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Assessment of mental health of destitute and normal women

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Abstract

The study was conducted to assess mental health and to know the difference between the mental health of destitute and normal women. The respondents of 130 women (30 non-institutional, 40 institutional and 60 normal) were selected from destitute homes and rural areas of Dharwad with age ranging from 18-45 years. Mental health questionnaire constructed by Sharma was used to assess the mental health. It was noted that 63-68 per cent of destitute women had poor mental health whereas 17.50 and 23.30 per cent of institutional and non-institutional destitute women respectively indicated moderate mental health category. It was reported that only 13 - 15.00 per cent of destitute women possessed good mental health status. But in normal women, more than half of them (53.40 %) had good mental health status followed by moderate (31.70%) and only 15 per cent of them had poor mental health status. There was a significant association between the levels of mental health of non-institutional, institutional and normal women. The institutional women (68.00%) and non-institutional women (63.00%) indicated mental health status as compared 15 per cent of normal women. There was a significant difference was observed between the mental health of destitute and normal women. SES and occupation found to be significant predictors to mental health status. Individual and familial factors such as age, education, occupation, marital status, type of family etc contributed up to 47 and 29 per cent of variance to mental health of non-institutional and institutional women respectively.

Keywords: Destitute women, mental health

Introduction

Destitute woman is the one who don't have any support from the family or relatives and they are deprived of basic necessities of life. destitute women means any female who has no independent source of livelihood or is not being looked after by any family member or relative and it also includes women who are divorced (Anon, 2009) [3]. Destitution among women is the result of family conflicts, they are discarded and are made to leave their homes without any means of subsistence, have no social protection from exploitation and are facing litigation on account of marital disputes (CSWB, 2005) [2]. The destitute women population includes individuals who are widows, divorced, separated, orphans, beggars, vagrants street urchins, sex workers, those recently released from prison with chronic mental illness, victims of sexual abuse and violence, being cheated (becoming pregnant prior to marriage), love failure, extra marital relationship, even elders who are suffering from chronic mental illness and dementia, disabled and migrants (Coker, 2017) [4].

According to Institute of Human Behaviour and allied sciences nearly 50% of destitute population is likely to have a mental illness. Mental health is defined as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his/ her community. The incidence of depression among destitute women around the world is found to be higher than normal women. (Kasen *et al.*, 2003) [5]. Loneliness, neglect, family conflict, exposure to violence/abuse, low income and poverty, poor access to basic services are the some of the factors leading to low mental health. Hence the study was undertaken to assess the mental health of destitute and normal women.

Material and methods

The study was conducted during 2018-19 year. The population for the study consists of institutional women and non-institutional women from Hubli and Dharwad. Normal women are selected from rural areas of Dharwad taluk. The sample of 130 women which has 30 were non- institutional, 40 institutional and 60 were normal women (age range 18-45 years).

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The structured questionnaire was used to collect personal information like name of the respondents and her family members with their age, relationship with respondents, education, occupation and their family's annual income, period of destitution, causes and problems. The socio-economic scale developed by Aggarwal *et al.* (2005) [1] was used to assess socio-economic status of the respondents. It consists of 22 statements which assess education, occupation, monthly income of parents, possession, type of house, no of vehicles, earning members, children, facility, education of children, servant at home, locality, milching animals present in family. The score were given for different dimensions and added to obtain total score. The socio-economic status has been classified as upper high, upper middle, lower middle, poor middle and very poor. The mental health questionnaire developed by Sharma (2002) [9] was used to assess mental health of women. This self-report inventory consists of 60 items. It contain 30 positive item and 30 negative item. Each item is followed by 3 alternatives namely 'Yes', 'Undecided', and 'No'. For positive statement a score of 2 is given for 'Yes', 1 for Undecided and 0 for 'No' answer. The pattern of scoring is reversed for negative statement. The scale can be administered individually as well as in group, high score indicates good mental health. The reliability coefficient was found 0.78. The total score ranges from 0-120.

