

Social and Livelihood Issues of Deserted Women: A Sociological Study focusing on the Vadamaradchi South-West Divisional Secretariat of the Jaffna District

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Abstract

This study utilized a mixed method. Primary data were collected through interviewer administered questionnaires, key informant interviews and case study methods. All 294 deserted women were included in this study. Research ethics were strictly followed by the researchers throughout the research. The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire method was analyzed using descriptive statistical methods with the usage of SPSS version 21. Qualitative data obtained from the case study method and interviews were analyzed thematically. The findings of the study reveal that deserted women encountered severe livelihood problems and social problems. Results reveal that Hinduism (84%) is the predominant religion of the majority of the respondents and 58.2 % of the respondents belong to the age group of 15-45 years. Majority (76.88%) of the deserted women have completed their secondary educational qualifications and only 4 of the deserted women have advanced level qualifications. Wage labor (46.9%) was the primary livelihood of many deserted women and more than 62% of the respondents' monthly income was less than 20, 000 Sri Lankan Rupees. Results also highlight that second marriage of the husband (47.6%), extra marital affairs (28.9%), dowry issues (10.5%), debt issues (11.9%), poor family support and care (72%) and misunderstanding among family members (62.8%) were the major underlying causes for desertion of women by their husbands. Results also indicate that security problems (4.4 %), sexual threats (15.3%) and poor participation in social functions and neglect of social activities (21%), poor income, poverty and education related problems of the children were the significant social issues facing deserted women. This study also suggests that the government should provide skills and vocational training to deserted women, and expand the employment opportunities available for them. Social agencies should be encouraged by appropriate social policy to provide employment opportunities to deserted women. Finally, all stakeholders including government institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and private sector need to work together to promote the psycho-social and economic well-being of deserted women.

Keywords: desertion, discrimination, marriage, poverty, survival