

Managerial problems and coping strategies in female headed households

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ABSTRACT

The study on Female headed households : managerial problems and coping strategies was carried out in Assam with 150 female headed households selected through purposive cum random sampling procedure. 'Z' test was computed to study the variation of problems of high, middle and low socio-economic status. It was observed that majority of the respondents belonging to LSES (92 per cent), MSES (88 per cent), HSES (66 per cent) were highly affected by general decline in financial position. A large majority of 74 per cent was always under constant financial precarious situations inspite of coping strategies. Temporal stress as expressed by respondents of middle socio-economic status was relatively high as compared to high and low social economic status. The problem was acute for working women. Further 87 per cent of employed and 69 per cent non-employed female heads were either always or sometimes affected by psycho-physiological components. A meager percentage of the respondents reported to be divorced and separated were affected moderately by social problems. No negative effect on widowed female heads on social life was observed.

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An alternate family may be broadly defined as single parent family, childless family and adoptive family, which are different from traditional forms of living. Out of these nontraditional forms of living, single parent families are most commonly found alternate family through out the world. It is almost accepted that everywhere single parent families are headed by women. However, the reasons for women to be single headed are different. In India, widowhood is the main reason for being recognized as single parent. Since women mainly head single parent families, they are also referred to as female headed families. The term "female headed families" is generally used for those families, where the women are the heads of the families by virtue of their main carrier status. The group of women included here are widowed, divorced abandoned, separated single women and women whose husbands have migrated for employment and whose husbands are not economic provider due to unemployment and ill health (Buvinic *et al.*, 1978).

In the context of socio-economic changes, women emancipation and women empowerment, the phenomenon of female headed households is gaining ground in 1970's and able to draw the attention of family sociologists in the last two decade. In India the concept of alternative families in general and female-headed families in particular is reflected through seminar sub-theme, and able to through light upon socio-psychological research. Many pertinent aspects of family living of these households in terms of family dynamics, stress and strain of managing households, coping strategies and level of satisfaction, etc. need longitudinal study for drawing the attention of programme and policy makers as well as

legislators in order to provide security and maximum protection from all directions.

The present study was under taken to find out managerial and social problems of households and coping strategies in terms of fiscal, temporal, psycho physiological and psycho social components and study the variation of the problems in different socio-economic status.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Assam. Households, which were headed by females, were selected from three socio-economic status *i.e.* low socio-economic status (LSES), middle socio-economic status (MSES) and high socio-economic status (HSES). Desai (1987) scale was used to categorized the different socio-economic status. An interview schedule was prepared, which was pre tested with 15 non-sample households. Statistical analysis in the form of frequencies, percentage, mean \pm SD were used to study the degree of stress. To find out the variation of the problem in the three socio-economic statuses, "Z" test was computed. Findings are presented under four major components that is fiscal components, temporal component, psycho-physiological component and psycho social component. The reference period for the study was from September 1997 to October 1998.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It was revealed (Table 1) that majority of the respondents (58 per cent) belonged to middle aged group followed by old (28.66 per cent) and young aged group (13 per cent). About 54.66 per cent of the respondents had middle level of education (Class IX to XII) nearly 14