The total score are categorized as follows.

| Classification of mental health | Total score | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Female | Male |
| Very Good | 78 and above | 80 and above |
| Good | 66-77 | 68-79 |
| Moderate | 54-65 | 56-67 |
| Poor | 42-53 | 44-55 |
| Very poor | 41 and less | 43 and less |

Result and discussion

Demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in the table 1. It is observed that among non-institutional destitute women, majority (up to 70%) belonged to the age group of 18-26 years followed by 27- 35 years age group. Whereas among institutional women 50 per cent of them belonged 18-26 years of age group followed by 32.50 per cent and 17.50 per cent of them fall in 36-45 years and 27-35 years age group respectively. In normal women group 48.33 per cent of them belonged to 27 – 35 years of age followed by women in 36- 45 years (35%).

With respect to education, 43.33 per cent of non-institutional women studied up to SSLC and 30 per cent of them had educated up to PUC. In institutional women 67.50 per cent of them had education up to SSLC but 15.00 per cent of them not attended school. Among normal women 75 per cent of them had education up to SSLC and 11.66 per cent of them were illiterate.

Majority of destitute (institutional and non- institutional) women (60 and 70 %) were not engaged in any productive work while remaining (30 - 40%) were working as labourer and household maids. In normal women, 58.33 per cent were housewives and remaining 41.66 per cent of them were engaged as agricultural labourers.

It is observed that 56.60 per cent of non- institutional destitute women were unmarried and 56.70 per cent were not having children. It is noted that 36.70 and 42.50 per cent of non-institutional and institutional destitute women had 1-2 children respectively while 6.70 and 15 per cent had 3-5

children. It was worth noting that 27.50 per cent of institutional women were unmarried, 22.50 per cent of them were separated from their partner and 10 per cent of them were widow. In normal women majority (86.66%) of them are married and having 1-2 children (55.00%). It was observed that 33.33 per cent of normal women had 3-5 children and 11.50 per cent of them were widow. Majority of non-institutional and institutional destitute women (70 to 90 % respectively) were living in nuclear family and only 10 to 30 per cent were having joint family. Same trend was observed in normal women.

It is important to note that 42.50 and 46.70 per cent of institutional and non-institutional destitute women were staying in the family with 4-6 members respectively while 15 to 30 per cent of them possess family with more than 7 members, similar trend was observed in normal women. Among institutional women 45.00 per cent of women are staying in short stay home from 1-2 years followed by < 1 years (40%). It was noted that 15.00 per cent of institutional women are staying in government aided short stay home > 3 years. All non-institutional women are staying with their family members but not having any financial support.

Distribution of destitute and normal women by SES was presented in table 2. It was noted that 56.66 per cent of non-institutional women belonged to the lower middle category of SES followed by poor category (43.33%). In institutional women, 92.50 per cent of them belonged to the poor category of SES followed by lower middle. The destitute women who belonged to lower SES and having no shelter are enrolled in short stay homes hence none of them were belonged to the upper middle class. Majority of normal women were (66.66%) belonged to the lower middle class followed by poor category of SES. 23.33% and only 10 per cent of them fall in upper middle class of SES. There was a significant difference was observed between levels of SES in non-institutional, institutional destitute and normal women indicating poor SES among destitute women.

Table 3 indicates that percentage distribution of women on their mental health status. Non -institutional (63.33%) and institutional (67.50 %) destitute women 50 per cent were in poor category of mental health, whereas 17.50 and 23.30 per cent of institutional and non-institutional destitute women respectively indicated moderate category. It was noted that only 13.30 and 15.00 per cent of non-institutional and institutional were in good mental health status respectively. But in normal women, more than half of them (53.40 %) were in good mental health status followed by moderate (31.70%) and only 15 per cent of them had poor mental health status. There was a significant association between the levels of mental health of non-institutional, institutional and normal women. Being single, responsibility of children, lack of support, no proper economic security and family support were the causes of poor mental health. Kasen *et al.* (2003) [5] reported that the incidence of depression among the destitute women around the world is higher than normal women.

