects

S.N	Variables		N	Family	Friends	S.O	SS score
				Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
1	Age at widowhood	25 yrs or <	52	10.06	10.83	10.79	31.67
		26 – 35 yrs	163	11.87	12.02	12.17	36.06
		36 yrs +	41	12.56	12.61	13.32	38.49
		Total	256	11.61	11.88	12.07	35.56
		F -ratio P level		2.735 .067	1.322 .269	2.796 .63	2.283 .104
2	Living Arrangement	With Spouse's Family	2	9.00	11.00	11.00	31.00
		With parents	11	11.91	12.73	12.55	37.18
		Independent Family	243	11.62	11.84	12.06	35.52
		Total	256	11.61	11.88	12.07	35.56
		F- ratio P – Level		.226 .798	.154 .857	.087 .916	.135 .874
3	Widow pension	Availed	99	14.08	14.68	14.08	42.84
		Not availed	157	10.06	10.11	10.80	30.97
		Total	256	11.61	11.88	12.07	35.56
		t- value P – Level		34.607 .000	47.678 .000	26.248 .000	37.535 .000
4	Type of house	Hut	122	10.36	10.75	11.05	32.16
		Tiled	85	11.11	11.22	11.46	33.79
		Terrace	49	15.61	15.82	15.67	47.10
		Total	256	11.61	11.88	12.07	35.56
		t- value P – Level		17.516 .000	17.059 .000	16.298 .000	17.830 .000

Table - 3 illustrates that the mean scores of support from family, friends and significant others found to be higher among the respondents whose age at widowhood was 36 and above. The support from family, friends and significant others found to be higher among the respondents who are living with their parents' family, and the respondents who have availed the widow pension. The social support score was higher among the widows of alcoholics who live in terrace building. Moreover, the statistical analysis also shows that there is a significant difference between the widows who received widow pension and type of house in the mean score of social support ($p < 0.001$)

Table - 4: Relationship between respondents' background characteristics and social support

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables			
	Family	Friends	Others	Social support
Current Age	***.225	***.272	***.205	***.240
Age at marriage	.085	.093	.087	.090
Age at widowhood	*.159	*.139	** .192	** .167
Year lived with spouse	*.140	.118	** .169	** .167
Education	***.200	** .16*	** .183	** .188
Income per month	***.310	***.25	***.321	***.300
Family Income	***.479	***.473	***.484	***.489
Number of Family members	***.210**	** .191	***.226	***.213
Monthly expenditure	***.400**	***.404	***.413	***.415

Table - 4 shows that current age, age at widowhood, years of living with spouse, education, respondents' income, family income, number of family members and monthly expenditure, increases, the social support score also increases.

CONCLUSION

The present study explored the level and nature of social support. Majority of the respondents scored lower level of social support. Further, the respondents who are having higher level of education, personal and family income scored fairly higher level of social support. Based on these findings, this study has implications for interventions with widows of alcoholics. These finding suggest that proper guidance and counselling to the widows of alcoholics and their family members, friends and significant others will be more beneficial besides encouraging them to take part in socio, cultural and religious ceremonies of their families, friends and others without any prejudices, bigotry and discriminations and treat them without affecting their self respect which will reduce their loneliness and lead to increase the interactions and social network of the widows of alcoholics. Providing formal as well as non formal education besides ways and means to increase the personal and family income of the widows of alcoholics will lead to receiving better social support from their families, friends and relatives.

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