

# Association between socio–economic status and anxiety among women deserted by NRI husbands in Doaba region of Punjab

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Present study was an attempt to assess the association of socio – economic status with anxiety among the deserted wives by NRI husbands in Doaba region of Punjab. Four districts namely Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Nawansahar (Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar at present) and Kapurthala were purposively selected. A total sample consisted of 60 deserted women, asymmetrically distributed over the four districts because of the distinct feature of the study. From each district, respondents were selected by using PPS (Probability proportional to size) and snow ball sampling techniques. These results revealed that majority of deserted women were from upper-lower socio-economic class and faced high level of anxiety irrespective of socio-economic status. The results emphasize the need to start the psychological counseling and consultancy services for deserted women.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Deserted wives, NRI husbands, Socio – economic status, Anxiety

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**N**RI marriages in Punjab are proving a curse for many unsuspecting girls and an enigma for the society. These marriages are found to be more painful and soul stirring social issue which continues to wreck the married lives of hundreds and hundreds of young innocent girls, causing them untold misery as also socio – economic ruination to their parental families and it's like a virus that has spread its tentacles in Punjab. A study done by Singh *et al.* (2007) revealed that more than two-third of the NRI marriages in Punjab turned out to be fraudulent matrimonial alliances. It was observed that the boy and his parents pressurize the girl for more

and more cash, cars and costly gadgets and failing to oblige; the girl is taunted, abused, harassed, humiliated, tortured and brutalized and her honour is slighted by her NRI husband / in laws. In 70 per cent of cases NRI boys married to Punjabi girls for the sake of dowry followed by parental happiness (Rani *et al.*, 2013). What eventually happens is that with zero chance of mutual compromise coupled with the denial of any financial support makes her an unwelcome dependent on her own parents and if per chance she happens to be a mother, it is all misery – her two generations are ruined. She is also faced with a piquant situation in as much as she no

more can perceive herself to be “married” duped, abandoned, deserted and yet not divorced, she loses her marital identity, with remote chance of remarriage and shunned even by the society. Such women faced a high anxiety through out the life.

Anxiety is a psychological and physiological state characterized by somatic, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components. It is the displeasing feeling of fear and concern. The root meaning of the word anxiety is ‘to vex or trouble’; in either presence or absence of psychological stress, anxiety can create feelings of fear, worry, uneasiness, and dread. Although lots of work was done by the researcher, government organizations like Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs and National Commission of Women, women cells and many other Non-Government organizations but they all are concerned with issues like dowry, ex-parte divorces and formulating schemes for NRI deserted wives, to provide them financial help but no one is concerned about their physical, emotional, behavioral, and mental health of those deserted women. Such women face so many problems like their husband or another family members force her to abort the child or sometime in-laws gave her medicines so that she could not conceive the child. In some cases medicines are also given to the women to prove that she is mentally ill. Deserted women tortured in many ways which further led to the anxiety among them. Dasgupta and Rudra (2009) results shows that socio-legal problems profoundly affected deserted women financially, emotionally, physically and socially which led stress and depression among those women. The physical effects of anxiety for such woman may include heart palpitations, muscle weakness and tension, fatigue, nausea, chest pain, shortness of breath, headache, stomach aches, or headaches. The emotional effects of anxiety include feelings of apprehension or dread, trouble concentrating, feeling tense or jumpy, anticipating the worst, irritability, restlessness and feeling like your mind’s gone blank as

well as nightmares/bad dreams, obsessions about sensations and feeling like everything is scary. The mental effects of anxiety may include thoughts about suspected dangers, such as fear of dying, whereas the behavioral effects of anxiety include withdrawal from situations which have provoked anxiety in the past. Anxiety among those women can also be experienced in ways which include changes in sleeping patterns, nervous habits, and increased motor tension like foot tapping etc.

## ■ RESEARCH METHODS

### The three socio-cultural zones of Punjab:

Malwa, Majha and Doaba, Doaba region was purposively selected to carry out the present study because of the large number of people settled in abroad. The respondents selected for the present study were 60 married women deserted by their NRI husbands. Snow-ball sampling technique was utilized to access abandoned women combined with purposive sampling technique because of the special characteristics of sample (*i.e.* women deserted by NRI husbands). To identify the required number of sample, a list of addresses was prepared with the help of Departments of Judiciary, Family courts, FIR registered in Women cell, Counseling centers and NRI Passport offices. The data was collected through personal interviewing with the deserted women and their parents. Socio-economic status scale by Bharadwaj (2001) was used to assess the socio-economic level of the respondents whereas anxiety level was assessed through comprehensive anxiety test by Sharma *et al.* (1992). Data were coded, tabulated, analyzed and interpreted using suitable statistical parameters like frequency, percentage and chi square test.