The mean scores of mental health status of destitute women among non-institutional and institutional found to be 52.13 ± 11.64 and 51.97 ± 11.18 respectively. Whereas normal women had higher mean score (66.88 ± 13.72) than destitute women. There was a significant difference observed on mental health status between three groups (table 4). Sharma (2014) [8] reported that destitute women had more depression compared to normal women and there was a significant difference observed between normal and destitute women on

their depression. Sandhyarani and Rao also reported that higher percentage (60%) of institutionalized women had severe depression. Predictors of mental health of women is presented in table 5 and 6. Among non- institutional women SES and occupation were the significant predictors of mental health. Variables such as age, education, occupation, marital status, SES, number of children and type of family totally contributed significantly to 47 per cent of variance towards the mental health of non-institutional women. In institutional destitute women variable such as age, education, occupation, marital status, SES, number of children and type of family contributed 29 per cent of variance to mental health however none of the variable significantly influenced the mental health. Among normal women, occupation is the significant predictors of mental health and all independent variable contributed 20 per cent of variance to mental health. Savadatti (2005) [7] also reported that in destitute women per capita

income showed as major predictor and influence on depression level and it was alone predicted 29 per cent of variance to depression in destitute women.

Conclusion

In brief, findings of the present study suggest that destitute women had poor mental health compared to normal women. There was a significant difference was observed where, normal women had better mental health than destitute women. Among non- institutional women SES and occupational status were the significant predictors of mental health. Hence educational awareness towards positivity and economic empowerment will help for better quality life of destitute women.

Results

Table 1: Demographic characteristic of destitute and normal women N=130

| Characteristics | Destitute women | | Normal women n=60 |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| | Non- institutional n=30 | Institutional n=40 | |
| Age (years) | | | |
| 18-26 | 21 (70.00) | 20 (50.00) | 10 (16.70) |
| 27-35 | 9 (30.00) | 7 (17.50) | 29 (48.33) |
| 36-45 | - | 13 (32.50) | 21(35.00) |
| Education | | | |
| Degree | 8 (26.66) | 2 (5.00) | 4 (6.60) |
| PUC | 9 (30.00) | 5 (12.50) | 4 (6.60) |
| Up to SSLC | 13 (43.33) | 27 (67.50) | 45 (75.00) |
| Illiterate | - | 6 (15.00) | 7(11.66) |
| Occupation | | | |
| Working | 9 (30.00) | 16 (40.00) | 25 (41.66) |
| Non-working | 21(70.00) | 24 (60.00) | 35 (58.33) |
| No of children | | | |
| None | 17(56.70) | 17 (42.50) | 7 (11.50) |
| 1-2 | 11(36.70) | 17 (42.50) | 33 (55.00) |
| 3-5 | 2(6.70) | 6 (15.00) | 20 (33.33) |
| Marital status | | | |
| Married | 3 (10.00) | 15 (37.50) | 52 (86.66) |
| Unmarried | 17(56.60) | 11 (27.50) | - |
| Divorce | 1(3.33) | 1(2.50) | - |
| Separated | 1(3.33) | 9 (22.50) | 1 (1.60) |
| Widow | 8 (26.60) | 4 (10.00) | 7 (11.50) |
| Type of family | | | |
| Nuclear | 21(70.00) | 36 (90.00) | 42 (70.00) |
| Joint | 9 (30.00) | 4(10.00) | 18 (30.00) |
| Size of family | | | |
| <4 | 7 (23.30) | 17 (42.50) | 10 (16.66) |
| 4-6 | 14 (46.70) | 17 (42.50) | 38 (63.33) |
| >7 | 3 (30.00) | 06 (15.00) | 12 (20.00) |
| Period of destitution | | | |
| < 1 year | - | 16 (40.00) | - |
| 1-2 years | - | 18 (45.00) | - |
| >3 years | - | 06 (15.00) | - |

Table 2: Distribution of destitute and normal women by SES N=130

| Women | SES | | | | χ^2 |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|----------|----------|
| | Upper middle | Lower middle | Poor | Total | |
| Non-institutional | - | 17(56.66) | 13 (43.33) | 30 (100) | 51.07** |
| Institutional | - | 3 (7.50) | 37 (92.50) | 40 (100) | |
| Normal | 6 (10.00) | 40 (66.66) | 14 ((23.33) | 60 (100) | |

Figure in the parenthesis indicates percentage

Table 3: Distribution of women on mental health status N=130

| Type | | Mental health status | | | | | | χ^2 |
|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|----------|----------|
| | | Very good | Good | Moderate | Poor | Very poor | Total | |
| Destitute women | Non-institutional (n=30) | - | 4 (13.30) | 7 (23.30) | 10 (33.33) | 9 (30.00) | 30 (100) | 37.82** |
| | Institutional (n=40) | - | 6 (15.00) | 7 (17.50) | 18 (45.00) | 9 (22.50) | 40 (100) | |
| Normal women n=60 | | 13 (21.70) | 19 (31.70) | 19 (31.70) | 9 (15.00) | - | 60 (100) | |

Figure in the parenthesis indicates percentage.

*significant at 0.05 level, **significant at 0.01 level, NS indicates non significance

Table 4: Comparison of mean scores of mental health of destitute and normal women N=130

| S. No | Women | Mean \pm SD | F-value |
|-------|--------------------------|-------------------|---------|
| 1 | Non-institutional (n=30) | 52.13 \pm 11.64 | 26.31** |
| 2 | Institutional (n=40) | 51.97 \pm 11.18 | |
| 3 | Normal women (n=60) | 66.88 \pm 13.72 | |

Table 5: Predictors of mental health of destitute women N=70

| Predictors Independent variables | Non-institutional | | | Institutional women | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------|--------------|---------------------|---------|--------------|
| | β | t-value | Significance | β | t-value | Significance |
| Constant | | 3.73 | 0.001 | -0.104 | 3.705 | 0.000 |
| Age | -0.154 | 0.764 | 0.453 | 0.018 | -0.63 | 0.950 |
| Education | 0.266 | 0.757 | 0.453 | -0.170 | 0.048 | 0.926 |
| Occupation | -0.600 | 3.70 | 0.001* | -0.299 | -0.959 | 0.345 |
| Marital status | 0.161 | 0.447 | 0.659 | 0.010 | 0.101 | 0.059 |
| SES | 0.195 | 0.492 | 0.003* | 0.097 | 0.057 | 0.955 |
| No of children | 0.001 | 0.006 | 0.995 | -0.008 | 0.424 | 0.674 |
| Type of family | 0.106 | -0.468 | 0.644 | | -0.040 | 0.968 |
| R | 0.686 | | | 0.539 | | |
| R ² | 0.470 | | | 0.290 | | |
| F | 2.791* | | | 1.365 | | |
| Adjusted R ² | 0.302 | | | 0.247 | | |

Table 6: Predictors of mental health of normal women N=60

| Predictors Independent variables | Normal women | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|---------|--------------|
| | β | t-value | Significance |
| Constant | | 8.061 | 0.000 |
| Age | -0.210 | 0.1599 | 0.116 |
| Education | 0.130 | 0.977 | 0.336 |
| Occupation | -0.363 | 0.2857 | 0.006* |
| Marital status | -0.441 | 0.3802 | 0.648 |
| SES | 0.115 | 0.913 | 0.365 |
| Number of children | 0.026 | 0.180 | 0.858 |
| Type of family | 0.092 | 0.65 | 0.51 |
| R | 0.45 | | |
| R ² | 20.00 | | |
| F | 4.655 | | |
| Adjusted R ² | 0.098 | | |

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