## ■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the present investigation as well as relevant discussion have been summarized

Table 1: Per cent distribution of desereted women according to their socio-economic status					(n=60)
Socio-economic status	No. of respondents				Total
	Jalandhar (n <sub>1</sub> =17)	SBS Nagar (n <sub>2</sub> =14)	Hoshiarpur (n <sub>3</sub> =16)	Kapurthala (n <sub>4</sub> =13)	
Upper	0 (0.00)	2 (14.29)	1 (6.25)	1 (7.69)	4 (6.67)
Upper middle	1 (5.88)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (1.67)
Middle	0 (0.00)	4 (28.57)	3 (18.75)	1 (7.69)	8 (13.33)
Upper lower	16 (94.12)	8 (57.14)	12 (75.00)	11 (84.62)	47 (78.33)
Lower	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

under following heads :

**Socio-economic status of women deserted by NRI husbands:**

The perusal of data in Table 1 reveals that majority of the respondents (78.33%) belonged to the upper lower socio-economic status. It is further evident from the table that 13.33 per cent of respondents were from middle socio economic status followed by 6.67 per cent who belonged to upper socio-economic status whereas only one respondent was from upper middle socio-economic status. NRI-deserted women mostly belonged to middle and upper socio-economic class of families and most of these marriages were arranged through relatives. The anxiety of parents of girls had led to hurried marriages with NRIs without verifying their antecedents. Also, NRI boys from Punjab under intense familial pressures do what their parents/relations want them to do. Many have non intention of taking their respective newlywed wives to the Promised Land, as many of them are already married there. They marry the girls just to satisfy the demands of their parents and relatives and leave them behind in India to serve their parents. These girls act merely as servants in their in-laws house and generally maltreated by them. Similar results were found in study by Singh *et al.* (2007) revealed that more than two-third of the NRI marriages in Punjab turned out to be fraudulent matrimonial alliances. NRI-deserted women mostly belonged to middle and upper socio-economic class of families and most of these marriages

were arranged through relatives.

**Anxiety level among women deserted by NRI husbands:**

Anxiety was the displeasing feeling of fear and concern and was faced by all the deserted women at different levels. It is evident from the data presented in Table 2 that very high anxiety was experienced by 8.33 per cent respondents whereas 40.00 per cent of the respondents faced high anxiety level. There were 28.33 per cent of respondents who faced very low anxiety. Average anxiety was faced by 21.67 per cent respondents. The inferences drawn from the study shows that most of such women are forced to live separately with their parents and face financial, psychological and social problems. It has been noticed that such women are more prone to abusive behaviour, remarks and eve teasing which lead to the frustration and anxiety among them. This result confirms the findings of Jabbi (2005) which revealed that inspite of facing physical and domestic violence deserted women face mental torture at a large glance due to the continuous unreasonable demands made by the groom’s family.

**Association of socio-economic status with anxiety level among women deserted by NRI husbands:**

It is evident from the data in Table 3 that the categories were merged in both the cases (socio-economic-status and anxiety level of the respondents) for making the generalization of data. It was further found from the table that 19.33 per cent middle class

**Table 2: Per cent distribution of deserted women according to their level of anxiety (n=60)**

Levels of anxiety	No. of respondents				Total
	Jalandhar (n <sub>1</sub> =17)	SBS Nagar (n <sub>2</sub> =14)	Hoshiarpur (n <sub>3</sub> =16)	Kapurthala (n <sub>4</sub> =13)	
Very high/saturated	3 (17.65)	0 (0.00)	1 (6.25)	1 (7.69)	5 (8.33)
High	9 (52.94)	3 (21.43)	8 (5.00)	4 (30.77)	24 (40.00)
Average	3 (17.65)	5 (35.71)	2 (12.50)	3 (23.08)	13 (21.67)
Low	0 (0.00)	1 (7.14)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (1.67)
Very low	2 (11.76)	5 (35.71)	5 (31.25)	5 (38.46)	17 (28.33)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

**Table 3: Association of socio – economic status with anxiety level among deserted women (n= 60)**

Socio-economic status	Anxiety of respondents			2
	High	Average	Low	
Middle class	19.33	9.33	11.33	1.723 <sup>NS</sup>
Upper lower class	9.67	4.67	5.67	

NS = Non- significant

respondents experienced high level of anxiety followed by 11.33 per cent who experienced low level of anxiety whereas average anxiety was found in 9.33 per cent of the respondents. It was further observed that high anxiety was found in case of 9.67 per cent respondents followed by low level of anxiety by 5.67 per cent respondents of upper lower class. Average anxiety was faced by only 4.67 per cent respondents belonging to upper lower class. Further the association between socio-economic status and anxiety was found to be non-significant among the deserted women. These results supports to the study of Sharma (2013) which revealed that varied form of violence faced by the deserted women such as physical, social, economic, psychological, spiritual and emotional torture is the major contributor to various ill health issues among those women.

### Conclusion:

The results of the study revealed that the menace of NRI grooms deserting their legally wedded wives is rampant irrespective of regional, religious, caste and other socio-economic background. All the deserted wives faced anxiety in the form of stress and depression which badly affects their own physical health, emotional health, mental set up, behavioural aspects of their life for a long lasting period. Non-significant differences were observed between the socio-economic status and anxiety. So, it was rightly asserted that the situation as indicated by the study is alarming and need a strong intervention on the behalf of the Government, Judiciary, NGOs so as to overcome this problem.

### Recommendations:

The government needs to start the process of rehabilitation of such deserted women by giving them psychological counseling and the consultancy for such family is still lacking.

Financial problem was found to be a major cause of the anxiety. For that awareness about the financial assistance should be provided to the deserted women. The ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has also proposed a scheme to provide some financial assistance to women in distress who have been deserted by their overseas Indian spouses for obtaining counseling and legal services.

Present study was conducted only to analyze anxiety among the deserted women, whereas to study the other issues of grievances associated with self-concept, self-esteem and self-confidence were also found to be very important to study.

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